

**THE CONSTRUCTION AND ARTICULATION
OF A PAGAN IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICA:
A STUDY OF THE NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS
OF A CONTESTED RELIGIOUS IDENTITY
IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY**

By

Dale Wallace

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Religion and Theology in the Faculty of Humanities,
Development and Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.**

Supervisor: Professor P. Kumar

Date submitted: December 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first acknowledgement of thanks is to my supervisor, Professor P. Kumar, who has once more been an indispensable support and guide in my studies. For his thoughtful readings of my drafts, his informed suggestions and his insightful questions, I am deeply grateful.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this thesis and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

This is my third consecutive study within the South African Pagan community, none of which would have been possible without their support and interest. In the context of this study, a few individuals warrant individual mention. In no specific order, these are:

Ariel Damon of SAPRA for his constant willingness to share with me the intricacies of their endeavours to secure constitutional rights for South African Pagans and for keeping me abreast of the latest developments and amendments; Donna Vos for her kindness in forwarding me her copies of television shows involving local Pagans that I had not managed to obtain; Norman and Mynie Geldenhys for many years of support and a great deal of information and opinion shared; Christopher Emery for sharing his opinions, and for his generosity in loaning me invaluable material from his extensive library. To all those who circulated my questionnaire among their groups or to their mailing lists, and to all those who took the time to complete and return them, my deep thanks for your time and trust. A further acknowledgement of thanks to a

few individuals whom I have called on numerous times over the years for additional clarification or opinion, and who were always generous in their responses. They are; Arias, Carol, Damon, Donna, Fey, Mayreck, Mynie, Norman and Spiral. There are countless others who have invited me into their homes and their circles, have welcomed discussion, shown interest in this project and answered my many questions, both online and offline. I have been privileged to share in all these encounters and thank them all.

Thanks are also due to Kathy Murrell for assistance in final typesetting of this document.

An undertaking as large and lengthy as this one inevitably impacts most on closest family and friends. To my husband Keith and my sons Jordan and Dane – thank you for all the times support was given, and for your patience and understanding through what has been a long involvement on my part. Last but not least, my gratitude to my mother Joyce Cowley whose assistance in every way has been immeasurable. To her I dedicate this project.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| AAR | American Academy of Religion |
| AIC | African Initiated Church |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| APC | Aquarian Planetary Cooperative |
| CAM | Circle of the African Moon |
| CDA | Critical Discourse Analysis |
| CNE | Christian National Education |
| HOGD | Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn |
| OCRU | Occult Crime Related Unit |
| NGK | Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) |
| PFSA | Pagan Federation of South Africa |
| SAPS | South African Police Services |
| SANDF | South African National Defence Force |
| SAPRA | South African Pagan Rights Alliance |
| SRA | Satanic Ritual Abuse |
| THO | Traditional Healers Organisation |
| ZCC | Zionist Christian Church |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | i |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | iv |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| The Problem | 3 |
| The Aims of the Study | 5 |
| <i>Primary questions</i> | 5 |
| <i>Secondary questions</i> | 5 |
| The Hypothesis | 6 |
| The Definition of Religion | 6 |
| The Clarification of Key Concepts | 8 |
| <i>Paganism as a New Religious Movement</i> | 9 |
| <i>Nature Religion</i> | 10 |
| <i>Nature</i> | 12 |
| <i>Paganism</i> | 13 |
| <i>Witchcraft and Wicca</i> | 16 |
| <i>Identity</i> | 18 |
| The Context of the Inquiry | 19 |
| The Background to the Study | 21 |
| Literature Review | 22 |
| Temporal Limits of the Study | 26 |
| Limitations of the Study | 27 |
| Layout of the Study | 28 |
| CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL METHODOLOGIES | 31 |
| THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY | 31 |
| Interpretative Social Science | 31 |
| Critical Social Science | 32 |
| <i>A discussion of 'power' in contemporary theory</i> | 34 |
| <i>Foucault's analysis of power</i> | 35 |
| Identity Theories | 36 |
| <i>The emphasis on 'power' in identity theories</i> | 38 |
| PRACTICAL METHODOLOGY | 39 |
| Data Collection | 39 |
| Phase One | 39 |
| <i>Data from written sources</i> | 39 |
| Phase Two | 41 |
| <i>Questionnaires and interviews</i> | 41 |
| Phase Three | 45 |
| <i>Participant Observation</i> | 45 |
| Field Notes | 47 |
| Data Analysis | 48 |
| Critical Discourse Analysis | 48 |
| <i>CDA and the media</i> | 51 |
| Stages in Data Analysis | 53 |

SECTION ONE
THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

56

| | |
|--|-----------|
| CHAPTER THREE: A BACKGROUND TO THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF SOUTH AFRICA PRIOR TO 1994..... | 57 |
| The ‘Christianization’ of South African Society from the late 19 th Century | 58 |
| <i>Religious development in South Africa from the late nineteenth century</i> | 60 |
| <i>Education in South Africa in the apartheid years</i> | 63 |
| <i>Mission schools</i> | 64 |
| The Development and Growth of the African Initiated Churches | 67 |
| <i>Witchcraft discourses in the African Christian context and in indigenous communities</i> | 70 |
| Modernity and the Secularization of South African Society | 74 |
| <i>The secularization of South African society during the apartheid years</i> | 78 |
| Conclusion | 79 |
| | |
| CHAPTER FOUR: PAGANISM AND THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT..... | 82 |
| A background to the discussion | 82 |
| Scholarship on Paganism and the New Age Movement | 84 |
| <i>The Western Esoteric Tradition</i> | 84 |
| Paganism and the New Age Movement in South Africa | 89 |
| Central Differences between Paganism and the New Age Movement | 90 |
| <i>Conceptions of ‘Nature’</i> | 90 |
| <i>Conceptions of Deity</i> | 93 |
| <i>The magical worldview</i> | 96 |
| <i>The sexual metaphor</i> | 100 |
| The Interrelatedness between Paganism and the New Age Movement | 102 |
| <i>New Age fairs and markets</i> | 103 |
| <i>Courses and workshops</i> | 103 |
| <i>Bookstores and the Internet</i> | 105 |
| Conclusion | 108 |

SECTION TWO
PERSONAL, SELF-DEFINED IDENTITIES

112

| | |
|--|------------|
| CHAPTER FIVE: FEATURES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PERSONAL PAGAN IDENTITY | 113 |
| PERSONAL IDENTITIES | 113 |
| The Adoption of ‘Magical Self’ | 117 |
| <i>The adoption of magical names</i> | 119 |
| The Pagan Sense of Embodiment | 123 |
| Body Adornment and Modification | 124 |
| <i>Jewellery</i> | 124 |
| <i>The body as art</i> | 127 |
| Embodied Spirituality | 129 |
| Movement and the Body | 132 |
| Marking identities in personal spaces | 134 |
| Pagan Altars | 136 |
| Conclusion | 138 |

CHAPTER SIX: PAGAN NARRATIVES; THE ARTICULATION OF MAGICAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL IDENTITIES..... 141

| | |
|---|-----|
| Myths of Continuity | 142 |
| <i>The Old Religion</i> | 142 |
| <i>The Golden Age</i> | 143 |
| <i>The myth of matriarchy</i> | 144 |
| Myths drawn from historical events | 147 |
| <i>The myth of the 'Burning Times'</i> | 148 |
| <i>Myths from the witch-craze era of medieval times</i> | 150 |
| Mythical and Magical identities in narrative and ritual | 152 |
| <i>Ritual tools</i> | 153 |
| <i>Mythologies of deity</i> | 155 |
| <i>Mythologies in songs and chants</i> | 157 |
| The role of fiction and fantasy in Pagan narratives | 158 |
| The role of 'context' in Pagan narratives | 162 |
| The role of reflection in Pagan narratives | 164 |
| Furthering a magical identity in narratives | 166 |
| <i>Reconstructed personal histories</i> | 166 |
| <i>The language of the occult in narratives</i> | 170 |
| Conclusion | 172 |

SECTION THREE
COLLECTIVE, SHARED IDENTITIES 175

CHAPTER SEVEN: PAGAN COMMUNITIES AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET 177

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Internet and Modern Paganism | 178 |
| <i>TechnoPaganism</i> | 180 |
| South African Pagans Online | 182 |
| <i>Extending identities beyond the self</i> | 184 |
| <i>Identity deception online</i> | 185 |
| <i>Authority and Authenticity online</i> | 187 |
| Building Pagan Communities Online | 192 |
| <i>Experiencing ritual online</i> | 197 |
| The Online Commodification of Paganism and Witchcraft | 199 |
| Discussions of "African" Paganism Online | 201 |
| Conclusion | 203 |

CHAPTER EIGHT: PAGANISM; FINDING COMMUNITIES IN NATURE 207

| | |
|--|-----|
| Nature Religions | 208 |
| Paganism as a Nature Religion | 209 |
| <i>Think globally act locally</i> | 210 |
| <i>Nature, gender and the body</i> | 213 |
| <i>Pagan healing through Nature</i> | 219 |
| <i>The Nature of Deity</i> | 223 |
| Paganism and African Religion: extending collective identities | 229 |
| <i>African Religion and nature</i> | 230 |
| <i>Nature and healing in African Religion</i> | 232 |
| Conclusion | 239 |

SECTION FOUR
SOCIAL, ASCRIBED IDENTITIES 243

| | |
|--|------------|
| CHAPTER NINE: PAGAN IDENTITIES AND THE MEDIA | 244 |
| The articulation of Pagan traditions in the South African media | 244 |
| Paganism and the occult: perpetuating stereotypes in the media | 249 |
| <i>Spells, magic and ritual in the media</i> | 256 |
| The Commodification of Witchcraft | 258 |
| <i>White Witchcraft</i> | 260 |
| The manipulation of meaning in the media | 264 |
| Paganism and Satanism in the media | 268 |
| Conclusion | 277 |
| | |
| CHAPTER TEN: PAGAN IDENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY | 281 |
| Pagans in the workplace | 283 |
| Paganism and other Religious Institutions | 285 |
| <i>Interfaith initiatives</i> | 288 |
| Paganism and Educational Institutions | 294 |
| <i>Religion as 'moral education'</i> | 296 |
| Paganism and Legal Institutions | 299 |
| Paganism and Law Enforcement Agencies | 304 |
| Conclusion | 313 |
| | |
| CHAPTER ELEVEN: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION | 316 |
| The features involved in the construction of a Pagan identity | 317 |
| <i>Personal, self-defined Pagan identities</i> | 317 |
| <i>Collective, shared Pagan identities</i> | 321 |
| <i>Social, ascribed Pagan identities</i> | 323 |
| Dominant Discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft in South African Society | 327 |
| <i>Christian discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft</i> | 327 |
| <i>Paganism and witchcraft discourses in the African context</i> | 331 |
| <i>Common features in dominant discourses</i> | 335 |
| Dominant discourses: their implications on Pagan identity constructions. | 337 |
| Paganism as a minority religion in a pluralistic society | 341 |
| Areas for Future Research | 343 |
| Concluding Remarks | 346 |
| | |
| APPENDICES | 349 |
| Appendix 1 | 350 |
| Appendix 2 | 354 |
| | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 357 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Paganism is a broad and embracive term that describes a collective of religious and/or spiritual traditions. These traditions can mostly be incorporated under the even broader term of Nature Spiritualities, and, together, form a contemporary religious movement that is one of the fastest growing in the West. The roots of this religion have been investigated by numerous scholars and/or Pagan practitioners, and some of the complexities of these investigations are succinctly alluded to by Hutton when he says,

To speak of ‘Modern Paganism’ is of course to invite debate in itself, for the expression covers a multitude of faiths and practices, with only a limited (though important) amount in common (2002: 225).

The diversity inherent in Paganism is largely a result of the multifarious sources from which modern Paganism has drawn inspiration¹. This diversity of sources and influences can be evidenced in the different foci and interests of the various traditions, which only from the late 1970s, came to be conjoined under the term ‘Paganism’. Most of these traditions have roots in the religion called Wicca that was developed in the United Kingdom from the late 1940s by Gerald Brossseau Gardner (1884-1964). The focus on the fertility cycles in Nature, the belief and/or practice of magic and a reinstatement of the Goddess in this religion, became the cornerstone of contemporary Paganism. Wicca, and the various traditions of Witchcraft that were a later

development, remain the dominant traditions in the Pagan movement. All nonetheless are traditions that in their own way, recognise the individual as being in a unique relationship with the natural world in both its visible and invisible dimensions. A consequence of diversity is also found in the conceptions of divinity in Paganism that can vary from being “polytheistic, pantheistic, panentheistic, or animistic, with each position ultimately subscribing to the idea of one source of divine energy, manifest in Nature, from which all other ideas are drawn” (Wallace 2000: 94).

Despite an intrinsic feature of Pagan traditions being their exploration and frequent attempts at the reinvigoration and/or reconstruction of ancient pagan traditions that precede the Christian era, they equally are examples of religiosities that owe their development to features of a modern, contemporary world. New traditions continue to emerge, while older ones are still often in the process of being shaped by events from both inside and outside the movement itself. Although no one person or group can speak for the movement as a whole, there are, internationally, a plethora of established groups and organisations that represent various Pagan interests and literally thousands of Pagan-related sites on the internet. Academic interest in Paganism really began in the 1980s, and, in 1993 Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman organised the first international conference on Contemporary Pagan Studies at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Pagan studies have since developed into a dynamic and developing field of research that “has taken a unique approach to academic inquiry, weaving together both etic and emic perspectives and being profoundly interdisciplinary in nature” (Blain et al. 2004: vii). The aforementioned quote is taken from the first in a series of books entitled *Pagan Studies* in which the

editors highlight the need for the breadth of focus that is found in Pagan research when they say,

Nevertheless, multiplicity is a key in Pagan studies: multiple concepts of the divine, multiple local forms of the religion, and a sacred relationship with the multiple forms of the material world as they are experienced by Pagans (ibid: vii).

Paganism first became a part of the visible religious landscape of South Africa in June 1996, with the formation of the Pagan Federation of South Africa, (hitherto referred to as the PFSA), with Donna ‘Darkwolf’ Vos nominated as its first president. This event was not unrelated to the change in dispensation in South Africa, and to the religious freedoms that were entrenched in the new post-1994 Constitution. In a decade the movement has undergone many changes, developments, and, not unexpectedly, tremendous growth; it has attracted substantial interest from both television and radio, it has been the subject of many magazine and newspaper articles, there are a steadily growing number of Pagan organisations, online groups represent a wide variety of Pagan interests, and numerous initiatives to articulate Paganism in the broader South African society have been undertaken.

This multi-focused, nascent and challenging form of religious expression as it has developed in South Africa since 1996 is the subject of this study.

The Problem

All of the aforementioned developments have not been without difficulties and challenges for this emergent movement. South Africa is a country where social,

political, economic and religious transformations are still, at best, experiencing various degrees of success. The meaning of the terms 'Pagan' and 'Witch', that are intrinsic to Paganism, contradict traditional Christian, African Traditional, and many New Age perspectives in South African society (Wallace 2000). The multitude of discourses associated with these words in South Africa inhibits full inter-faith cooperation and understanding between the various groups, and in many instances gives rise to 'deviance labelling', misrepresentation and, in some instances, persecution. Such instances frequently arise from a pervasive trend in the above discourses to associate Paganism and Witchcraft with the concepts of Satanism and/or evil. Many discourses in South Africa have been shaped by colonialism and the attendant features of religious, cultural and ethnic imperialism. The dominance of Christianity in South African history, and the phenomenon of witchcraft violence and persecution in indigenous societies, have clearly established the features that can be included in the categories 'Paganism' and 'Witchcraft', and dominate the ways in which these terms are understood. This factor has rendered the development and acceptance of Paganism in South Africa vastly more problematic than for its American and European counterparts. As a consequence of the generally entrenched bias against Paganism and Witchcraft in large sectors of the community, Paganism is largely identified by a series of stereotypes and assumptions. The Pagan emphasis on gender issues and environmental ethics are generally obscured and/or manipulated as a result. This factor severely compromises its ability to articulate itself in the context of understanding religious pluralism in South Africa.

This study is an endeavour to obtain an understanding of the factors involved in the construction of a Pagan identity in South Africa in the light of these challenges. It

also complies with the need for investigation into the marginalisation of minority religions and worldviews in South Africa despite Constitutional religious freedoms.

The Aims of the Study

Primary questions

There are three primary questions to be addressed in this study.

- a) What criteria are involved in Pagan self-identity?
- b) How do Pagans perceive they are identified?
- c) How are Pagans actually identified by those outside of the movement?

Secondary Questions

In order to address the above, it is necessary to give attention to the social context in which identities are constructed. The questions therefore will be underpinned by secondary questions that are,

1. Who and what are the primary agents of discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft in South Africa, and by what means are these discourses disseminated?
2. What underlies the contested nature of Pagan identity in South Africa, and what implications does this have for the Pagan movement on the construction of its identity?

In the interplay between the primary and secondary questions of the study, I hope to bring information to bear on what mechanisms and processes are involved in the marginalization of minority religions and worldviews in our pluralistic society, and whether these indicate new forms of the denial and containment of religion, despite the religious equality entrenched in our Constitution.

The objectives of this study are both exploratory and explanatory. The main objective of the exploratory dimension is twofold. Firstly, to explore the factors involved in the construction and articulation of a Pagan identity in South Africa, and, secondly, to identify and analyse the agents and nature of discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft in our society, The explanatory dimension aims at valid causal explanation that there is a demonstrable relationship between the nature of such discourses and the construction and articulation of a Pagan identity in South Africa.

The Hypothesis

The hypothesis in this study has been generated inductively from my experiences in previous research into Paganism and Witchcraft. As in many qualitative studies, it is in the form of a general statement. It is as follows.

The meanings of the terms 'Pagan' and 'Witch' that are central to the religious movement Paganism, are contested in South African society. This factor negatively affects the construction and articulation of a Pagan identity and compromises its full participation in the religious freedoms entrenched in our Constitution.

The Definition of Religion

Many issues and problems are involved in a definition of religion and no one definition can elicit agreement between scholars who study a variety of phenomena that may be called 'religious'. This problem lies in the fact that religion can be approached from a variety of perspectives, and agreement and disagreement persists as to the inclusion or exclusion of certain categories within that definition, and to the meaning attributed to words utilised. Despite this fundamental problem, a working definition of religion is required that is, in Ronald Johnstone's words,

...specifically a definition that we can be fairly sure includes the major ideas of this concept; a definition that is moreover flexible and responsive to changing conditions and new evidence – so that we can communicate fairly sensibly, not only among ourselves, but with others as well (1975: 12).

It is only since the late 1970s, and far more recently in South Africa, that individuals have used the term ‘Pagan’ as one of a personal religious identity, and only in more recent years that it has been included in the religious census of certain countries².

Irrespective of its tendency to revitalise ancient pagan traditions, and the frequent appropriation from indigenous traditions, Paganism is a new religious movement that draws on the past in creative ways in order to critique and address contemporary concerns.

Meanings of words are dependent on their usage within a particular language, and language is, of course, encased in a specific social structure. The meaning of each word within a definition is defined by the social group whose language is utilised, and who confer a context of meanings upon the word. The structure of language, however, may have no demonstrable connection with an independent reality, and may become “the cage” as so termed by Wittgenstein³. Secularisation, changes in modern industrialised societies and the accommodation of the plurality of religious beliefs and their expression, have meant that meanings are also not fixed. Any definition of religion must take cognisance of the fact that it is a working guide that must follow flexibility with changing conditions and worldviews. It also takes into account the point made by David Chidester in his keynote address at the IAHR 2000 Conference, when he raised the problem of a definition of religion in saying that, “...we should be careful how we use it (the word religion) and that a single,

incontestable definition of religion cannot simply be established by academic fiat" (cited by Taylor 2000: 3)⁴. To define religion outside of the constraints of merely one religious perspective, and to include the plurality of religious beliefs and expressions is difficult, and in this context is, at best, a temporary endeavour. This assertion is ratified by Berger and Kellner where they state that, "Just because all human worlds are 'constructions', so they are fragile, contingent and finally destined to be swept away" (1981: 76).

The definition of religion that underpins this study, must be broad enough to incorporate the plural and non-traditional forms of contemporary religiosity, and particularly religions where Nature is the central referent. Against the backdrop of the aforementioned considerations, my working definition of religion for the purposes of this study is that of Catherine Albanese who said that religion is,

a system of symbols (creed, code, cultus) by means of which people (community) orient themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meanings and values⁵.

This definition is suited to the study of Nature and Earth spiritualities by its situation of the individual *in* the world, and the 'orientation' of the individual/group to both sacred and mundane powers, meanings and values. It allows for the inclusion of a plurality of Pagan experiences, and although it has functional tendencies, is sufficiently abstract to serve as a starting point to this project.

The Clarification of Key Concepts

I shall provide a lengthier discussion than is customary on the way in which terms are employed and contextualised in this study. The reasoning behind this decision is the

fact that the entire study, in essence, revolves around the definition of terms and the conceptions of reality that inform their meaning. In the course of this study questions will constantly be raised as to the meaning of certain terms, who uses them and in what contexts. I believe, therefore, that a fairly in-depth discussion of central terms used in this study is warranted at the outset. (I simultaneously state that any deliberations made here, are likely to be contested and are open to reformulation at the conclusion of the project).

Paganism is a challenging field of study as a result of many of its intrinsic features; most notably, its decentralised and diffuse tendencies, as well as the diversity of traditions and paths that can be incorporated in the term. Boundaries of the movement are not clearly defined and many of its central terms are contested from within the movement itself. In the light of these constraints, and in order to construct a clear demarcation of the field of investigation of this study, the following explanations have been made.

Paganism as a New Religious Movement

I have already identified Paganism as a New Religious Movement, based on the findings from my previous two theses of 1998 and 2000⁶. Despite some Pagan activity in South Africa prior to 1996, it was only from this date when the first formal Pagan organisation was formed, that Paganism took on a visible, public identity; making it a very new religious movement in the South African context. The following definition of a movement by R. Garner will apply to this study.

A movement is constituted by human beings engaged in discourses and practices designed to challenge and change society as they define it. It is

formed by people who, over the course of time, are involved in non-institutionalised discourses and practices of change (1996: 12).

Nature Religion

Paganism is ubiquitously described as ‘nature religion’ or earth spirituality, but this designation is not without problems inherent in the term. Bron Taylor, in his *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, gives the following description of Nature Religion when he says,

Since the early 1970s the term nature religion has been used to denote religions that share a reverence for nature and consider it to be divine, sacred, or populated by spiritual beings. Practitioners of Paganism deploy the term as a descriptive umbrella for all earth-and-nature orientated spiritualities.⁷

In his paper, presented at the IAHR Conference 2000⁸, Bron Taylor makes the distinction, (that has been useful to this study), between religions that consider nature to be sacred, and those religions that are influenced by nature in some way. In his own words he says,

In my own effort towards greater clarity about “nature religion”, I have taken to distinguishing between “nature-as-sacred” religions and (which some scholars and pagan religionists consider equivalent to the “nature religion” term) and “nature-influenced-religions” (in which nature is an important but not sacred symbol or meaningful referent) (2000: 4).

Taylor developed this distinction bearing in mind the work done by Catherine Albanese, but argued for a greater need for clarity on what can, and cannot, be included in the term. Of Albanese’s definition he said,

...she used... [the construction “nature religion”]...strategically to illuminate the worldviews and practices of groups and figures not always considered religious, but who take nature to be an important if not central rubric (cited in Taylor, 2000: 4).

Discussing nature religion, and building on from Albanese’s work, Peter Beyer maintains that,

What they all have in common that makes them deserving of the label is, on the concrete level, the attribution in various ways of divinity to nature; and, on the societal level, a critical stand with respect to the dominance and negatively judged efforts of the globalised, instrumental systems (1998: 16-17)⁹.

Beyer’s comment adds an additional dimension to the discussion so far, when he highlighted the oppositional tendencies that can be found in nature religions. It is essential to list his identification of certain features (ibid: 17) that he believes are, independently or in combination, instanced with sufficient regularity in contemporary manifestations of nature religions to indicate a pattern. The necessity of this lies in the fact that these features will recur throughout this study, and are as follows.

- a. A comparative resistance to institutionalisation and legitimisation in terms of identifiable socio-religious authorities and organisations.
- b. A concomitant distrust or even eschewing of politically oriented power.
- c. A corresponding faith in charismatic and hence purely individual authority.
- d. A strong emphasis on individual paths or at least individual chosen paths to fulfilment and hence on the equal value of individuals and groups.
- e. A valorisation of physical place as vital aspects of their spiritualities.

- f. A this-worldly emphasis with a corresponding important place for the search for healing, personal vitality, and a transformation of self.
- g. A strong experimental basis where personal experience is a final arbiter of truth or validity.
- h. A valuing of community as non-hierarchical and effectively charged human bond or belonging.
- i. A stress on holistic conceptions of reality.
- j. A conditional optimism with regard to human capacity and the future.

Whilst bearing in mind Taylor's important distinction between nature-as-sacred religions and nature-influenced religions, the term nature religion in this study will conform to Albanese's definition of a nature religions as being,

A useful analytical abstraction that refers to any religious belief or practice in which devotees consider nature to be the embodiment of divinity, sacredness, transcendence, spiritual power, or whatever cognate term one wishes to use (cited in Taylor 2000: 4).

This decision is made in light of the orientation(s) towards Nature that can be most observed in the South African Pagan community.

Nature

Aside from 'nature religion' itself requiring in-depth clarification, the designation of the term 'Nature' within the Pagan context has been investigated and contested. The pluralism endemic to Paganism has inevitably given rise to a lack of uniformity in the understandings of 'Nature' between traditions, and this in turn has raised questions of the equal centrality of the term to different groups and/or individuals¹⁰.

Most Pagans would support Graham Harvey's contention that "Nature itself is formative of the character of Paganism" (1997: 186) and, through a celebration of eight seasonal festivals¹¹, the inner life of the individual is synchronised with the natural world. The understanding of sacredness as immanent in Nature, *and* of the individual as being an indivisible part of the greater whole, can be traced to the Hermetic principle that stresses a unity of the Supreme Being with all living things. Nature is 'all-that-is' and, in this sense, eliminates the separation between the sacred and profane. For others, it is what Taylor refers to as,

...a "nature" that most of us, most of the time, experience as other than us, namely, the forces, and life-forces, surrounding us, impacting us, beyond our control, but in reciprocal relationship with us, at least to some, small degree (2000: 5).

In this sense there is an implied distinction between the individual and 'Nature' around us. This designation can sometimes be free of any conceptions of deity and implies the necessity for the individual to find ways to *engage with* Nature, as opposed to *participating in* nature. Pagan support can be found for both positions, dependent on the tradition in which the individual is engaged, and, in some individuals, can vacillate between the two. In this study 'Nature' is contextualised as encompassing both positions, and is capitalised when used in the modern Pagan context in recognition of their perspective that divinity is manifest in the natural world.

Paganism

In this study the word 'Paganism' is also capitalised in order to differentiate the contemporary movement from indigenous paganisms and those of the ancient world.

It is a term to denote a religious movement, and is the first example of its usage as one of self-identification. Within the movement the most commonly quoted meaning of the word 'Pagan' is that of *paganus* or country-dweller. The subsequent and ubiquitous association of *paganus* with 'rustic' has permeated most Pagan literature and has had an undoubted influence on its development. There is now ample evidence that by the fifth century, Christians were using the term *pagani* to refer to those who were not practitioners of the new religion, and referred more to urban nobility and academics who forefronted pagan resistance to Christianity, than to the country-dwellers (Pearson 2002: 18).

Other meanings for the term that have been proposed is that of 'civilian'. As Pearson (ibid: 18-19) explains, "By the second and third centuries, the *pagani* were those who had not enlisted as part of God's 'army', as *militia Christi* (soldiers of Christ) against the forces of Satan." This meaning appears to have been short-lived and without negative connotations, but is one that supports the juxtaposition in popular culture of a Pagan as one who is a non-Christian or even anti-Christian. Ronald Hutton (1999: 4) states that both of the above derivations were challenged by the French academic Pierre Chuvin in 1990. He quotes Chuvin's derivation as follows.

The word *pagani* was applied to followers of the older religious traditions at a time when the latter still made up the majority of town-dwellers and when its earlier sense, of non-military, had died out. He proposed instead that it simply denoted those who preferred the faith of the *pagus*, the local unit of government; that is, the rooted or old, religion. His suggestion has so far met with apparent wide acceptance (Hutton 1999: 4).

Whilst Paganism can, and does, draw on any of the above interpretations, it is 'Pagan' as 'country dweller' that is most common in South African understandings.

My attempt to demarcate boundaries for the inclusion and/or exclusion of various traditions from the broader term 'Paganism' is reflective of the similar debates that can be found in some sections of the Pagan community itself. Although the movement is broad, eclectic and escapes adequate definition on many levels, I have found the following aspects common to most modern Pagan traditions.

1. Paganism is a Nature Religion, where the Earth may be seen as Mother, or, for many, as Goddess.
2. Paganism can be polytheistic, pantheistic, duotheistic, panentheistic and/or animistic.
3. Paganism is anti-hierarchical and opposed to any form of external domination. It is likewise resistant to central authority, and to dominant religious traditions that are seen to desecralize Nature through dualisms that separate spirit from matter.
4. Paganism resists patriarchal religious traditions through its assertion of the feminine aspect to divine reality.
5. Paganism is illustrative of the magical worldview that there are unseen relations between all elements of the cosmos, and that an individual can, through various technologies, participate with, and engage in, these relations.

I do not employ the term 'Neo-Paganism' as it is not used in the South African Pagan community. My intention was also to apprehend the meaning of terms as used by individuals and not to complicate this process by bringing new terms into the mix. At this point it must be noted that some Pagans, whilst including African traditions in the

term ‘Paganism’, still differentiate these traditions from their own by using terms such as “Black Pagans”, or “African Paganism.” These are not terms that I employ, so any usage of them in this document is merely a direct quotation.

Witchcraft and Wicca

Witchcraft and Wicca are the dominant traditions of the Pagan movement, both locally and abroad. Although I refer to Paganism and Witchcraft as being *interrelated* terms in South Africa, the terms Paganism, Witchcraft and Wicca are often conflated by scholars and practitioners, and/or used interchangeably. The movement is so new in South Africa, that despite its very rapid development and expansion, there remains a fairly wide lack of consensus as to what differentiates these three terms from each other, and what indeed unites them.

Though the development of modern Witchcraft traditions came after that of Gardnerian Wicca, its allegiance to, and current links with, the latter, are the subject of contemporary debates. Many Witches follow traditions that they distinguish from their understandings of the religion of Wicca as founded by Gerald Gardner. ‘Witch’ and ‘Witchcraft’ are also capitalised in order to distinguish Witchcraft in the modern movement from the phenomenon of witchcraft in ancient paganisms, anthropological understandings of indigenous witchcraft, and the historical phenomenon of Christian heresy and subsequent persecution of witches that developed in the Middle Ages. In the latter, witchcraft came to be associated with Satanism and Christian heresy, with the era as a whole often referred to by Pagans as The Burning Times. In different degrees, the practice of magic is part of all of the above discourses. In this study, a

Witch' will refer to a Pagan who practices magic and who (re)claims the term to refer to his/her religious/spiritual tradition.

In the United Kingdom in particular, the word 'Wiccan' refers to members of the new religion called Wicca that was formed by Gerald Gardner and that brought together aspects of the ancient mystery religions, folk and ritual magic, folklore of the day, the veneration of the God and the Goddess, and observations of the Celtic seasonal festivals. In this context it is an initiatory, mystery tradition that has developed directly from Gardnerian and/or Alexandrian Wiccan traditions. In South Africa, in the absence of such traditional lineages in which to train or be initiated, Wicca has become a far broader term that, whilst still adhering to the Gardnerian features mentioned above, can incorporate a range of interests, many of which are non-traditional, and some that contain some distinctly New Age practices and conceptions. Although some Wiccans refer to themselves as Witches, many in South Africa consciously avoid its usage. For others, the terms are used interchangeably. Some Witches equally avoid the term Wicca as they believe it to have far too overtly 'New Age' connotations, largely as a result of the commodification of Wicca in popular culture.

For the purpose of this study, and due to the aforementioned lack of consensus in South African Paganism, I have included those who identify themselves as a Pagan, a Wiccan or a Witch, regardless of whether they embrace the other terms.

Identity

This is an identity study that seeks an understanding of the factors involved in the construction of Pagan identity in South Africa. This intention necessitates some guidance as to what is meant by 'identity' and the role of this meaning to this study. Bearing in mind Giddens's (1991) description of "reflexive modernism" it takes cognisance of the idea that contemporary society offers many choices for both personal and social identity. As opposed to notions of fixed identities one finds a multiplicity of texts, representations and trans-group affiliations. Identity is also a construction that operates on a number of personal and social levels, and which are all contingent on, and mediated by, the contexts in which they are situated. A key to understanding these operations can be found in the narratives and discourses individuals employ to describe *the self* in relations to *others*. As identities are socially constructed, they incorporate ideas individuals hold about themselves, about others whom they perceive to share this identity, and, consequently, as those who stand outside this boundary. An identity is therefore equally self-constructed as it is imposed.

This supports Henri Tajfel's notion that identity involves "the individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups" (quoted in Abrams & Hogg 1990: 2). By extension of this idea, the said individual is simultaneously *not a part* of other groups and 'identity' is therefore constructed on the notion of 'otherness.' To incorporate this notion, along with the idea of fluidity in identity constructions, this study will follow W. Connolly, who said,

An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognised. These differences are essential to its being. If

they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidarity....Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts differences into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty (1991: 64).

The Context of the Enquiry

That Paganism is a growing and visible movement in the West is indisputable, and its surfacing and development in South Africa is consistent with international trends. It is, as mentioned earlier, a diffuse and decentralised movement, and one that exists and grows through an informal network of groups and individuals. There are no spokespersons for the movement as a whole, no codified system of beliefs or practices and, as yet, no adequate quantification of the number of Pagans in South Africa, although I am currently making efforts to this end.

Religion and Religion Studies have, in the global context, undergone many changes under the past four decades. The secularisation of society that was a consequence of modernity's emphasis on the success of science as the root of knowledge, and on a neo-Enlightenment belief in the triumph of reason, led to what Berger et al. termed "a modern rationalization of consciousness" (1974: 82). Many scholars, (Berger 1974; 1981; Martin 1978; Wilson 1982; Steyn 1994 and Bruce 1996) have investigated the history and consequences of these changes to society and to the individual, and conclude that such developments be understood in the context of global economic, political and social change. Early studies of the secularization thesis have been criticised and revised with Bruce saying, "I see no reason why the shift from institutional religion to some amorphous supernaturalism should not be described as "secularization"" (1996: 59).

South Africa, during most of this season of change, was an apartheid state under National Party rule, and, largely due to the pariah status of South Africa in global terms, was influenced more by internal factors than by external trends and developments. Apartheid was a system that entrenched divisions in our society, not only on racial lines, but also on the economic, the social and the religious.

Christianity and colonialism had both been a part of the endeavour to bring 'civilization' to foreign shores, and Christianity was the means by which salvation would be brought to 'the savage Other'. Christianity was, and still remains, the dominant religious discourse in our society, and new Constitutional freedoms have not erased strong societal tendencies to equate the categories 'Christian' and 'non-Christian', with believer and non-believer, or, respectively, as those who stand inside or outside some kind of truth.

The secularised position of our post-1994 government, our new Constitution that has endorsed religious and gender rights and equalities, the return of South Africa to the global markets and the growth of the internet, have been factors that have facilitated the emergence of new religious discourses. Many of these challenge dominating and hegemonic ideologies and the hierarchical and patriarchal tendencies of the Semitic religions, in particular. Responses to these changes have ranged from a growth in conservative and more fundamentalist ideas to definite trends towards a greater accommodation of different religious ideas and practices. Structures of power in South Africa have changed irrevocably, and now are less tolerant of manifestly discriminatory practices. This is not necessarily an indicator that latent forms of discrimination are not still operative.

This trend cannot be divorced from global, postmodern tendencies in society, of which Paganism is not only reflective, but indeed encapsulates. It is a movement that must be viewed in the context of the global trend towards more inclusive perspectives. South Africans are involved in new and multiple searches for identity that reflect their transformed society and a globalised world.

Background to the Study

My first contact with Paganism in South Africa was in April 1997 when I was put in contact with a young woman who was a practitioner of Wicca, and the KwaZulu Natal representative of the PFSA. This meeting was as a result of a decision to undertake an exploratory study of Paganism in South Africa as part requirement for my Honours degree in religious studies. My interest had already been sparked by a short comment in Chrissie Steyn's 1994 study of the New Age Movement in South Africa entitled *Worldviews in Transition: an investigation into the New Age Movement in South Africa* wherein she predicted the surfacing of the movement in South Africa (1994: 78). My initial study provided an overview of the movement, and raised many more questions than it provided answers for. As I progressed in my studies to a Masters degree, I was already fairly well known in the rapidly developing Pagan community, and began my intention to provide a diachronic study of Paganism in South Africa. That dissertation was a furtherance of this intention, and one that raised many issues regarding a Pagan identity in South African society through a study of this identity in relation to the New Age Movement.

The lack of attention given to Paganism by South African scholars from all disciplines is in sharp contrast to international academic advances in the field. It remains

intensely under-researched, and whilst this has provided me with infinite possibilities for the direction of my studies, my studies have remained, by and large, a solitary endeavour, due to the lack of discussion with peers working in the same field as myself, and of other local studies against which I could measure my findings. Isolated cases of interest are, I hope, indications that this position will change in the years to come. This study takes an approach that requires a greater degree of reflexivity on my behalf towards the influences I bring to this work and the impact they have had on the execution of data collection. Researcher bias and/or subjectivity is unavoidable and I reject the positivist notion that research can be ‘value-free.’ There is a deeper discussion of this aspect of my research in chapter two.

Literature Review

Scholarship in the field of Pagan Studies has grown since the early nineteen nineties, and has itself undergone transitions through the attraction to the field of scholars from a variety of academic disciplines. Unique challenges to Pagan Studies are the multiplicity of forms found in modern Pagan traditions and the fact that a majority of studies have been undertaken by individuals who are both academics and Pagan practitioners. Griffin notes that, “Thus, from its inception, Pagan Studies has taken a unique approach to academic inquiry, weaving together both etic and emic perspectives and being profoundly interdisciplinary in nature” (2004: vii). The relevance of Pagan Studies in the broader field of Religion Studies was acknowledged when the discipline was accorded its own consultation in the American Academy of Religion (AAR) from 2005.

My own entrance into Pagan Studies was in late 1997; just over a year after the first public emergence of Paganism in South Africa. My initial overview of the Pagan movement in that Honours dissertation was extended in my Masters thesis that addressed the relationship and identity of Paganism in relation to the New Age Movement in South African society. This study highlighted the plethora of issues involved in the articulation of Pagan identities in a post-colonial, post-apartheid society, and an awareness that the articulation of a new religious identity, and of Paganism in particular, was an often contested and negotiated endeavour. This project is aimed at addressing those issues and seeks also to redress the shortfall in documented studies of modern Paganism in an African environment.

The identity studies that most informed this study were those of Henri Tajfel (1982) and Giddens (1991, 1997) due to their emphasis on the fluid and contingent nature of personal and social identity construction. The identity studies of Abebe Zegeye (2001) were useful in their grounding in the South African context and as a critique of the ideological motives behind historical constructions of identity in apartheid South Africa. The postmodern tendency towards the maintenance of multiple identities over a unified, centred self was explored through the writings of Lyotard, (1984) Baudrillard, (1998) and Castells (1997). Castell's discussions on "resistance identity" were valuable in relation to collective identity construction, particularly in marginalised groups. The breadth and focus of this study, and the multiple facets involved in the construction of a Pagan identity necessitated a literature review that encompassed the full range of Pagan scholarship to date, as well as the body of written work generated by South African Pagans since 1996. Pagan scholarship such as Harvey (1997), Pearson et al. (1998), Harvey and Hardman (1995) provided a

succinct introduction to the range and diversity both of modern Pagan traditions and of the multiple strands that have influenced the birth and development of the movement. Locating the movement in Nature-based spiritualities, these works also introduced the magical orientation of some Pagan traditions, looked at the development of traditions focussed more on the Pagan emphasis on the feminine divine, and initiated the questions and debates related to the history of ancient paganisms and modern revivals. They likewise sought to locate the contemporary Paganism of a post-modern, globalised world in relation to these histories. These issues have been developed in more specific work such as Ronald Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon* (1999) that is, to date, the most in-depth historical study of modern Pagan Witchcraft. The ongoing debates and contestations of this history, such as raised by Heselton (2000), have instigated further investigations and, in the process, shed light on the mythologies developed in the modern movement. An early work—and one that has received criticism for the role of researcher—was Tanya Luhrmann's *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (1989) that was the first study to look at ritual magic practice in Wicca and Witchcraft groups in England. The strong identity of Pagan paths with ritual and sympathetic magic was further developed by Greenwood (1996, 2000) and Lewis (ed.) (1996). Contributions to the Lewis publication underscored the diversity within Paganism in papers exploring the history and development of the many traditions that affirm the efficacy of magic and renewed the academic debate on the relationship between religion and magic. A greater understanding of how Pagans develop their identities in ritual space—as solitaries, in small groups or in community festivals—was found in Pike (2001) and Bado-Fralick (2005).

The many challenges presented to social science and religion scholars in the study of Paganism have been addressed in various panels at the annual Pagan Studies Conference that precedes the AAR conference each year. These, and other methodological issues, are addressed in *Researching Paganisms* (Blaine, J et al. (eds) 2004); a body of scholarship giving particular attention to the role of reflexivity and reactivity in Pagan research, and was an invaluable resource in enabling me to contextualize my own experiences as researcher in the field. A gamut of identity expression is facilitated by the internet and along with the immediacy of access to information it provides, has been a significant site for the construction and representation of Pagan identities and an important feature in the growth of the movement. The relevance of these features and the importance of the internet as a site for new community development and ritual practice are widely covered in Dawson and Cowan (2004) and Cowan (2005). Also of relevance to this study are studies that investigated the manifestation of Paganism in different societies and locations around the world. The studies of Paganism in Australia, (Hume 1997) in New Zealand, (Rountree 2004) in America, (Berger et al. 2003 and Clifton 2006) and in Britain, (Luhmann 1989; Harvey 1997; Pearson (ed.) 2002), while ratifying common features of Paganism, highlighted the gap in the study of Paganism in the South African context, and raised many questions on the articulation of this religious identity in our religious and social context. The academic study of Paganism has found expression online, namely through DISKUS and *The Pomegranate: the International Journal of Pagan Studies*, co-edited by Chas Clifton. The online discussion group Nature Religion Scholars Network (Natre), that is limited to academic dialogue in the field has been an invaluable source of information, particularly due to the lack of peer engagement in the field in South Africa.

An important source of information in identity studies is the literature and media forums where Pagans speak of themselves and of their experiences in modern society. The enormous growth in such literature, from introductory 'how-to' books, to works by established Pagan elders such as Crowley (1994, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c), Harrow (1999, 2003), Curott (2001), and Adler (1986), have provided useful insights into Pagan beliefs, practices and self-understanding. The only local work in this category is Vos's *Dancing under an African Moon* (2002); an uncritical but useful text that raises many of the issues faced by Pagans in South Africa and also allows certain local practitioners to provide their own histories and narratives. Other perspectives on local practices are provided in the numerous online Pagan magazines, particularly *Penton Pagan Magazine* and *Firefly*. Smaller magazines are circulated amongst specific groups, and some have been of more limited lifespan. Throughout this study, membership of numerous online Pagan groups has kept me abreast of the discourses and issues circulating in the local community, and of their many interests and concerns. Information on specific topics was elicited through my survey. Both Government and University libraries in South Africa stock little to no books by Pagan authors, nor any from the emerging body of academic investigation from a multiplicity of disciplines. This affirmed the correctives needed locally for material on this challenging and burgeoning religious orientation in South Africa.

Temporal Limits of the Study

This study has synchronic and diachronic dimensions, the former being the fact that the specific area of investigation of this study was undertaken within a circumscribed time period. The cross-sectional nature of the data collection and analysis was not uninfluenced by the diachronic, or longitudinal dimension of the study; namely, that I

have remained 'in the field', without interruption, since 1997. My personal and academic immersion in the Pagan world has increased considerably during this time, and my new data cannot be viewed in isolation from previous understandings that were gained in earlier stages of research.

Limitations of the Study

Whilst this dissertation is firmly located within the field of Religion Studies, it is exclusively concerned with the plural forms of contemporary Paganism that have developed since the 1970s, and, more specifically, in South Africa since 1996. It centres primarily on the dominant forms of Paganism in South Africa, namely those of Wicca and Witchcraft. Although this statement is suggestive of two distinct and independent traditions, it must be reiterated that, for many, the terms are used interchangeably, whilst others argue vociferously for their separation. Although I was very clear with regard to the boundaries of my focus, it must be noted that this at times was made complex by, a) the reality of a practiced form of witchcraft in indigenous societies in South Africa, and, b) the initiatives made by some Pagans to include African Religion under the label of 'Paganism'.

Research into Paganism is challenging on a number of fronts. Firstly, it is a new field of study in South Africa, and, I believe, is still one that is still to be recognised as an important and valuable area for academic investigation. Secondly, the community itself is diverse, segmented and without any one spokesperson for the movement as a whole. Codes of secrecy in some groups, solitary practice and fear of discrimination often have made contacts difficult. Coupled with this, was the volatile nature of Pagan groups that at times made it arduous to move between individuals and groups

who were at odds with each other, whilst simultaneously assuring respondents that my research stood outside of any such issues, and that I was not, nor could I become , personally involved.

Layout of the Study

Chapter One includes an introduction to the study, and statements of the problem, the guiding definition of religion, a clarification of key concepts, the context of the enquiry and background to the study, a literature review and the layout to the study.

Chapter Two provides details of the theoretical orientation and methodology of the study, as well as the practical methodology employed. This includes an overview of the data collection, questionnaires, interviews, participant observation, and of my data analysis. A discussion of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a primary means of data analysis is included.

The balance of the study is divided into four sections. In recognition of the importance of the socio-historical context in the construction of identity, Section One covers two features of South African society that were important to the environment into which Paganism emerged. In this section Chapter Three gives insight into religion in South Africa prior to the emergence of Paganism in 1996. Issues discussed include colonialism, apartheid, Christian National Education, the growth of the African Initiated Churches and the overall ‘Christianization’ of South Africa prior to 1994. In Chapter Four Pagan identity is situated in relation to the New Age Movement due to its antecedence in South Africa and in order to isolate features of this relationship prior to the investigations of this project. Section Two contains two chapters that deal with the construction of personal Pagan identities. Chapter Five

isolates the features and processes involved in the individual self-identification as a Pagan, and Chapter Six, the importance and function of narrative and mythology in this construction. Section Three moves the investigation to the construction of collective identities, with Chapter Seven highlighting the Pagan definition of “community” as it is found in, and through, Nature. This chapter also questions the relationship between Paganism and African Religion on this basis. As Pagans have had no gatherings or initiatives to bring them together into a single community, the internet has mostly served this function. Pagans and the Internet, and the issues that raises for the definition of community, are the subject of Chapter Eight. Section Four takes the study beyond the Pagan community and examines the process of social identity construction. This process is not merely how one perceives the self and one’s community in society, but incorporates the way the movement is perceived from the outside. Chapter Nine provides an analysis of Pagan representation and participation in the media. Chapter Ten looks at Pagan encounters in South African society and particularly with its leading institutions. Throughout these chapters the primary discourses associated with the words ‘witch’ and ‘pagan’ in South Africa are explored, as well as the way in which these discourses operate as ‘systems of truth’, on what basis Pagan terms are contested, and the implications of this for the Pagan movement. Chapter Eleven is a presentation of the findings and conclusion of the study.

¹ For a fuller discussion of these sources see Hutton’s chapter entitled *The Roots of Modern Paganism* in Pearson, J (ed.) *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* Milton Keynes: Open University, 2002, pp 225-238.

² This has not been achieved in the South African census, although certain Pagan groups are lobbying to this end.

³ In *The Preface of Tractatus* Ludwig Wittgenstein made the point that the limits of our language are the limits of our world. He said that “language is a cage” which resists attempts to talk significantly about things outside of factual realities.

⁴ This quotation is taken from the introductory comments in the Overview Essay presented to the Nature and Religion Consultation at the Quinquennial Congress of the International Association of

History of Religion, Durban, South Africa, August 2000 by ERN editor Bron Taylor. This can be accessed on the website <http://www.religionandnature.com/overview.htm>.

⁵ Quoted in the paper entitled *Catherine Albanese on Religion in America* on the website <http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/mazur/courses/reli206/albanese.html>.

⁶ My first thesis on Paganism (1998) was part requirement for B.A.Hons degree and was entitled *An Exploratory Study of Paganism as a New Religious Movement in the South African context*. The second study (2000) was my M.A. thesis entitled *An investigation to develop a theory of Pagan identity in relation to the New Age Movement: an assessment of their historical foundations and the degrees of convergence in both movements in South African society today*.

⁷ The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature (ERN) is edited by Professor Bron Taylor.

⁸ Ibid: footnote 5.

⁹ This quote is found in Beyer's chapter *Globalisation and the Religion of Nature* in Pearson, Joanne, Roberts, Richard H, & Samuel, Geoffrey (eds.) *Nature Religion Today* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp 11-12.

¹⁰ For further discussion of this point see Marion Bowman's paper *Nature, the Natural and Pagan Identity* printed in DISKUS WebEdition Volume 6, 2000.

¹¹ These festivals, called Sabbats, are known as The Wheel of the Year. Marking times of seasonal transitions, the historical foundations of all eight festivals is still debated. For more on the Sabbats see Rabinovitch and Lewis (2002: 230-6).

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL METHODOLOGIES

THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY

The aims of this study require the application of different theories in the social sciences to different areas of investigation and/or explanation. The theoretical approach is, however, broadly situated in the Interpretative Social Science paradigm, but includes understandings of Critical Social Science and its later developments, and from contemporary identity theories.

Interpretative Social Science

The Interpretative Social Science paradigm is also referred to as the Qualitative Method, the history of which lies in the works of sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). Dilthey posited a difference between the natural sciences and the human sciences, and argued that the latter rest on “‘lived experiences’ (erlebnis), expression and understanding (verstehen)” (Wallace 2000: 6). Related to the field of hermeneutics, qualitative research is defined by Denzin and Lincoln as “multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (1994: 2).

Within this framework, life is seen as having no single *a priori* meaning, and social reality is therefore deemed as contingent on the individual’s interpretative perspectives and definitions. In other words, “...the social world is largely what

people perceive it to be” (Neuman 1997: 69). This perspective emphasises the cultural basis of meaning, and, in general, the interpretative approach is best described as,

The systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural setting in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds (ibid: 68)¹.

Critical Social Science

Besides the Interpretative approach, the study will take cognisance of ideas from Critical Social Science. This is driven by the aims of the study and the related need to address societal issues involved with dominance, stereotyping and negative discourse. Critical Theory originated in the Frankfurt School that was founded in Germany in the 1930’s and which initially represented a critique of capitalism, the overt commodification of every aspect of modern society, and of the hegemonic “role of ideology in integrating individuals into their existing social order” (Kellner nd: 1)². Scholars associated with the school include Theodore Adorno (1903–1969), Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) and later, Jurgen Habermas (1929-).

Critical Theory criticised positivism’s failure to give due attention to the social context, but likewise rejected what it considered as the overt subjectivity found in Interpretative Social Science. Nonetheless its value in this study lies in its insistence of the need for research to adopt a value position towards its subject, and in its definition of social science as being,

A critical process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves (Neuman 1997: 74).

Critical Theory, in its classic sense, was overtaken by later developments in the social sciences that had been brought about by what was termed as Postmodern Theory.

Postmodern Theory, articulated by scholars such as Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Baudrillard (1929-), Lyotard (1924–1998), and, in a certain sense, by Michel Foucault (1926–1984), essentially espoused the view that humanity must move beyond the hegemonic discourses of modernism. Exponents of this transition argued that globalization, advanced media and information technologies and changes in the socio-economic system of the world, had reduced the possibilities of stable and fixed identities and changed the nature of knowledge production and acquisition.

Individuals were seen as free to choose from a multitude of discourses and texts for the construction of their identities, and society reflected differentiation, pluralism and competing discourses.

Many scholars have cited the features and the ambiguities of a ‘postmodern condition’ and in doing so have raised a number of related issues. In his analysis of such features, Zygmunt Bauman also raises some negative impacts of the phenomenon when he says,

The most conspicuous features of the postmodern condition; institutionalized pluralism, variety, contingency and ambivalence – have all been turned out by modern society in ever-increasing volumes; yet they were seen as signs of failure rather than success, as evidence of the insufficiency of efforts so far, at

a time when the institutions of modernity, faithfully replicated by the modern mentality, struggled for *universality, homogeneity and clarity* (1992: 187).

Postmodern social theory would examine the world from a multitude of perspectives, none of which would be superior to another. Ben Agger, in his paper *Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: their sociological relevance*³, states that,

Like poststructuralism, postmodernism is profoundly mistrustful of social sciences that conceal their own investment in a particular view of the world.

Like poststructuralism and critical theory, postmodernism rejects the possibility of presuppositionless representation, instead arguing that every knowledge is contextualised by its historical and cultural nature. At some level, a universal social science is judged impossible because peoples' and groups' different subject positions cannot be measured against each other (nd: 6-7).

Whilst this study is not grounded in postmodern theory *per se* it takes cognisance of its development from, and relation to, Critical Theory, and thereby supports Agger's summation that,

Social science becomes an accounting of social experience from these multiple perspectives of discourse/practice rather than a larger cumulative enterprise committed to the inference of general principles of social structure and organisation (ibid: 7).

A discussion of 'power' in contemporary theory

The hypothesis of this study is based on the assumption that there are mechanisms and processes in society that are involved in the marginalization of minority religions and worldviews. More specifically it is assumed that these processes have negative

implications on the development of Paganism and on its full participation in the religious arena in South Africa. This statement implies the existence of dominant structures in society and is suggestive of the need to investigate the relevance of the power they exert in the marginalisation of alternative and/or minority voices.

Foucault's analysis of power

Michel Foucault was an eclectic thinker whose thought has contributed greatly to postmodern social theory. He spoke of discourse as a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment, and which, by extension, is therefore seen to construct the topic and direct the way in which it is comprehended. That “knowledge” of the topic is inclined to acquire a sense of authority is, in fact, merely a “discursive formation sustaining a regime of truth” (Hall and Gieben 1992: 45).

Foucault rejected theories that were based on traditional notions of power as being monolithic and hierarchical, but argued rather that power was de-centralised in society, and that it operated less visibly through techniques rather than being ensured by right. Foucault conflated the terms ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’ and declared that this power/knowledge operates through language and is located in discourses. Truth and belief are both productions of power/knowledge. This analysis of power is relevant to this study as it diffuses power throughout society and requires investigation of techniques of ‘power over’ that are buried in networked relationships⁴. I hope to apply this analysis to uncover the “regime of truth” held on the terms ‘pagan’ and ‘witch’ in South Africa, or, in Foucault’s words, “the type of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true” (cited in Hall and Gieben (eds) 1992: 295).

Parker and Shotter (1990: 151) suggested that an analysis of power should be a part of all research as qualitative research alone is ineffective in providing a voice for dominated groups. They later add, “Rather it is the conceptual basis for the research which may be the starting point when considering empowerment and social research” (ibid: 151). A task in this research is to investigate the reasons why certain voices are not heard, and, “must provide a simultaneous analysis of those who are potential ‘bearers’ and why they do not hear” (ibid: 151).

Identity Theories

Identity studies have been given new impetus in a globalised, post-colonial, technological world. Within this milieu, personal, collective and social identities reflect the perspectival, fluid and contingent nature of meaning construction in contemporary societies. Calling this period “reflexive modernity” Giddens (1991) emphasises the importance of individual narratives in identity construction in late modernity, and how both individuals and societies are changed through processes of reflection as opposed to through the prescriptions of traditional customs and practices.

Giddens’s accent on the importance of human agency in the production of identities and meaning is consistent with Interpretative Social Science theory and provides a valuable theoretical direction in which to investigate the intense individualism in Paganism and its location in a postmodern, global environment. The three categories ascribed to identity construction by Manuel Castells each had bearing on aspect of this study. Giving emphasis to the overall structures in modern societies, Castells (1997: 10-12) distinguishes between, a) legitimating identities that are produced by dominant, hegemonic institutions and discourses, b) resistance identities that emerge

in marginalised groups, and c) project identity where individual agents redefine their identities in relation to their cultural context.

Taken from Talal Asad's criticisms of Orientalism, the term "Other" is widely used in postmodern social science studies, and is used to refer to those people who are perceived as different from the Self. In Asad's view methodology in the social sciences has been affected by difficult issues or criticisms that have collectively been labelled as 'post-modern' criticisms. Amongst these criticisms is the tendency to 'construct' peoples and the criticism of voice. Henri Tajfel, who developed the Social Identity Theory in 1979, situates identity construction *in* the individual when he defines it as, "the individual's knowledge that he or she belongs to certain social groups, together with some emotional or value significance to him or her of the group membership" (cited in Abrams and Hogg 1990: 2). Theories of the construction of the Other are proposed by Tajfel (1982)⁵ in his book *Social Identity Theory* which highlights stereotyping as a functional result of the societal tendency to develop 'in-groups' and 'out-groups.' He remarks on the tendency in identity formation to exaggerate the differences of those categorised as "Other", and to minimise the differences of those categorised as "Us." Stereotyping is a direct consequence, and the individual is now perceived in terms of the characteristics of the shared category, and not by their personal nature. I am aware that Pagan identity is surrounded by stereotypes and assumptions, and I hope to illuminate the sources and nature of these in this project. Pagan complicity in these phenomena will also be investigated.

The emphasis on 'power' in identity theories

The aforementioned discussions of theories of power and of identity are brought together by Sik Hung Ng, in the *The Social Psychology of Power* (1980: 179-205), that brought together theories of power and identity when he spoke of the power relations implicated in discrimination, stereotyping and construction of the 'Other.' He maintained that such practices can only occur in a social context which justifies and sustains discriminatory ideologies. He ratifies the Foucaultian notion that such power relationships are not fixed, but are rather fluid and constantly open to change as social conditions and understandings change. He says,

Outgroup discrimination is not a necessary outcome of social categorisation, but is contingent upon a pervasive inter-group power relation. In the presence of such a power relation, the magnitude of discrimination increases when the power advantage becomes decisive (1980: 204).

By social categorisations, Ng is referring to Tajfel's theory of inter-group relations wherein, he maintains, individuals simplify the world by categorising groups of persons into social categories based on our own experiences and determined by society. This theory, however, lacks consideration of the dimension of change due to changes in power relations.

In sociology, three overlapping, yet identifiable, aspects of identity have been isolated. They are as follows:

1. Personal identity which is self-defined.
2. Collective identity is a deliberately selected, shared identity which is voluntary and involves a sharing of cultural meanings and intent.

3. Social identity which is ascribed by others to the individual. This may be according to religion, lifestyle, or other social categories.

The focus in this study will be on all three of the above in order to ascertain how Pagans identity themselves, individually and collectively, how they perceive they are identified and how they are actually identified from outside the movement. Today's pluralistic society offers many choices for both personal and social identity, and frequently, as opposed to over-arching fixed identities, one finds a multiplicity of texts, representations and trans-group affiliations.

PRACTICAL METHODOLOGY

This is an empirical, qualitative study that will employ a triangulation of methods that are consistent with the theoretical approaches and with the twofold aim of study.

Data Collection

The collection of data for this study was best divided into three distinct phases.

Phase One

Data from written sources

This phase was ongoing during the course of this project and entailed the collection of data that reflected 'already-constructed' views of Paganism. The media and the internet received particular attention in my data collection, as my previous research emphasised that understandings of the social world are mediated by discourses in the form of newspapers, film, television programmes and magazines etc. Media sources included newspapers, television, magazines and film; therefore warranting the need to include perspectives from Critical Media Studies. This discipline developed as early

methods of bringing attention to stereotypical and/or racist depictions of individuals and/or groups in the media, and is now an independent, multidisciplinary field of study. Paganism and Witchcraft have been well represented in the media in South Africa in a number of ways that firmly situate the media as a site of contestation of terms and meanings. Pieter J. Fourie and Beschara Karam, in their essay entitled *Representation: race, gender and sexual orientation* link “representation” and “stereotyping” when they say that one of the ways in which representation can be understood is by how the media represent people and groups (2001: 470). They add,

When we talk about how the media represents specific people and groups, especially groups, we are on the terrain of stereotyping. The question of stereotyping is of special importance in South Africa – a society known for its tension and conflict between different racial, ethnic and language groups (ibid: 470).

To this, I would add religious groups.

From 2002 I began a search in the archives of national and local newspapers for any articles pertaining to Paganism and Witchcraft and simultaneously collected copies of similar magazine articles. Both included material from a Pagan perspective, as well as from a multitude of sources outside the movement. The inclusion of instances where Pagans have also received a more favourable press in some magazine articles, newspapers and/or television slots, was important as I had no wish to begin from the premise that the only press that Paganism in South Africa received, was negative.

I managed to obtain copies of most of the television programmes in which Paganism has been the primary subject, or in which Pagans have participated. I also

familiarised myself with some of the American imported television programmes that are hugely successful in South Africa, and in which the witch is a central theme. These included *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Charmed* and *Angel*. The ‘Witch’ has also been popularised in many mainstream films and I ensured that I saw as many of these as possible to enhance my understanding of how the witch is constructed in popular culture. Radio interviews with Pagans and/or on Pagan related subjects were recorded for analysis.

The internet has become a central means of communication and networking among South African Pagans. There are now a number of Pagan groups that have their own website, offer online courses, disseminate news and/or newsletters, and also a growing number of Pagan online chat-groups. I have long subscribed to all the South African based newsletters, many online groups and have used these, as well as material from Pagan websites, as data for this study. The internet, however, was also found to be a site where terms are contested and meanings challenged, and over a period of time I was able to collect many internet articles from outside the Pagan movement that carried both favourable and unfavourable commentary and discussions. The sources of the articles varied from religious groups, political groups and academic sources, to private individuals.

Phase Two

Questionnaires and Interviews

Questionnaire

My questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was developed after careful consideration of the research question and of the data I was hoping to obtain. In order to widen the scope

of responses, a questionnaire that could be disseminated via email was designed, as well as a short explanatory document of my background, the aims of the questionnaire, in particular, and of the study, in general, and in which I invited participation in the study. This latter document I forwarded to the leaders of the larger public Pagan organisations and groups in South Africa, as well as distributed it at festivals and to Pagans who were already known to me. Many individuals kindly forwarded it to their own mailing lists, and, in a short period of time, I found that it had reached not only groups I was initially unaware of, but also South African Pagans who now lived in other parts of the world, or who were solitary practitioners. Questionnaires were forwarded to individuals who, as a result of this document, advised me that they would be willing to complete a questionnaire. Many were hand posted to individuals who did not have access to email.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire comprised of a total of 102 questions. In order to pre-organise the data for future analysis, the questionnaire was divided into four sections that each addressed a specific area under investigation. They are as follows;

Section One This section comprised of 25 questions that covered the respondent's personal details and background, their Pagan affiliation and also addressed the individual's understanding of the terms Pagan, Witch and Wicca, as well as the relationship between these terms.

Section Two This section was divided into 2 parts, with the first part comprising of 21 questions that primarily focused on Pagan ritual and on exoteric features of the movement. The second part had 18 questions that mostly investigated the individual's links within the South African Pagan community, their opinions on how this

community is articulating itself in South African society, and on their general perceptions of the development of Paganism, Pagan clergy and courses in South Africa.

Section Three This was the shortest section being only 15 questions that concentrated on various relationships of the individual in society, on their perceptions of how Paganism is understood in society, and on any real and/or perceived examples of discrimination as a result of their Pagan affiliation.

Section Four The final section comprised of 23 questions and asked the respondent to identify their perceptions of similarities and differences between Paganism and other religions in South Africa, with particular attention being given to African Traditional Religion and the New Age Movement. It also asked for opinions on the ‘uniqueness’ of South African Paganism in relation to the global movement, and for their opinion on the future role of Paganism in South Africa.

Although the questionnaire was fairly long it was designed to be saved as a Word document by each respondent, and could therefore be worked, on as time allowed, over a period of a few weeks. The response rate for questionnaires distributed this way was very high, and I found that even after the cut-off date I had stipulated for returns, many more were returned daily as the questionnaire was further circulated. The response rate of hand posted copies was, by contrast, very low. A total of two hundred returned surveys were selected for inclusion and analysis.

A useful guide in the design of the questionnaire was in Neuman’s chapter on survey research (1997: 227-244)⁶. Although most questions were open-ended to allow the respondent to express his/her thoughts freely, some closed questions were included

where I desired to make easier comparisons between the answers of different respondents. Neuman (ibid: 241), provides an extensive list of the advantages and disadvantages of open and closed questions, points which I found useful, even in the later analysis of the data.

Interviews

In order to overcome some of the problems embedded in the questionnaire, a number of interviews were conducted with members of the Pagan community. Many respondents of the questionnaire indicated that they would have preferred an interview as “there is so much more I wanted to say or explain”. All groups create, to a greater or lesser extent, their own language, rules and symbols; the meaning of which Elliot G. Mishler (1986) maintains is stripped of its natural social context during the interview process. He also advocates that the goal of the interviewer thus becomes one of the reconstruction of the missing context and consequently an intensely interpretative endeavour. The interviews were mainly conducted after the main body of questionnaires had been returned, so I was able to pre-identify the areas where the greater degree of further explanation was required. With Pagan respondents I used the questionnaire as a rough guide to the direction of the interview, but the interview allowed me the flexibility to add questions to some areas, omit others and probe for more detail where required.

In this respect, the interviews conformed with the Nonschedule Standardized Interview model that Richardson, Dohrenwend and Klein say, “...works with a list of the information required from each respondent” (cited in Denzin 1989: 105).

According to this model, the phrasing and order of the questions was adapted to each

specific respondent. Every attempt was made to approach responses from the respondent's perspective, and I allowed for flexibility in the sequence of questions being asked. When a respondent raised issues unsolicited by me, this became a topic for conversation and part of the coded information. Each respondent was, however, exposed to the same uniform areas of discussions and no restriction placed on where they wished to extend such areas. The interviews all took place at a setting designated by the respondent, and all were taped on a dictaphone so as to avoid constant note-taking. Permission to do so was always requested at the outset. All interviews were later fully transcribed to allow for future analysis, and all non-verbal cues, noted during the course of the interview, were included in the field-notes.

Nonstandardized interviews were held with various individuals who are outside of the Pagan community, but whose input was vital to the study. Each of these was conducted for a specific and unique purpose, and questions duly tailored to each individual's specific expertise and/or involvement. Topics for discussion were allowed to develop and, in many instances, there was an exchange of information as many questions were asked of my field of study. Both the questionnaire and the interviews were designed to attain an understanding of a) Pagan self-identity, b) how Pagans perceive they are identified, and c) how Paganism is identified by sources outside the movement. Complicity of Pagans in b) and c) above was of importance.

Phase Three

Participant Observation

Observation and participation within the Pagan community was maintained during the study and featured as an important part of the research design. Extensive field notes

were made of conversations and observations, all of which formed part of the data for analysis. Denzin says that “Participant observation is a commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing in their day-to-day experiences” (1989: 156). He formally defines it as “a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation and introspection” (ibid: 157-8).

My academic and personal engagement in the Pagan community has been ongoing since 1997 and has played a vital role in my data collection. It has included formal and informal encounters, attendance at workshops and open festivals, and at private, closed group workings. All subjects were aware of my role as researcher and relationships were developed to the point where I was frequently invited to participate in many events with no instigation on my part. As I became more well known at Pagan gatherings, I was most often included as a full participant, and accepted as confidant in many discussions. I had guaranteed anonymity to questionnaire respondents and found that this was particularly important due to the, often volatile, nature of Pagan groupings. An early ground rule that I would not discuss one individual or group with another was never compromised, and, I believe, was a reason why all but one group was more than willing to either include me, or be participants in my research⁷. The fact that this relationship often extended beyond my direct research goals, and that no clear boundaries could be drawn around my “leaving the field”, ratified my support for Harvey’s opinion that, ““Participant observation” is compromised by its dichotomizing of participation versus observation, and threatened by its temporal and spatial boundedness” (2004: 252). Whilst remaining cognisant of

traditional participant observation methodologies, my own experience and engagement contested the extreme dualism they implied⁸.

Field Notes

Additional data was generated from independent questions that I occasionally forwarded for opinion and/or clarification to specific Pagans with whom I had developed a strong relationship for dialogue. The many conversations that I had telephonically and in person also were an important source of information. The keeping of detailed field notes was essential, and was maintained throughout this course of investigation. These notes aimed for a full description, not only of spoken texts, but of every aspect involved in each encounter. These included notes on setting, number of individuals, gender, dress and ages of individuals, and notes on my own feelings and responses. In other words, they contextualised the data from Pagan observations and were made as soon as possible after leaving the research setting.

With bearing on both Pagan participation and observation and field notes, is Clifford Geertz's (1973) delineation of the terms "thin description" and "thick interpretation"⁹ to refer to a detailed and intensive reading of cultural sub-texts that allows for multiple interpretations. This emphasis on the recording of specific and even peripheral detail over a broad overview was adhered to, and this proved to be a valuable guide in my field research. Ensuring that my field notes gave a "thick description" of observations went some way towards overcoming the possibility that I might distort or misunderstand what I had seen and heard.

Data Analysis

This study produced a mass of data from many sources. To facilitate an effective and productive analysis of the data, it was necessary to divide the analysis into three sections, namely; a) all media-generated data and data from previously written texts, b) data from questionnaires and interviews, and c) data from participant observation and field notes. Each of these three areas was analysed independently prior to the integration, and, in some instances, a comparative analysis of results.

My primary method of analysis for all media generated data was to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in order to explain the nature of the discourses in terms of social interaction and social structure. A short discussion of CDA, and particularly its relationship with the media, is provided at this point.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The employment of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in this project was a necessary tool in the analysis of Section Four of this study, dealing as it does with data drawn from the media and from sites of discriminatory rhetoric on Paganism and Witchcraft in South African society. It is also a methodology that is integrally tied to the theoretical underpinnings of the study. CDA is a relatively new discipline that can be seen essentially as a contribution to the study of language “in use” (van Dijk 1985: 1)¹⁰. Traces of the discipline nonetheless can be found in the social critiques of the Frankfurt School, in the counter-culture of the 1960s and in the development of postmodern criticism such as feminist research, ethnocentrism and Western dominance (ibid: 1). Its later development in the 1970s gave attention to the ‘social context’ as the site of discourse, and how important in this context, were features such

as roles, power, gender, status etc. Its value in studies of discrimination and social attitudes was explored “as it became increasingly legitimate to ask questions about inequality, power and dominance in group relations and about the ways these are reproduced and legitimated by text and talk” (van Dijk nd: 1).

The “critical” positioning of discourse analysis was therefore always implicit in the term, even prior to the development of the subset known as CDA¹¹, that is defined by van Dijk as,

A type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus to understand, expose and ultimately to resist social inequality (1998: 1)¹².

For effective application and realisation of its aims, van Dijk (1998: 1-2) further asserts that CDA needs to satisfy a number of requirements. These are,

1. As is often the case for more marginal research traditions, CDA research has to be ‘better’ than other research in order to be accepted.
2. It focuses primarily on social problems and political issues rather than on current paradigms and fashions.
3. Empirically adequate CDA of social problems is usually *multidisciplinary*.
4. Rather than to merely *describe* discourse structures, it tries to *explain* them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure.

5. More specifically CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of *power* and *dominance* in society.

These points, I believe, ratify the utility of CDA in the study as well as the fact that CDA does not have a unitary theoretical framework, but can equally be applied from a variety of perspectives. The data generated in this study is mostly concerned with the meanings, either implied or understood by, the usage of certain words. Van Dijk (1998: 2) argues that a critical discourse analysis of such data would need to be cognisant of the way in which certain groups have the social power to influence and control the thoughts and actions of other groups in society. Power, in other words, and consistent with Foucaultian analysis, is diffuse in society, and may be accepted, resisted, complied with, or challenged by one group from another. This leads on to the obvious conclusion that “those groups who control most influential discourse also have more chances to control the minds and actions of others” (ibid: 3-4). In this context the intention was to unravel who controls the most influential discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft in South Africa and the direct influence of this on the construction of Pagan identity. It is important to note that, in my opinion, Paganism is not a fixed and stable entity, but is equally involved in challenges to, and construction of, the aforementioned discourses.

Stephen Riggins (1997: 4) notes that the usage of the term ‘Other’ approximates earlier usages by sociologists of the terms *deviant* and *outsider*, which implies that notions of inferiority and dominance are embedded in the term. Of relevance to this

study are the three dimensions of the relationship between Self and Other that Riggins says Todorov¹³ employed in his study of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. These are,

(a) *value judgements* (eg. The Other may be deemed good or bad, equal or inferior to the Self), (b) *Social distance* (the physical and psychological distance the Self maintains from the Other), and (c) *knowledge* (the extent to which the history and culture of the Other is known by the Self) (1997: 5).

The association between these three dimensions and negative/positive constructions of the terms ‘Pagan’ and ‘Witch’ will be important. Van Dijk talks of similar dimensions existing in the way in which Others are represented when he maintains that this is in terms of,

(a) socio-cultural differences, (b) deviation from dominant norms and values, and (c) violence and threat. Thus, cultural differences will be enhanced and magnified and similarities ignored or mitigated. The Others will be seen as violating precisely those norms and values that the dominant group finds important (1998: 9-10).

CDA and the media

Much of the data collected in phase one of this study was from the mass media, namely newspapers, magazines, television and film. In this regard the point made by Lemke (1995: 16) that it is habitual for people to say and do the same sort of things in the same way over and over again became pertinent. This highlighted the effects of sustained repetition in the power of certain discourses, and particularly in incidences of negative stereotyping. Shohat and Stan are cited in van Dijk (1998: 8) as saying that, “It is the continuity of this socio-cultural tradition of negative images about the Other that also partly explains the persistence of dominant patterns of representation

in contemporary discourse, media and film.” The mass media is a fertile ground for repetition which is indeed the core of stereotyping. A critical discourse analysis was applied to examples of representations of Paganism in the media—both written and visual—and examples were used to illustrate this point. A full analysis of the role of the media in the perpetuation of stereotypes and discriminatory practices is beyond the scope of this study, but their role in the aforementioned with respect to Paganism is of central significance and is covered in a dedicated chapter.

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) coined the phrase “the culture industry” in referring to the collective operations of the media, with Adorno specifically “representing it as an advertising machine for commodities” (Fereby 2002: 1)¹⁴. This development has added a complexity to constructions of identity through the plural and diverse options they afford. O’Donnell emphasises this fact by saying that individuals and groups are seen as, “constructing their identities from a vast and constantly replenished supply of media images and consumer products” (1997: 643). The mass media, or culture industry, was seen by Stuart Hall (1992: 63) as an arena where “reality” was not just reproduced, but which was complicit with its definition. Meanings are produced in the media, and, say Hall, for one meaning to be regularly produced, requires it to,

...win a kind of credibility, legitimacy or taken-for-grantedness for itself. That involved marginalizing, down-grading, or de-legitimizing certain alternative constructions (ibid: 63).

Emphasising the constructive use of language in social life, discourse analysis was an important tool in examining how, and what, language was used in relation to

Paganism, what meanings were implicit in such language, and how these were employed to operate as systems of truth.

Stages in data analysis

With each section of data worked on independently, the stages were as follows;

1. To organise the data into conceptual categories and to create themes and contexts. My research questions were used as a guide and each code/theme was checked to ensure that it was supported by qualitative data.
2. The coding of data, or ‘close examination of the data.’
 - a) After a reading of the data for emerging themes, initial codes were assigned.
 - b) The initial codes and themes were re-visited through a second reading of the data with a view to establishing more codes, and to investigate the interactions and processes that can be found in the various themes.
 - c) A third reading of the data ratified the codes selected, and hypotheses of the discourses used in the text were formulated. Support for these hypotheses was then sought in the overall data.
 - d) Every text was assumed to have a specific function to fulfil, and each was read keeping this function in mind. My noting, if possible, of the context in which the text was generated was important.
3. The final stage of analysis was to compare and contrast the different ways in which the various codes/themes appeared in the data, and to note the ideas and representations that could be associated with them. This enabled me to identify what associations were being established and to see where they were being contested.

As this study also focuses on stereotyping, discriminatory rhetoric and prejudice, such instances were sought and noted. To identify discriminatory rhetoric is to constantly ask questions about the social impact of the text, and particularly questions such as whose opinions are being voiced, and who is likely to benefit from such opinions being expressed. In summation, Teun van Dijk's following definition of a critical discourse analysis informs my approach.

Discourse analysis is...a mode of research and not a passing paradigm. By definition, it combines theory and practice. It is multidisciplinary and does not fear to explore everybody's backyard. Its practitioners know they sometimes get into trouble. Critical discourse analysis is difficult, theoretically, analytically and practically. At the same time, it is rich and challenging. It is real scholarship. It may make a difference (nd: 4-5)¹⁵.

Critical Discourse Analysis is, then, my chosen method of interpreting the various discourses associated with Paganism in South Africa, and is a form of qualitative analysis that recognises that perspectives, meanings and identities are embedded in the contexts within which they are constructed.

¹ See Neuman (1997: 67-73) for a more in-depth description and analysis of Interpretative Social Science. It must also be noted that "The interpretative approach is criticized for being too subjective, and too focused on the localized and micro-level setting" (ibid: 74).

² Kellner's paper *CriticalTheory Today: revisiting the classics* can be found on the website <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell10.htm>.

³ This can be accessed on the website <http://www.uta.edu/humour/illuminations/agger2.htm>.

⁴ See Steven Green's paper entitled *How can some of Foucault's ideas and perspectives be usefully applied to the study of mass media in society?* on the website <http://www.theory.org.uk/f-sa1.htm> where he gives a fuller description of Foucault's conceptions of the way power operates in society.

⁵ See Tajfel (1982: 7-18) for a more comprehensive discussion of this theory.

⁶ See chapter 10 in Neuman (1997) for a history of survey research, as well as a more detailed discussion of the many factors that have bearing on questionnaire design, distribution and ultimate success.

⁷ The leader of this group did, however, become a valuable contributor in the latter stages of the study.

⁸ Harvey's (2004: 242) proposal of "guesthood" research suggests alternative approaches to engaging in social research and for the role of researcher. Many of the contributors to *Researching Paganisms* Blaine, J et al. 2004 address the challenges in the role of the researcher in the field of Pagan studies.

⁹ See Denzin (1989: 159-160) for further details and also Bennett, C *In Search of the Sacred: anthropology and the study of religions* London: Cassell, 1996: pp 37-39 wherein he notes that what Geertz meant by “thin” and “thick” descriptions is the difference between describing “a wink”, and describing what meanings lie behind the act itself.

¹⁰ Teun van Dijk’s paper *Editorial: Discourse Analysis with a Cause* appeared in Volume 2 (1) of *The Semiotic Review of Books* that can be found on the website <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb/srb/2-1edit.html>.

¹¹ Van Dijk, in the paper mentioned in footnote 10, notes that the roots of CDA lie in the 1980s development of a critical linguistics. It was this merger with similar approaches in social semiotics and pragmatics that resulted in putting critical, socio-political, socio-cultural issues on the agenda.

¹² This quotation can be found in van Dijk’s paper entitled *Critical Discourse Analysis* that was printed as a second draft in January 1998 on the website <http://www.hum.uva.nl/~teun/eda.htm>. He herein mentions that the paper was scheduled to appear in the book *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* by Deborah Tannen, Deborah Schiffrin and Heidi Hamilton (eds) that is still in preparation.

¹³ For these dimensions Riggins is citing Todorov, T *The conquest of America* New York: Harper, 1982, p185.

¹⁴ Taken from the paper by Andrew Fereday entitled *Are the Neo-Pagans Merely Another Branch of the Culture Industry Provoked by the Postmodern Condition?* 2002-08-29 on the website http://www.lillyweb.btinternet.co.uk/witchwords/academic_af_neo=paganism.htm.

¹⁵ Ibid: footnote 10.

SECTION ONE

A BACKGROUND TO THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

The theoretical methodology of this study highlights the need for emphasis on the historical and social context in which identities are constructed and represented. Societies are transformed through their ability to respond to and accommodate the introduction of new ideas and worldviews. The latter in turn reflect the adjustments required for their clear articulation in the social context in which they are being presented. Colonisation, missionary activity and the four decades of National Party leadership in South Africa led to the establishment of Christianity as the dominant religion in the country, and, as a result, the birth of new forms of indigenous Christian expression. For over a decade prior to political transformation in South Africa, the country faced social upheaval and political violence and schisms as it moved towards a democracy that could take its place in global, political, social and economic spheres. This process initiated profound questioning of the foundations on which South African society had been constructed, with attendant insecurities and uncertainties in all sectors of society. During this period of transition, the essential features of healing and transformation found in the New Age Movement gained many adherents who took its ideas and language into diverse sectors of the community. Essentially an alternative worldview to the predominantly Christian mainstream, the New Age Movement laid an important foundation on which the emergent Pagan movement could begin to articulate its own alternative and yet essentially different, religious identity. The fact that identities are constructed and articulated in a social context makes both the process of the Christianization of South Africa and the antecedence of the New Age Movement in society vital contextual aspects in investigating the process of identity construction in the nascent Pagan community in South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

A BACKGROUND TO THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF SOUTH AFRICA

PRIOR TO 1994

The visible emergence of the Pagan movement in South Africa precedes the formation of the PFSA. It is difficult, however, to ascertain the very first Pagan activity in South Africa but certain individuals do attest to being involved in Pagan practices since the 1980s. International traditions and publications afforded some individuals contact with what were already thriving communities in Britain and America, and these ideas were being disseminated in the country many years prior to the establishment of the PFSA in June 1996. The formal establishment of this organisation was directly related to the religious freedoms afforded by the new Constitution. Change, however, is a process, and changes in the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of a society do not necessarily accompany legislative change, but continue to carry the influences of the previous status quo.

No movements develop in a vacuum, and to gain any real understanding of the factors involved in the contestation of a Pagan identity in South Africa, it is essential to provide a background to the social climate into which this movement was born. In order to do so, I have identified four developments in South African society that I believe are pertinent to enhance an understanding of the Pagan movement that has grown so considerably in South Africa over the past decade. What is important to this study is that each has, in the past, and continues to, play some role in the contested nature of the central terms and concerns of the Pagan movement.

1. The ‘Christianization’ of South Africa, particularly since the later nineteenth century. The roots of the Christianization of South Africa lie in the colonization in the seventeenth century, but it is events in the twentieth century that most affected religious demographics in the country.
2.
 - a) The development and growth of the African Initiated Churches.
 - b) Witchcraft discourses in the African Christian context and in indigenous communities.
3. Modernity and the secularisation of South African society.
4. The growth of the New Age Movement in South Africa since the 1980s.

The boundaries of these developments are blurred and there is a network of connections between them, many of which lie beyond the scope of this study.

South Africa’s pluralistic society remains in the process of addressing apartheid’s legacy of labels and categories that divided its population through the second half of the twentieth century. The seeds of this system were sown during the colonial years; the consequences of which are visible in the complexities surrounding identity issues in the new South Africa. The features of this history that are pertinent to this investigation are discussed below.

The ‘Christianization’ of South African society from the late nineteenth century

The category ‘religion’ is a Western construct and is itself a problematic one. What can be included in the category has changed alongside economic and political changes and has also been changed by exposure to religions other than Christianity through colonialism and associated missionary activity. Pratap Kumar points out that Hanna Adams was perhaps the first to write on the subject of world religions ‘impartially’,

but whose work “also suffered from the same hierarchy that the intellectuals of the eighteenth century provided” (1995: 45-6)¹. To illustrate this point further, Kumar quotes Thomas A. Tweed’s comments on Adam’s work as follows,

...until approximately the second quarter of the nineteenth century the religious world still was populated by Christians, Jews, Muslims and ‘Pagans’ or ‘Heathens’.For Adams and most of her contemporaries, the final category ‘Heathens’ or ‘Pagans’, included an extremely wide range of groups and peoples. In the entry under ‘Pagans’ in her Dictionary for instance, Adams listed four subgroups of those who stand outside the traditions of the monotheistic West. The first two included the religions of various ancient people (Greeks, and Romans as well as ‘Chaldeans, Phoenicians, and Sabians, etc...’). Next came major Asian religions (‘the Chinese, Hindoos, Japanese, etc.’). Finally Adams listed the religions of the non-literate peoples (the ‘barbarians’ of Americas, the South Seas and Africa) (ibid: 6).

Hanna Adams’s four broad pagan subgroups crossed geographic and temporal boundaries, but firmly positions Paganism as a category of religion(s) outside of the Abrahamic traditions. David Chidester mentions that in the late nineteenth century, when F. Max Muller delivered his introductory lectures on comparative religion, the number of major religions had expanded to eight. These he noted as being Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, and Taoism (nd: 3). This reflected the tendency to include, in the term, the plurality of traditions with which Christianity had made contact. The intellectual climate of the nineteenth century imbued the developing study of world religions with meanings that began with the premis that Christianity was the most advanced form of human

religious development. Through missionary activity and colonization, this hierarchical categorization infiltrated the third world.

Religious development in South Africa from the late nineteenth century

Although missionary activity in South Africa was highly advanced by the late nineteenth century it was the entrenchment of Christianity as a state religion by the National Party—who came to power in 1948—that instigated important developments in the status of religion in society. During the apartheid years there was no separation between church and state. Nationalist rule (1948-1992) was based on a form of Calvinistic Christianity that pervaded all of society's institutions, particularly those of education, law enforcement and social welfare. It was, however, through education, that the religious demographics of South Africa were to change substantially in the twentieth century. Richard Elphick, in the introductory chapter in *Christianity in South Africa: a political, social and cultural history* says,

Because Christians have been so numerous and so politically influential, Christian doctrine, language, and sentiment are all so interwoven in the social and cultural history of South Africa (1997: 1).

The Union of South Africa became a member of the United Nations in 1945, and, in 1961, declared its independence from Great Britain. Under the apartheid system of the Nationalist government a Calvinistic form of Christianity was privileged in all social, economic, political and educational facets of South African society, as well as in the national media. Under this situation of 'Christian privilege' in South Africa, other established religions in South Africa were not accorded equal status, nor the associated benefits of religious liberties and opportunities for valid articulation and/or

expression. Foundations for this 'privileged' position had been laid in the colonial interpretations of what indeed could be termed 'religion'. These interpretations had the consequence of what David Chidester called "the denial of religion"² (1996: 92) for all religions that fell outside of Christian traditions. African indigenous religious forms had fallen victim to the colonial propensity to distinguish between religion and 'superstition', and by which distinction it was relegated to the latter category.

"Practicing a kind of comparative religion, these European observers acknowledged the existence of religious diversity in the world, but they denied the existence of any religion at all in this region" (ibid: 92). This conception of indigenous persons as having 'no religion' was to have widespread economic and social consequences.

Chidester argues that,

Denial of religion, I would argue, was a strategic intervention in local conflicts over land, trade, and labour relations, configuring a discourse about others as animals with no rights to land, as irrational as they failed to appreciate the value of trade goods, and as lazy savages, resistant to being incorporated as labourers, because they lacked the industry that supposedly came with religion (ibid: 92).

Where indigenous people were viewed as having 'no religion', other forms of religiosity were designated labels that hinted at 'recognition', but were latently accepted as also meaning 'no religion at all'. One example is that, despite tacit acceptance of Hinduism as a world religion, it was frequently designated as a 'pagan' religion by virtue of its polytheism and 'idolatry'. A 'pagan' in South Africa was broadly understood as 'not Christian', an 'unbeliever', in other words as having no religion, or as an individual who was not a follower of the 'true' religion. The fact

that it is not unusual for the label of ‘pagan’ or ‘heathen’ to be applied to, for example, even Hinduism today, will be discussed in more detail further in this study.

During the apartheid years, although South Africa was not officially a Christian state, the ruling party legally embedded the advantaged status of Christianity in most areas of the Constitution. A direct consequence of racial segregation in South African society was segregation in the religious, political, social and educational spheres of life. The fact that the apartheid system was as much aimed at racial and social segregation as it was at the promotion of Calvinistic Christianity, can be evidenced in excerpts from a letter³ written on the 12th February, 1954, by then Prime Minister D.F. Malan to Reverend John Piersma of the Oakdale Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Although the purpose of the letter was to clarify the relationship between Christianity and apartheid, it also is a clear indicator of the denial that indigenous persons indeed had a religion at all. In this letter Malan states that, “...Apartheid is based on what the Afrikaner believes to be his divine calling and his privilege to convert the heathen to Christianity without obliterating his national identity.” Malan then provides a series of statements in an attempt to clarify the Dutch Reformed Churches’ position on the envisaged racial segregation policy. Below are certain points taken from some of these statements.

- Missionary work has been practiced in this country from early beginnings as being the Christian duty of the Settlers to the heathen. Only afterwards were the principles formulated which govern the racial policy of the state and of the established churches here.
- The Church believes that God in His wisdom so disposed it that the first White men and women who settled at the foot of the Black Continent were profoundly

religious people, imbued with a very real zeal to bring the light of the gospel to the heathen nations of Africa.

- The Bible is accepted as being the Word of God and the Dutch Reformed Church accepts the authority of Holy Writ as normative for all the political, social, cultural and religious activities in which man indulges. The Church acknowledges the basic rights of the state as a particular divine institution to regulate the lives and actions of its citizens.

The privileged status of Christianity from the time Malan's letter was written, has changed form through the political changes of the nineteen eighties and early nineties. Despite this, much of this study will address the way in which its position of primacy has not dissipated with the change in dispensation, but has rather been entrenched by other factors. Some of these preceded the apartheid years.

Education in South Africa in the apartheid years

It was in the field of education through the twentieth century that Christianity was to exert a powerful influence over the values, attitudes and consciousness of the South African population. It also was the primary means by which racial, religious and cultural identities were constructed and reinforced in society.

According to Johann Kinghorn (1997: 135-154), an independent theological school had been established in Burgersdorp before the end of the nineteenth century, and which later became the Potchefstroom University of Christian Higher Education. In the early years of the twentieth century, in terms of rapidly emerging Afrikaner Calvinistic theology, Christian education was seen as,

...the study of all the sciences based on the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, the creator and maintainer of all things. This perspective was deemed necessary in view of the perceived ungodly challenge of “humanism” to the sovereignty of God, the root of eighteenth-and nineteenth- century disorders such as the French Revolution, Darwin’s evolutionary theory, campaigns for human rights, and so on (Kinghorn 1997: 136)⁴.

Tension between this view and the ‘humanistic’ ideas of the British that were presented in some Transvaal schools after the Anglo-Boer War⁵ were to result in the 1902 Commission for Christian National Education⁶ (hitherto referred to as CNE). The meanings that underpinned the agenda of this commission were to last through the twentieth century. The most salient of these was, as Kinghorn further adds, “The title “national” was significant, implying that humanist ideas were by definition alien” (ibid: 137). The privileged status of Christian education in South Africa was to be a reality for the next 92 years.

Mission schools

Missionary activity in South Africa was undertaken in the nineteenth century by most churches representing the diverse immigrant population to the colony. These included Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist and others, all of whom established mission schools that focused on one or another of the indigenous communities in the colony.

Towards the close of the century, mission schools were prolific in rural areas, and alongside teachings of Christian universalism, provided training in new agricultural technologies, ideas of democracy, and colonial systems of values and attitudes. By

1911 when the government census revealed that more than a quarter of the African population was Christian, most of these had received their education in a mission school (Kinghorn 1997: 156). Although the three hundred Christian National schools were closed by 1907 as funding from the Netherlands was depleted, the quest for Christian Higher Education was once more invigorated in 1918 at a church conference in Pretoria (ibid: 137). Kept alive by church initiated parent bodies for the next thirty years, it was in 1948 when the National Party came to power that,

Christian Nationalism became the official education policy for South Africa, implemented, particularly, in the Bantu⁷ Education Act of 1953 that introduced into black schools, as in white schools, compulsory religious instruction (that is, Christian, Reformed, evangelization) at all levels (ibid: 137).

CNE was implemented by the South African National Party in 1948 as a means of justifying apartheid ideology. This was a system of segregation that advocated separate educational facilities for different racial groups, whilst simultaneously appealing to exclusivist Calvinistic theology for support. In ‘white’ schools, Religious Education was a compulsory module for all students and was singularly reserved for the teaching of Christianity. Education in the ‘non-White’ population was spread between poorly subsidised, Christianised state education and mission schools that were partly state subsidised prior to the implementation, in 1953, of the Bantu Education Act. By this Act, subsidies were to be withdrawn, and mission schools were to be registered with government departments. The Act also introduced compulsory religious instruction of the Reformed⁸ tradition into ‘black’ as well as ‘white’ schools. A goal entrenched in the Act was that students were educated in accordance with Christian morals and values.

For Blacks in rural areas a mission school education had been, for many, the only education option available. The Bantu Act of 1953 not only entrenched CNE, but is regarded to have had other implications, namely its role in the secularisation of South Africa. The essential point, however, is that there was "...a massive growth of Christian adherence among Africans in the twentieth century" (Elphick 1997: 7). The education system was one of the primary factors in this growth. The system that had been designed to further Christian education in all of the diverse sectors of the population was later, however, to be the site of retaliation and violence in the 1970s⁹. It was from within education that a strong resistance movement to apartheid was born, and for which the slogan 'Liberation before Education' embraced a far wider appeal for change.

In 1994, the newly appointed government of the African National Congress adopted a constitution that endorsed fundamental human rights, including freedom of religion. According to Section 14 (1) of the Bill of Rights, as it related to freedom of religion, it states that,

1. Every person shall have the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion, which shall include academic freedom in institutions of higher learning.
2. Without derogating from the generality of subsection (1), religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions under rules established by an appropriate authority for that purpose, provided that such religious observances are conducted on an equitable basis and attendance at them is free and voluntary.

The position taken by the African National Congress, whilst remaining non-negotiable on religious equity, has nonetheless undergone numerous revisions over the past ten years. The religious population of South Africa is more Christian than it was a century ago, and it is mostly from some Christian sectors of South African community that calls for a single faith approach to teaching religion in schools are still heard.

Over and above the long-lasting implications of CNE, there was another development from early in the twentieth century that contributed to a massive conversion to Christianity amongst the indigenous population. This was the growth of the African Initiated Churches.

The Development and Growth of the African Initiated Churches.

Alongside the influence of mainstream churches was the rapid growth of the African Initiated Churches¹⁰, hitherto referred to as the AICs. These churches—that were a response to the growing urbanisation and secularisation in society—were a syncretism of Christianity and African indigenous beliefs and practices.

Numbering well in the thousands, these churches can be broadly divided into 4 categories, namely, the Ethiopian, the Millenarian, the Shembe or Nazarite, and the Zionist¹¹. These categories, or typologies, are not static, but, as Pretorius and Jafta state, "...should be regarded as archetypal categories, for they can scarcely deal fairly with changing historical factors in a complex context" (1997: 212). A brief overview of these churches is provided.

1. Ethiopian Churches This grouping was an African initiative in the establishment of ethnic churches that based themselves on the Thembu National

Church that was founded around 1880, by Nehemiah Tile. Church leaders were Christians who highlighted discrepancies between the teachings of the Christian missionaries and their actual practices.

2. The Millenarian/Apostolic Churches These churches developed out of the influences of American Baptist and Pentecostal movements that had entered South Africa early in the twentieth century. One of the most influential was the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church of Zion (CCACZ), founded in 1896 by faith healer John Alexander Dowie. Elevating the power of the Holy Spirit over any political order or mission school teachings, they were African initiatives that referred back to 'original' Christianity whilst anticipating the imminent return of Christ.

3. The Shembe/Nazarite Churches In 1911 Zulu prophet and healer Isaiah Shembe, started the Church of the Nazarites. These churches gave emphasis to spiritual healing and denounced the taking of any 'traditional' or modern medicines. Shembe churches used Old Testament prohibitions and espoused an almost Calvinistic work ethic.

4. The Zionist Churches The Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) was founded around 1910 by Ignatius Lekganyane, and is today, the largest indigenous church grouping in South Africa. In 1925 the membership was approximately 1000; this increased to 30,000 in 1945, and to a recorded figure of 4,971,931 in the 2001 census, making it the largest of the indigenous churches in the country. Also employing Old Testament prohibitions, the Zionists were conservative, advocated the avoidance of secular politics and a commitment to spiritual healing and purity.

Whilst all the AICs facilitated the preaching and practice of the Christian gospel, while retaining many of the practices and beliefs of African Religion, it was in the

Zionist Churches that the most obvious syncretisms could be found. Many ZCC members were found among the poorest sectors of African society and those most affected by Nationalist policies of segregation. Despite the fact that accurate figures are difficult to ascertain, Pretorius and Jafta offer the following statement.

An indigenous contribution to Christianity in South Africa, these diverse churches by 1991 embraced at least 9.2 million people and 47 per cent of all black Christians, up from 40 per cent in 1980, a dramatic increase compared to all other religious groups. More people in South Africa belong to African Initiated Churches (AICs) than to churches originating in European and American missions (1997: 211).

Highest estimates put the total figure in the AICs at well over twelve million today. The African Initiated Churches were a challenge to mission schools in that they undermined the influence of the missions, whilst invigorating a new and independent form of African Christianity.

Pentecostalism¹², a movement that had begun within Protestantism, and which highlighted the belief that all Christians should seek a post-conversionary religious experience, the importance of the action of the Holy Spirit through baptism, and the speaking in tongues, was simultaneously becoming a fourth major strand of religion alongside the orthodox traditions of Catholicism and Protestantism. Drawing initially on “the disenfranchised black people and the poor-white Afrikaners reeling from the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War” (Anderson and Pillay 1997: 230), Pentecostalism had an enormous influence on the AICs, to the point where, “In 1991 Pentecostals and members of African Initiated Churches with affinities to Pentecostalism

accounted for more than 40 per cent of the South African black population”

(ibid: 227). In the same paragraph they add,

This amazing growth is the result partly of the ability of Pentecostalism to adapt itself to specific cultural contexts; partly of the enthusiasm, spontaneity and spirituality of Pentecostalism; and partly of its ability to address core problems of South Africa: ill-health, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, sorcery, and spirit possession. The growth of these churches is much more rapid than, and often at the expense of, the older churches.

Whilst the mission schools had laid the basis, through Christian education, for the conversion of the African to Christianity, and the education policy implemented by the future apartheid government was to ratify this process, Elphick maintains that it was the African Pentecostals who,

...continued to be the key agents of Christianization in the twentieth century, most obviously in the AICs, which grew from almost nothing in 1980 to embrace somewhere between a third and a half of the Africans of South Africa by the 1990s (1997: 7).

Witchcraft discourses in the African Christian context and in indigenous communities

The AICs had a decidedly more ‘this-worldly’ emphasis than that of the mission and mainstream churches, and addressed the realities of the social, political and religious change in the lives of their members. The sources of harm and evil, traditionally identified as ancestral wrath or witchcraft, were cast into a dualistic framework against the supreme source of ‘good’, identified as the Holy Spirit. Witches were

recognised as the primary source of evil and anti-witch rhetoric became a vital part of sermons in the AICs.

Isak Niehaus quotes Kiernan as saying that, “In the dualistic Christian worldview witchcraft was seen as the most basic source of affliction” (2001: 40). He adds that although the mission churches discouraged a belief in witchcraft, this stance was far less influential than that of the Zionist churches that “actively perpetuated witchcraft beliefs. In their everyday lives nearly all Christians, even the members of mission churches, acknowledge the existence of witches” (ibid: 40).

Under the apartheid government, various steps were undertaken to regulate against witchcraft beliefs. The Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) of 1957, amended by Act 50 of 1970, (see Appendix 2) was formulated on British anti-witchcraft laws that were clear in their denial of witchcraft. This was evident in the way the Act renders it an offence to accuse a person of practicing as a witch, and to *pretend* to use supernatural powers, witchcraft, sorcery, conjurations, and even fortune-telling. It also makes it illegal to solicit or employ a ‘witchdoctor’¹³, and provides no exclusion for traditional healers. This strange legislation is enormously criticised for fuelling witchcraft violence by its tone of denial that such practices even exist. The witch, the embodiment of evil and social ills, is an empirical reality in most African lives, and under this Act, the ‘victim’ has no real recourse or support from the State, a position that most often had disastrous consequences. As Niehaus explains,

Under apartheid official discourses about civilization, called for the suppression and elimination of superstitions, such as witchcraft. In practice, however, people’s experiences of proletarianisation, villagisation, Christianity,

and democratisation led to the proliferation of witchcraft accusations. Political authorities and apartheid courts were also far more tolerant of witchcraft beliefs and accusations than official discourses would lead one to believe (2001: 192).

The discussion on the implications for contemporary Paganism of the state denial of witchcraft will be raised in a later chapter. At this point it is just worth noting that the Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) has not been repealed by the present ANC government.

The denial of witchcraft was also evidenced in the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 that had changed the traditional role of the tribal chiefs in addressing witchcraft concerns in the communities, by disallowing them to involve themselves in any witchcraft related matters. The growth of the AICs way exceeded growth in mainstream churches over the following decades, and, unlike the denial of witchcraft from the latter, the indigenous churches incorporated recognition of magic and witchcraft in their teachings. This process had the dual implications of furthering the Christianization of the African population, combined with recognising and teaching the reality of the evils of witchcraft. The denial of witchcraft beliefs was a natural progression of the binary opposition of religion versus superstition, and of the worldview that saw Africans as being ‘non-religious.’ It also ratified the views of the later Enlightenment period that, in the light of new rationalistic ideas and the Scientific Revolution, saw witchcraft as superstition. After over a century of persecution that became known as the ‘witchcraft craze’ of the late Middle Ages¹⁴, the new worldview denied the possibility of magic, and, by extension, of witchcraft. It was a worldview that carried over into colonial legislation.

The growth of the AICs was perceived as a threat as they were a dangerous symbol of black independence. This view negatively affected official recognition for many of the rites of passage conducted within the AICs, and was reflected in the designation of, frequently derogatory, names to the independent church movement as a whole. Pretorius and Jafta say, “They have been called native, separatist, heretical, proselytic, quasi-Christian, millennial, magico-religious, neo-pagan, syncretistic, and cultic”¹⁵ (1997: 211). Of relevance to this study is the overtly African traditional orientation found in the AICs in comparison to that of the mainstream churches, and the influence that this has on the transformation of society in South Africa in the light of them representing, what Pretorius and Jafta say is,

...the largest and potentially the single most important religious group in South Africa, and, in spite of weaknesses and divisions, their vitality, their rootedness in the African traditions, and their capacity for innovation, will most likely have a decisive influence on the history of the church and society in the changing South Africa (ibid: 226).

The most unifying feature of the AICs is their healing practices that are implemented when an individual is negatively afflicted in a physical, emotional or social way. Steyn (nd: 5) acknowledges Oosthuizen as identifying two sources for such afflictions. One is that such an individual is recognised to have fallen under the influence of malicious external forces, or, the misfortune has arisen out of factors of the victim’s own doing. In the former, “malignant sorcery and witchcraft are often said to be involved” (ibid: 5). Within the AICs a discourse on the evil agency of

witches was kept alive, whilst simultaneously offering a protection against their destabilising and negative attacks through belief in the Holy Spirit.

Modernity and the Secularisation of South African Society.

A further feature of South African society that facilitated the advent of the Pagan movement, and which today plays an important role in its development and identity, is that of modernity and the advancing secularisation of South African society.

The secularisation of society's institutions, increases in technological production, urbanisation and pluralisation are all features of modernity. South African society, despite its international pariah status during the apartheid years, was not impervious to developments and changes in the West, where modernity had brought changes, not only to politics and economics, but to the forms and foundations of religious life. The Industrial Revolution and the subsequent technological advances of the twentieth century instigated processes that had far reaching consequences for society, and which were to influence traditional religion. In their book *The Homeless Mind: modernization and consciousness*, Berger and Kellner (1974) describe the process whereby human beings underwent a 'secularisation of consciousness'¹⁶. The segmented, or pluralistic, nature of modern life was to contribute to the condition of "homelessness" in the modern mind. Berger et al. describe it in the following way;

Modern man has suffered from a deepening condition of 'homelessness' ... what might be called a metaphysical loss of home. It goes without saying that this condition is psychologically hard to bear. It therefore engendered its own nostalgias ... nostalgias, that is, for a condition of 'being at home' in society, with oneself and, ultimately, in the universe (ibid: 82).

Technological advancement, increasing industrialization and the growth of cities in South Africa led to a marked growth in urbanization. This urbanization led to radical changes in traditional religious life, and raised awareness of religious pluralism and difference. Secularisation in South African society was, however, not accompanied by a decline in religiosity, but rather by a growth in new forms of religion and certain changes from mainstream traditions¹⁷. As diversity is a manifest feature of modern societies, individual modes of religious, social and cultural life, increasingly became a part of a person's private life. Through the recognition of a plurality of religions, this process nonetheless impacted directly on the construction of personal identity through a series of differences.

Labels and categories of difference lie in the history of South African society, and changes to the Constitution in 1994 has evidenced a modernist tendency to affirm pluralism whilst reinforcing the boundaries by which differences can, in fact, be identified. Currently, as in the past, recognition of diversity and difference give renewed impetus to the role of religion in South Africa. This it has achieved, in many and varied instances, as religion is utilised as a vehicle for negotiating geographic and social changes. Consistent with reaction and resistance to social changes and modernization were the growth in fundamentalism, evangelicalism, new instances of religious convergences, and the experimentation with new forms of religion (Steyn 1994: 9).

The implementation of CNE was, as previously mentioned, in many ways a resistance to humanistic, modernizing tendencies. An extreme example of the anti-modernizing trends was the 'charge of modernism', in 1930, against Stellenbosch theological

Professor Johannes du Plessis who attempted to reconcile biblical teachings with modern discoveries in science and with his interest in modern trends in theology (Kingham 1997: 137). His journal *Het Zoeklicht (The Searchlight)*, launched in 1923, initiated a dispute that resulted in du Plessis' expulsion from the seminary and involved leading Afrikaners in the NGK¹⁸. In the resultant Supreme Court case, du Plessis was accused of transgressing Christian doctrine. This he had done by,

...questioning, for example, Christ's omniscience during his earthly existence, as well as Moses' authorship of the first five books of the Bible, the infallibility of the Reformed confessions, and the divine inspiration of the Bible. They also challenged his acceptance of Darwin's concept of evolution (Kingham 1997: 138).

This episode highlighted the interference of the NGK in educational appointments and content, as well as their status from the mid 1930's as, "the intellectual bastion of resistance against modernization" (ibid: 138).

The apartheid policy of separate development and the episodes of resistance it garnered from various segments of the population initiated debates within the NGK, and highlighted schisms in church ideology. In 1982, and as a delayed response to the Soweto uprising of 1976, a revision of the churches' policy issues was instigated. This resulted in a 1990 signed document, about which Kinghorn says,

The discourse was no longer doctrinaire on socio-political issues. Concepts such as "modernism," "godless humanism," etc., disappeared altogether.

Peace with modernity had been made (1997: 150).

Kingham subsequently advises that, "In 1990 the NGK synod even adopted a resolution that modern dancing was, after all, not sinful" (ibid: 151). Anti-modernism

trends were nonetheless kept alive in fundamental, evangelical churches and in many of the AICs. They can be found today in parts of the home-schooling movement¹⁹ and have been seen to re-emerge from within the ranks of the NGK itself. In April 2003 Jan H. Nieder-Heitmann published a paper in *The International Review of Mission*, entitled *The Missionary Challenge of Christendom and Modernity in South Africa: a Dutch Reformed account*²⁰ in which he explores the idea, “that both culture and Christendom are in crisis in South Africa” (2003: 1) as a result of secularisation, the ‘modernist’ worldview, and the modernist liberalism of our constitution. His mode of resistance is clear in the following extract from his paper.

Only a small number of people in South Africa, through their exposure to western tertiary education, have been influenced by post-Enlightenment culture, and could be considered to have a thorough modernist worldview. Now, however, as a result of the freedom struggle, this culture is gaining dominance over all other worldviews. As Anthony Balcombe vividly portrays the new situation;

Sangomas (magical functionaries) open conferences for intellectuals, praise singers and enter parliament. Whites go to soccer matches, blacks to rugby matches, gays parade in the streets and born-again Christians take to the streets in protest at all this licentiousness. South Africa has suddenly become a liberal society. It is an extraordinary phenomenon. And it is unique in Africa.

In a highly pluralist society such as ours, the new uninhibited integration of various ethnic and cultural inflections is furthermore promoting pluralism as a worldview, with the concomitant subjectivism that is elsewhere associated with a postmodern condition (2003: 1).

Reactions to modernist trends in society ranges from the extreme, as the one above, to more latent examples that I hope to elucidate in this dissertation. Some further points on the secularisation of South African society over the past few decades are important.

The secularisation of South African society during the apartheid years

The heading of this section might appear to contain a contradiction, having just mentioned the widespread influence the apartheid government system had on the ‘Christian consciousness’ in South African society. Richard Elphick succinctly describes this contradiction when he says,

Secularisation in South Africa has sometimes been camouflaged. It is easy to forget that the massive system of apartheid, created by the state in cooperation with numerous expert elites, was in many respects a secularizing process, despite the government’s theoretical allegiance to the anti-secularizing ideology of Christian Nationalism. The most dramatic step in the secularization of South African society – the taking over of the mission schools in the wake of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 – was imposed on the churches by a government that proclaimed its Christian commitment (1997: 9).

The Social Gospel, “the belief that Christians were called to combat sins embedded in the structure of society” (Elphick 1997: 9), had also been adopted. The implications of this, was that Christian teachings turned their focus to the secular world²¹.

In South Africa where secularizing tendencies were less rapid than in other parts of the West, the adoption of the Social Gospel by certain members of the Christian churches, led to Christianity playing a prominent role in South African political, social and cultural life. Elphick further informs that “The Social Gospel also reached South Africa via a branch of the American “home missions” begun in the years after the Civil War” (1997: 354). Social Christianity, as it became known, began to lose ground to “secular organisations and secular modes of thought” (ibid: 364). He adds that the aforementioned Bantu Education Act of 1953 was, however, “arguably the most significant factor in the secularisation of South Africa” (ibid: 365). The importance of modernity and secularisation in this context lies in their role in the development of new religious movements that eschew dominant ideologies whilst embracing the centrality of the individual in the formation of his or her religious and philosophical worldview or spiritual orientation.

Conclusion

I have given consideration to certain features in South African history from the late nineteenth century that I maintain have been of vital influence on the construction of a Pagan identity in South Africa. These have included the Christianization of South African society during that period, particularly with regard to education; the growing modernity and secularism in South African society, and the incumbent reactions to the phenomenon. These, along with the growth of the AICs and the phenomenon of witchcraft violence in indigenous societies, have become primary sites of discourses on paganism and witchcraft. They are, importantly, also sites of contestation of these terms, and, as a result of these already-established discourses, are vital features in understanding the context in which modern Pagans endeavour to articulate their

identities. I have made no reference yet to the emergence of the New Age Movement in the 1980s in South Africa, the importance of this emergence for Paganism, nor to the frequent conflation of their identities in South Africa today. This is the subject of the next chapter.

¹ Kumar (1995: 45) notes that Hannah Adams had initially published her *Dictionary of All Religions* in 1784 but that further typologies of religion developed in the nineteenth century, tended to ignore her work as the conservative Protestant religious climate distanced itself from Adams's impartiality.

² For more on this point read *Scientology: a religion in South Africa* by David Chidester Los Angeles: Freedom Publishing, (nd) as well as his essay entitled *Gestures of dismissal, policies of containment: from denial to discovery in Southern African comparative religion* in de Gruchy, J W and Martin, S *Religion and the reconstruction of civil society* Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1995, pp 90-105.

³ This letter is quoted on the website <http://www.geocities.com/-anntohill/demo/religion.htm> under the heading Apartheid and Religion.

⁴ Here he is referring to Ferdinand Deist's *Wetenskapsteorie en Vakmetodologie in Bybelwetenskaplike Navorsing in Suid Afrika* Pretoria: HSRC, 1990 vol. 2, 63ff.

⁵ The first Anglo-Boer War was 1879-1881, and the second Anglo-Boer War was 1899-1902.

⁶ Johann Kinghorn states that this commission had widespread support even by twice Prime Minister of South Africa, General Jan Christiaan Smuts. This is interesting as Steyn (1994: 123-4) maintains that Smuts is one, of only two, individual precursors of the new Age Movement in South Africa.

Specifically, she states that, "In 1926 Smuts published his book *Holism and Evolution*, in which he postulated a creative unifying principle or force in nature that tends towards whole-making – the creation of ever more highly organised wholes. This principle is called 'holism'" (ibid: 124).

⁷ The word 'Bantu' was first used in the 1840s by Wilhelm Bleek, as a linguistic classification. It was later used to refer to all black Southern Africans.

⁸ "The Reformed tradition maintains and is often associated with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, or predestination" (Gerstner 1997: 17).

⁹ The 1976 Soweto riots began amongst pupils in Soweto as a protest against Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in black schools, and spread rapidly throughout the entire country.

¹⁰ Alongside the typology of African 'Initiated' Churches, these churches have also been known as African 'Indigenous' Churches and African 'Independent' Churches. Pretorius and Jafta in their chapter entitled *A Branch Springs Out: African Initiated Churches* say that "African Initiated Churches" is used to focus on the churches' distinctive African origins" (1997: 211). They cite Paul Makhubu as saying that, "An African Independent or Indigenous Church means a purely black-controlled denomination with no links in membership or administrative controls with any non-African church..." (ibid: 211-212).

¹¹ See Pretorius and Jafta (1997: 212) for a slightly different typology in which they attempt to distinguish between *spiritual* churches and *indigenous* churches.

¹² For more on the history of Pentecostalism and its development in South Africa see the chapter by Anderson and Pillay entitled *The Segregated Spirit: the Pentecostals* (1997: 227-252).

¹³ This is a colonial designation for indigenous sacred specialists who were employed by the community in the identification of, and protection from, witches and witchcraft.

¹⁴ For more on this see Russell (1980: 72-103) and Wallace (2000: 75-79).

¹⁵ In their footnote to this point, they refer to *Schism and Renewal in Africa* by David Barrett, London: Oxford University Press, 1968, pp 46-7 where they say, over 40 terms are listed.

¹⁶ Berger, P et al. (1974: 111-113) mention componentiality, maximalisation and bureaucracy as being some of the factors that were to result in this change of consciousness, and which they identify as being the primary carriers of social change. They refer to the pluralization of the modern world and the growth of the city as secondary carriers to this change.

¹⁷ This correlation is supported by Stark and Bainbridge (1985) who, in a challenge to the secularisation thesis, state that secularisation and modernity actually revitalize the religious milieu as new religious movements appear to counter them.

¹⁸ The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, or Dutch Reformed Church, was first established in the Cape in 1652 and spread to the northern interior from 1836 onwards.

¹⁹ The home-schooling movement in South Africa is (mostly) a conservative Christian movement that gained impetus in South Africa when the education system no longer recognised the primacy of Christian teaching in schools and when schools were no longer segregated on the basis of race.

²⁰ The html version of this paper can be found on

http://academic.sun.ac.za/buyton/Vennote/GOCN/Jan_Nieder_Heitmann_The%20missionary.doc.

²¹ For more on the discussion of the Social Gospel and its implications, see Elphick (1997: 347-369).

CHAPTER FOUR

PAGANISM AND THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

A background to the discussion

A complex relationship exists between Paganism and the New Age Movement. Both movements present problems in the search for adequate definition; both are broad descriptive terms that incorporate a diversity of systems of belief and practice, and are movements with no codified system of beliefs and/or practices. Neither movement has any single spokesperson who can speak for the movement as a whole. There are points of convergence in many of their central themes and conceptions, and a degree of overlap in certain ideas, language and technologies that are drawn on by both movements. This has resulted in many academic and lay assumptions of a ‘qualitative sameness’ that was initially recognized, but has, of late, been more widely contested. Such assumptions of ‘sameness’, however, have only in very few instances¹, been held by practicing Pagans.

When the PFSA was established in South Africa in June 1996, the New Age Movement had been making inroads into many sectors of society for almost one and a half decades. The antecedence of the New Age Movement in South Africa by so many years was unlike their almost contiguous development in the West. Whilst Wicca was a new religious development in the United Kingdom in the 1950s, both the New Age Movement and the broader movement of Paganism developed in the 1970s², both exhibiting—with varying degrees of influence and emphasis—reactions to the secularising tendencies of late modernity, ideas from the 1960s counter-culture, such

as feminism and the ecological crisis, and renewed interest in Western esotericism and/or the occult sciences. Such congruencies resulted in them being identified as having the ‘qualitative sameness’ to which I have referred. The emergence of Paganism in South Africa was, without doubt, delayed as a result of the lack of religious tolerance afforded by the previous government, and the movements’ embracing of the terms ‘Witch’, ‘Pagan’ and ‘Witchcraft’.

The first academic study of the New Age Movement in South Africa was undertaken by Chrissie Steyn, and was published in 1994. Although this study was therefore without the benefit of either empirical material on Paganism in South Africa, or of the vast increase in the following years, of research into convergent features, she nonetheless makes the insightful comment that,

When one considers that the Neo-Pagan movement is comparable in size to the New Age movement in the United States, one realizes what an enormous following it commands. Given the influence of American culture on South Africa, one would expect that this movement will also soon surface here (1994: 78).

Steyn’s opinion, on talking of the emergence of the New Age Movement in 1994, that “In general, emphasis has been placed on peripheral practices and in some Christian circles the reactions to the movement has been one of alarm and fear” (ibid: 2), gives some insight into the understanding of the reluctance and skepticism that accompanied the emergence of spiritual forms that were distanced, theologically and cognitively, from accepted mainstream traditions. Her statement also points suggestively to the misconceptions and problems that would surround a movement whose identifying features were frequently socially constructed as being associated

with Satanism and/or evil. Despite essential differences between the movements, a marked dissociation of Pagans from the New Age Movement, and a mostly limited knowledge of Paganism on the part of the New Age practitioner, it was on the boundaries of the New Age Movement that Paganism found fertile ground on which to promulgate some of its ideas and practices.

Scholarship on Paganism and the New Age Movement

Prior to a revision of my own research into the relationship of Paganism and the New Age Movement in South Africa, it is pertinent to review some of the relevant international scholarship on this issue.

The Western Esoteric Tradition

Both Paganism and the New Age Movement have roots in the Western Esoteric Tradition and it is the consequent overlap of various philosophies and practices that increases the tendency to see the movements through a single lens or as interrelated phenomena. Hanegraaf notes an important feature in Western esotericism that has influenced both Paganism and the New Age Movement since their inception. He says, “Modern western esotericism is a product of the “discovery of nature” and has, from the very beginning, displayed a strong interest in understanding the secrets of the natural world” (1996: 387-8). Steyn makes no distinction between the terms ‘occult’ and ‘esoteric’ (1994: 66-67)³ but accepts that this alternative tradition through the ages is one of the four main precursors of the New Age Movement. That this history has also played an important role in the development of many Pagan traditions, is no doubt as a result of their mutual indebtedness to the occult revival of the late nineteenth century and which flourished in the twentieth century in groups such as the

Theosophical Society⁴ The Theosophical tradition was an historical approach to the direct experience of ultimate reality, and was one “that propounded the ideal of an ancient wisdom that has been transmitted through the ages” (Wallace 2000: 80), and, as such, was heavily gnostic in character⁵. Gnosticism, a body of philosophical teachings that combined elements of Christianity with Neo-Platonism, was an essentially dualistic philosophy of two opposite forces (light/dark, good/bad) that are in constant tension. This philosophy is influential in many New Age circles in South Africa today.

Although Gerald Gardner, the founder of Wicca, was a member of the Theosophical Society, it was with founder Blavatsky’s successor, Annie Besant, that he formed an alliance that married their mutual interests in witchcraft and ritual magic (Wallace 2000: 80). The formation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, (hitherto referred to as the HOGD), in March 1888 by W.W. Westcott, W.R. Woodman and S.L. McGregor Mathers, was instrumental in furthering “the future direction of occultism and the practice of magic” (ibid: 61). Both the Theosophical Society and the HOGD had developed during the cultural movement of Romanticism that championed nature over culture, celebrated emotion over rational thought, and diversity over homogeneity. These ideas, in conjunction with academic scholarship of the day, “highlighted the concept that mental healing and spiritual development could be found in nature” (ibid: 156). It was my contention that, “This concept influenced both the theosophical tradition and magical practice, which in subsequent developments *became divergent occult streams that drew inspiration from a common tradition*” (ibid: 156).

The overlaps that exist between the two movements have attracted scholarly attention from both Pagan and New Age perspectives. Ronald Hutton (1999: 411) makes the observation that scholars, whose focus of interest is the New Age Movement, are more inclined than scholars whose focus is Paganism, to assume the inclusion of Paganism in the New Age category. Some scholars of the New Age Movement, such as Steyn (1994), stop short of actual inclusion, but nonetheless suggest areas of mutual interest and concern. Others, such as Hanegraaf (1996), confess to the relationship as being problematic⁶. A more total conflation of Paganism and the New Age Movement is made by Jon P. Bloch (1998) in his sociological study of the two movements. In making reference to activities and beliefs he considers common to both movements, he states that,

Many of the people who participate in these activities do not dwell on whether what they are doing is “New Age” or “Neo-Pagan,” and are not interested in such distinctions. In fact, often they prefer not to label their spirituality, even as it involves much of their discretionary time and money (ibid: 1).

In this statement Bloch contradicts the findings of most scholars who have noted that whereas adherents of the New Age are unlikely to self-identify as ‘New-Agers’, for Pagans this is quite the contrary and most will adopt the term, often prior to more indepth investigation as to what this entails. Bloch’s conflation of the two identities is, despite the evidence of a great deal of activity on the boundaries of the movements, problematic as it implicitly negates the degree to which practitioners within both these movements challenge and debate their relationship and argue for a clearer distinction.

A sociological study on Paganism and the New Age Movement was undertaken by Michael York in 1995. In this study he does provide specific examples of differences

between the two movements, but seeks an appropriate sociological tool that could enhance understandings of the way in which their overlaps and differences in society can be understood and identified. His proposal of Gerlach and Hine's⁷ SPIN theory as an applicable construct by which the growth and development of these movements could be understood, and by the nature of their operations in society, leads York to allow for a broader inclusion of both movements under the umbrella term of "holistic movements"⁸. Under this umbrella York includes, among others, "New Age, Neo-Paganism, the ecology movement, feminism, the Goddess Movement and the Human Potential Movement" (1995: 330). York (1995: 161) specifically identifies Neo-Paganism as essentially bi-theistic and as a new religious movement that can be distinguished from the "absolute plurality" of paganism that he considers a much wider term, but which includes 'Neo-Paganism'. To this end, York says, "in other words, Neo-Pagans *are* pagans though generally of a different kind" (ibid: 161).

The very fact that Pagan scholarship, as Hutton suggests (1999: 411), has, more especially since the mid 1990s, continued to refute the inclusion of Paganism and Witchcraft into the New Age Movement, ratifies the pervasive verbal distancing of Pagans from the New Age Movement. The scholarship to which Hutton refers, (Harvey 1997; Simes 1995; Pearson 1998, 2002; Hutton 1999), has, for the most part, shed light on features that negate most of these 'inclusionary tendencies'. Pearson refers directly to these tendencies by entitling her chapter in *Nature Religion Today*, 'Assumed Affinities'.

Rather than commencing with the assumption of affinities, Pearson employs what Paul Heelas (1996: 18-20) considers to be the three principles that exemplify the New

Age Movement and then explores the viability of measuring Wiccan conceptions against these principles. These principles are cited by Pearson (1998: 46) as being, “‘your lives are not working’, ‘you are gods and goddesses in exile’, and the third is the instruction, ‘let go/drop it’”. Whilst not fully addressing areas of convergence, the exercise leads her to conclude that such direct correspondences are difficult to sustain, and that Wicca is an independent and identifiable reality that cannot easily be absorbed into the New Age category. Although Pearson’s perspective is looking at Wicca and the New Age Movement, the fact that Wicca in South Africa is certainly the dominant form of Pagan practice, enhances the relevance of her findings to this project.

Graham Harvey (1997) had a wider focus of comparison and looked at the broad areas of similarity and difference between Paganism and the New Age Movement. He suggests that although there is a degree of similarity between these movements, it at least equals the degree that can be found to exist between the New Age and Christianity⁹ (ibid: 219). He makes specific reference to the New Age emphasis on ‘light’ as opposed to the Pagan acceptance of polarities, and the fact that, for the New Age, “health and wealth are prime indicators of spirituality” (ibid: 219). The similarities Harvey mentions are more exoteric and likewise differ in degree and emphasis¹⁰. Along with scholars who emphasize the differences between the movements, Harvey also mentions the cost differential, the closer relationship to mainstream society found in the New Age Movement, and its lack of sexual metaphor. Ultimately, he states that the centre of New Age attention is humanity. Many of the issues raised by the aforementioned scholars have a direct bearing on this study, as they allude to significant sites of meaning from which South African Pagans

construct aspects of their identity. Of more importance is that some of the findings of these scholars appear to be increasingly less applicable in the South African context.

Paganism and the New Age Movement in South Africa

My own investigations were inevitably drawn into the aforementioned debate, as it became increasingly difficult to gain an understanding of Pagan identity without a prior attempt to explicate the Pagan/New Age distinctions. It is on these boundaries that aspects of Pagan identity are challenged, explored and frequently expanded, despite past and present protestations of dissociation. A valid point of departure for this discussion is to ratify the point that in South Africa, the emergence of Paganism was not contiguous with that of the New Age Movement, as it was in other countries in the West. The consequence of this was that the New Age Movement was already a part of the landscape into which the emerging Pagan movement had to position itself; giving rise to a more complex arena of debate from inside and outside Pagan circles.

By 1996 the New Age Movement had made steady and convincing inroads into public and private lives in South Africa with its underlying message of holism, and of the potential of the individual, through various technologies and practices, to transform all the negative aspects of his/her life, into ones that are positive¹¹. Body, Mind and Soul fairs that marketed New Age ideas and practices to the local market were commonplace in major cities, and workshops on a plethora of New Age interests had become commonplace. New Age preoccupations, such as holistic healing, the benefits of positive thinking, and the 'ability to create one's own reality'¹² had permeated many spheres of society including the medical sciences, the business world, education and the national media. Below are those aspects that are the subject

of the most debate, as well as the sites of new forms of divergence and convergence in South Africa.

Central differences between Paganism and the New Age Movement

Conceptions of 'Nature'

Paganism declared itself as a “Nature-based religion” from the outset. This is borne out of the following statement by the editor of the first magazine of the Pagan Federation of South Africa¹³ when he said, “What all Pagans have in common is their belief in nature as a manifestation of Divinity and therefore that nature is sacred” (Pagan Africa Vol. 1, issue 1: 12). The relationship to nature for the typical New Ager, Steyn proposed, can be profiled in the following way.

The perception of the world as sacred and in process, together with the notions of co-creating and individual responsibility, leads the New Ager to *a deep ecological concern and commitment*. She accepts the mutual dependence of humankind and nature, and works actively against the exploitation of the environment that is characteristic of modern society (1994: 306).

These two positions are perhaps representative of, firstly, those that Bron Taylor terms as religions that see “nature as sacred”, and, secondly, what Catherine Albanese characterizes as “the worldviews and practices of groups and figures not always considered religious, but who take nature to be an important if not central rubric” (cited in Taylor 2000: 4)¹⁴. Without repeating my overview of this debate it is important to point out how central this is to many current debates on where, and if, boundaries of Pagan identity can be drawn, and of the challenges that have been made to some of its claims. One such challenge has been the onus on Pagans to more

clearly articulate their (divergent) understandings of ‘Nature’, and the variety of conceptions that inform their religio-magical engagement(s) therewith.

Conceptions of Nature and its role in spirituality have a qualitative difference in these two traditions. Although both had gained inspiration from the Western esoteric tradition, Paganism drew on and emphasized “the practical application of ancient occult practices in the formulation of magical systems,... a glorification of nature, and the folk magic and witchcraft practices with which it could be associated” (Wallace 2000: 157), whereas the New Age Movement with its infinitely more gnostic inclinations, was informed by the Theosophical thought that proclaimed a spiritual evolution for all humanity¹⁵. This important distinction is noticeable in the ways in which South African Pagans articulate their relationship to Nature, and which seldom, if ever, includes conceptions of the transcendence of Nature, or of a desired outcome for all humanity. Emerging from these dichotomies, this spirit/matter, immanent/transcendent, dialectic developed into distinctly disparate foci. In Paganism, ‘Nature’ became both the signifier and the signified of spiritual experience. Not only was Nature a manifestation of divinity, but was itself the primary sacred forum for spiritual experience. The primary means to engage in such experiences was through magical practice, witchcraft and shamanism, supported by revived mythologies and histories of the ancient mystery and fertility traditions, and by ideas from societies that were deemed to have lived closer to nature itself. The New Age Movement, by contrast, developed with the inherent dialectic that Catherine Albanese describes as a polarisation between, on the one hand, religions that see matter/nature as a ‘real’ position and therefore as a manifestation of the divine, and, on the other hand, those that view matter as an ‘illusion’ and therefore something that should be

transcended¹⁶. This perceived ambiguity in New Age thought is heavily criticized by Pagans who criticize New Age encounters with Nature as being primarily aimed at personal growth rather than a reconciliation of the *self with Nature*. Some more recent developments within Paganism have, however, made this distinction less easy to identify.

The legacy of the Western esoteric tradition is evidenced in disparate forms in the two movements in South Africa. Despite ongoing challenges to Pagan conceptions of Nature-as-sacred, Nature and her cycles remain the terrain from which Pagans take their spiritual calendar and form the central feature in philosophy, rituals and practices. Steven Sutcliffe also utilises this distinction and argues that, “the ‘category ‘nature’ constitutes a useful index to New Age religiosity” (1998: 43), but also notes that there is considerable movement in New Age understandings of ‘nature’. In acknowledging the legacy of the Western esoteric tradition in New Age thought, Hanegraaf (1998: 27) nonetheless argues that its position illustrates a substantial shift from traditional forms of esotericism where there is consequently no room for the supernatural. By implication, this suggests that modernity and the influence of New Science in the New Age Movement, has transformed traditional hermeneutics of magic and associated occultism. Paganism is generally less inclined to follow this path, and mostly continues to advocate a ‘resacralisation’ of Nature, the efficacy of magic to this end, and proposes a new hermeneutics regarding the relationship between religion and magic in modern society. The New Age Movement, through a general avoidance of the terms ‘magic’ and ‘pagan’, has a markedly more passive engagement with nature as opposed to the more active engagement of Paganism (Wallace 2000: 160). Whilst members of both movements are prone to holistic

conceptions, and affirm the interconnectedness of the human with Nature, there is a greater degree of religiosity in the Pagan encounters with these conceptions, than can be found in the New Age Movement. There have been many developments and changes in South African Paganism since the statement issued in the PFSA *Pagan Africa* magazine in 1996. Nature remains the central focus in Pagan identities and practices, but there have been growing currents in the movement that bring Paganism closer to the New Age “*deep ecological concern and commitment*” (Steyn 1994: 306) with a correspondent increase in practices that have self-transformation and healing as desired ends. The means by which this is achieved has mostly been through an advancing Pagan interest in the healing technologies and courses offered on the New Age circuit, and greater emphasis on magic to heal and transform the self. Nature is a central feature in the construction of a Pagan identity, but there is a more complex relationship with the term that is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

Conceptions of Deity

Pertinent to conversations of the understandings of ‘Nature’ in traditions that draw eclectically from Western esoteric traditions are the varying conceptions of deity held by Pagans and New Agers. Hutton’s point that “The New Age is based largely upon the quest for a common basis for world spirituality” (1999: 412), alludes to the pervasive tendency by New Agers, to refer to the divine in universal terms such as, “The Source”, “The Universe”, and “The Christ Consciousness”¹⁷, or “The Cosmic Consciousness”¹⁸.

Such cosmologies are reflective of the mystical and gnostic traditions in Christianity and Theosophy, and are cosmologies that have facilitated the ease with which the

New Age Movement has also found concordance with the cosmologies of certain Eastern religions. Paganism, and Pagan Witchcraft in particular, is essentially a western tradition, and appropriations and additions from the latter are more infrequent.

Paganism has what York calls “a multiple and gender-differentiated understanding of God”¹⁹. It holds an intrinsically polytheistic position and explores a variety of deity pantheons in its ritual and mythology. Some traditions, such as Wicca, are an attempt at a revival, or reinvention, of the ancient fertility and mystery religions. Although “all Pagans ratify the ancient Orphic belief of the fundamental unity of divinity” (Wallace 2000: 98)—a position that has monotheistic implications—it is a firmly held Pagan position to describe this divine unity as the active energy *in* the material world. The variety of interpretations that arise from such an understanding, are reflected in the different approaches to deity in the various Pagan paths. By contrast, in her study of the New Age Movement in South Africa, Steyn found that “the belief system most prevalent among the participants in this study, is one of panentheism” (1994: 183) and was a system that drew substantially on the theosophical teachings of Alice Bailey (1880-1949), on the panentheistic worldview of Roman Catholic priest Matthew Fox, and New Age spokesperson David Spangler, all of whom spoke of a God who was both transcendent and immanent. This disjunction between spirit and matter is pursued by Pearson in her attempt to relate Wicca to Heelas’s second principle of the New Age, namely that “You are gods and goddesses in exile” (1998: 46). She interprets that “this second principle therefore suggests that the New Age upholds something akin to a Manichean dualism of matter/body versus spirit” (ibid: 46) and continues that, “Correspondingly, New Age practices facilitate a movement from one

state of being to another, from a body/matter/imperfection to spirit/godhead/perfection” (ibid: 48). This worldview illustrates the implicit dualisms that can be found in much New Age rhetoric and which are largely absent in the Pagan worldview. In essence, this difference illuminates the more vertical response of the New Ager to the divine, as opposed to the more horizontal responses found in Paganism. The ‘vertical’ response of New Agers contains within itself implicit hierarchical structures and associated patriarchal tendencies. This tendency “brings the New Age closer to the Christian dualisms that, through the concept of the soul, afford humanity a unique opportunity to experience the divine that transcends the individual” (Wallace 2000: 101). The New Age Movement is inclined to articulate this dualism through modes that are highly informed by the appropriation of Christian ideas and language. In Steyn’s study she found that “the metaphor most often employed in descriptions of God was ‘father’”, and this is supported by my own investigations. Whilst many New Agers verbally acquiesce to a feminine principle in divinity and often refer to the earth as ‘Mother’ or ‘Gaia’, Steyn adds that “this did not prevent any of the participants from referring to God in exclusively masculine language and there were none who used feminine pronouns” (1994: 186). The Pagan position is succinctly defined by Prudence Jones when she says,

Pagan religions recognize the female face of divinity, called by modern Pagans the Goddess; taken for granted in Her many manifestations by the Pagans of the ancient world. A religion that does not accept that divinity may manifest in female form is not, on this definition, Pagan (1995: 34).

South African Pagans never speak of the divine in a singular, masculine form, and reflect Jones’ definition in all their narratives and practices.

Gender issues are elevated to a far more central position in Pagan traditions than can be found in the New Age worldview, that still shares (perhaps more so in our society), in patriarchal language, and where the male voice is more prevalent in New Age workshops and courses. Pagans carry their bi-gendered notions of the divine through their ritual encounters into their mundane lives, which essentially, are inseparable. Women play a central role in Pagan ritual where the divine feminine is both verbally and symbolically acknowledged. This is seen by many Pagans as providing a corrective to the central position played by men in most religious traditions.

The magical worldview

Additional explication of the role of magic in the Pagan/New Age debate is important as the inherently magical worldview held by most Pagans is one that is only infrequently espoused by New Agers. Pagan magical practice is diverse, creative and was outlined in my previous study as being drawn from,

...the ritual and ceremonial magic of the hermetic tradition, the other being the practices of folk magic through the ages. Such divisions somewhat correspond with the ancient Greek categories of low or mechanistic magic, and high magic or theurgy, which has more religious approximation. These distinctions, although crude and not necessarily mutually exclusive can be witnessed in the Pagan community today (Wallace 2000: 107).

There are, within the New Age Movement in South Africa, certain traditions that are involved in the more occult dimensions of the movement, but real differences emerge in the emphasis given to such practices and in the goals inherent in these encounters. David Spangler's insistence that the New Age Movement is "not to be identified with

pagan religions, Eastern philosophies, the occult, channeling, crystals, reincarnation, psychic phenomena or prophecy” (quoted in Steyn 1994: 37) is closely linked to his assessment of groups and individuals “who are living out their own fantasies of adventure and power, usually of an occult or millenarian form” (ibid: 37), as being a part of level of the movement in which the New Age can be seen as ‘glamour’²⁰.

Parts of the movement have nonetheless explored the history of the occult in the West, and this is evidenced in New Age interests in Kabbalah, numerology, runes, tarot and astrology, to mention but a few. What is a noticeable feature of these explorations, specifically in the South African context, is the strong inclination by the New Ager to, firstly, circumvent the words ‘pagan’, or ‘magic’ from such practices, and, secondly, to market and rationalise these practices as ones to facilitate the ‘healing of the individual’ or, as ones to enhance spiritual advancement. This circumvention of Pagan terms is frequently criticized by Pagans as being indicative of shallowness or a lack of honesty. As one respondent said, in uniting this sentiment with Spangler’s second level, “the New Age Movement is nothing more than pop-Paganism with no substance, and which is aimed at a mass market”. There are, particularly in our society, other issues at play in this circumvention, and which can be traced back to the divergent streams that developed out of the Western esoteric tradition. The one from which the New Age Movement drew most of its inspiration lay in various systems of gnosticism and mysticism, and which showed no discernable influence from the history of witchcraft in the West, and little from the history of ritual and ceremonial magic²¹. The New Age Movements’ evolutionary vision of global transformation had resulted in its conscious avoidance of words and practices that *are still* inclined to be associated with ‘paganism’ and ‘witchcraft’. Almost all New Age respondents in my previous study associated Paganism and Witchcraft with magic and with witches; both

terms that I found were not employed to any great degree in the New Age Movement. Although Steyn noted a growing New Age interest in magic in her study, “only one of the participants admitted to dabbling in magic (with dire consequences)” (1994: 82). Whilst not all Pagans practice magic, a belief in, and/or practice of, magic is a central feature of South African Paganism. The New Age Movement consciously aims for wider social acceptance and is in direct contrast to Paganism that retains a consistently more oppositional stance to mainstream society. Despite a substantial increase in the amount of media exposure that Paganism has received in the past few years, its terms of self-identification, and its open advocating of the utility of magical practice as a means of spiritual growth, remain features by which it is—often negatively—assessed from the outside. In Andy Letcher’s paper he quotes Westwood and Walbridge, when he says, “by declaring ourselves Pagan, we have stepped out of the mainstream of society, and to a certain extent put ourselves on the line both materially and spiritually” (2000: 6).

The New Age Movement’s closer affinities with what is popularly called New Science²² underscored the New Age associations between mysticism and physics, and, through authors such as Gary Zukov and Fritjof Capra, explored the transformative capacity this view has for humanity. These views support the holistic conceptions which Capra described in the following way.

These living systems form part of larger and ever larger wholes, so that ultimately reality itself is viewed as one. These systems are not confined to organisms, but include social and ecosystems, which are all interrelated and interdependent (quoted in Steyn 1994: 47).

The ideas that the microcosm can be found in the macrocosm underline the holistic cosmology of both movements (Wallace 2000: 108), but it is only in Paganism that these ideas were translated into systems of active and direct engagement; in other words, for the practice of magic. The strong Christian tendencies in the New Age Movement in South Africa, also, I believe, influence the evasion of the word ‘magic’ by many quarters of the movement. Although it will be covered in detail in a later chapter, I contend at this point, that it is the Pagan involvement with magic that lies behind most Pagan media exposes wherein Pagan practitioners are urged to explain what he/she means by ‘magic’, and where dualisms such as white/black, good/bad magic are imposed.

Where the New Ager shows an engagement with magic, it is usually of the non-ritualistic variety, and, regardless of practice employed, it is “only in the extreme exception that she will call this magic, or see the primary goal as being communion *with nature*” (Wallace 2000: 117). Such practices have an overtly more utilitarian intent that aim at the healing or growth of the individual, and more clearly situates the movement as a whole into the category of a ‘self-religion’. The Pagan value given to magical practice situated it more firmly in the occult milieu, presenting it with challenges in society for which New Age practices in South Africa had provided little to no groundwork. More importantly, it was the Pagan self-identification with the terms ‘Witch’, ‘Pagan’ and ‘Witchcraft’ that were unique in South Africa, despite the inroads made by New Age practitioners in addressing alternative worldviews and practices.

The sexual metaphor

Michael York (1995: 164) says that “Neo-Paganism also embraces the idea or practice of ritual/symbolic or sacred sex”. Within New Age we find little if any use of the sexual metaphor. Graham Harvey provides a twofold explanation for this when he says, “Sexuality had little place in New Age for at least two reasons. It would, first, require a more Pagan celebration of embodiedness and, secondly, diminish New Age’s respectable image” (1997: 220).

The celebration of embodiment is fundamental to Pagan thought and is enacted in all dimensions of Pagan experience. The Christian legacy of sexual conservatism and its elevation of spirit over matter is pervasive in most cultural groups in South Africa. Besides in mainstream religions, these views are strongly held in the African Initiated Churches, in the new forms of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, and in traditional African Religion. Traditional African society is patriarchal and human sexuality, particularly with regard to the woman, is associated with many taboos and prohibitions. Since 1996, when Paganism became a publicly visible movement, it has been caught in the dialectic of, on the one hand, giving verbal affirmation to the celebration of human sexuality through myth and ritual²³, and, on the other, of finding a way in which this affirmation can be articulated to the general public.

As a member of an online Nature Religions Scholars Network²⁴, I have been party to many discussions that have enhanced my understanding of this issue in the UK and USA particularly. What is most noticeable is the vast degree of relative conservatism in the South African Pagan community, as responses to my questions to local Pagans on this topic also revealed. To my question, “What are your feelings on ritual

nudity?”, the majority were opposed to it, and the balance gave mainly qualified assertions such as, “it is alright for solitary ritual”, “it should only be done in private groups”, and, more interestingly, “it should not be advertised as how things are done in our religion”. This latter comment is fairly prevalent in the Pagan community and exhibits both a cognisance of the conventional sexual mores in our society, a hesitancy to confront these directly, and also the degree to which moving out of, or ‘beyond’ mainstream norms is still, for the large part, exploratory. Whilst they have not avoided the sexual metaphor in practice, as has the New Age Movement, there remain conflicting representations of this metaphor to the public.

Vivianne Crowley (1994: 162) refers to the phenomenon of sexual morality as being cognitively associated with religion and/or spirituality, and adds that, “laws about sexual conduct are not Divinely ordained but are the creations of society.” The fear of female sexuality was a central feature of the witch-craze of the Middle Ages, and was a central issue in the 1486 work, the *Malleus Maleficarum* by H. Kramer and J. Sprenger. A telling quotation states that,

All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. See *Proverbs xxx*: there are three things that are never satisfied, yea a fourth thing which says not, It is enough; that is the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lust they consort even with the devils (1971: 47).

Such associations are also common in witchcraft accusations in indigenous society in South Africa where allegations of unusual sexual relationships, excessive sexual appetites and fidelity issues, converge in a system of discrimination and persecution that contributes to the upholding of male supremacy and that reinforce the construct of the “witch” as female, promiscuous and dangerous. Pagan Witchcraft and Wicca, in

particular, illustrate a corrective to this construction in their reclaiming of the word ‘Witch’, the symbolic enactment of human sexuality in their rituals, and the celebration of the creative capacity of females through mythologies and ritual. The New Age Movement does not share in any of these endeavours and aims for wider acceptance, and, as York maintained, “Within New Age, we find little if any use of the sexual metaphor” (1995: 164).

The practice of magic within traditions identified as Wicca or Witchcraft, the sexual metaphor that permeates these traditions and the centrality of the divine feminine in Paganism, remain as differences between themselves and the New Age Movement in South Africa, and are areas that have rested exclusively on Pagans for their articulation in society. Differences in their conceptions of Nature have become a far more complex category within some sectors of the Pagan community. South Africa Pagans also continue to reject any view of the material world as something to be ‘overcome’ or transcended, and does not share in the universalising proclivities found in the New Age Movement. There are, however, some developments that are indicative of new areas of convergence.

The Interrelatedness between Paganism and the New Age Movement

Whilst a degree of overlap between Paganism and the New Age Movement is recognized (Harvey 1997; York 1995 and Hutton 1999), it is Harvey’s opinion (1997: 219) that distinguishing features are best evidenced in the *mix* of these overlaps. It is on these boundaries where New Age and Pagan interests converge, where new developments can be discerned. These are primarily in the following avenues.

New Age fairs and markets

Such fairs have been a common feature in South Africa and precede the emergence of the Pagan movement. More widely known as Body, Mind and Soul fairs, they have become a regular feature in most cities, frequently held on days of Pagan festivals,²⁵ At such festivals the plethora of New Age interests are showcased, lectures are given, crystals, candles and other artifacts of New Age spirituality are sold to the public, and visitors can engage in and experience various New Age technologies. Despite my aforementioned discussion of the general dissociations of Paganism from the New Age Movement, it was essentially to such forums that Pagans initially turned its attention. There has been a notable increase in overtly Pagan representation at such fairs where ritual tools, spell-kits and other Pagan paraphernalia are marketed, and where the symbol of the Witch has found a new avenue for public exposure. There is generally little tension between the New Ager and the Pagan at such fairs, despite the general disparagement of the New Age by Pagans and the lack of depth to understandings of Paganism on behalf of the New Agers. Paganism, since 1996, has steadily increased its visibility in a commodified market where, on occasions, it ventures into what were exclusively New Age interests and practices.

Courses and workshops

The New Age Movement has always made good use of the workshop and/or course format, and these have generally been criticized by Pagans for their high cost factor²⁶. More recent developments in South African Paganism, has been the rapid rise in workshops and courses offered by Pagan practitioners on a myriad of Pagan interests and/or skills. What is of relevance is how closely some of these are approximating, what can best be described, as a 'New Age inflection'. There are now numerous

individuals and organizations that provide a guide to the basics of Paganism and Wicca, or initiation into a specific tradition. With regards to the latter, these opportunities are usually limited to those who can attend in person, a factor that vastly reduces the number of individuals who can take advantage of this option. It is with the former where a blurring of the boundaries between Pagan and New Age interests can be found. Whilst many courses retain an exclusive Pagan context such as teachings of deity conceptions, seasonal festivals, ritual techniques and tools, and so forth, there are a number whose content increasingly covers more traditionally New Age concerns. These include modules on Feng Shui, one on Esp and paranormal phenomena, and on colour therapy – all taught under the umbrella of a course on Wicca. The significance of these developments is in the questions they raise. Do these developments mark a new development in Paganism to move to a more normative, and therefore New Age, position? Are these developments illustrative of what York (1995: 164) refers to as the fact that both orientations “consider the Calvinistic belief that material welfare reflects spiritual achievement”? To embrace New Age concerns in an ostensibly Pagan framework broadens the potential client base, increases marketability, and, in doing so, creates a new (and popular) form of New Age Wicca. Such developments also urge me to revisit my earlier contention that “as Paganism gains more visibility, (and frequently in New Age forums and outlets), it, nonetheless, continues to define itself in its own terms” (Wallace 2000: 164). Paganism traditionally rejects the conception of the teacher or ‘guru’ and uses these issues both as a further objection, and as a point of dissension, between itself and the New Age Movement. It is in many of the above formats, however, that this position is becoming quite elevated within some sectors of Paganism and where the distinction between teacher and student is strongly reinforced. The traditional

Pagan championing of individual autonomy is eroded in such group situations, giving rise to frequent challenges of authority.

My tentative assessment of the participants of such courses is that they are increasingly close to the “predominantly White, middle-class phenomenon” that Harvey identifies as the profile of a typical New Ager (1997: 219). This is born out by the fact that attendees are almost exclusively White, most have a disposable income, they have frequently come to Wicca through a New Age activity²⁷, and many are interested in healing technologies that aim at personal growth. It is also in this group that females vastly outnumber male participants.

Bookstores and the Internet

Even a decade ago there were very few booksellers that carried a reasonable selection of books on Paganism, Wicca and/or Witchcraft. Many local Pagans have testified to the difficulty they had in obtaining any literature on Pagan traditions, and, for the most part, relied on small independent dealers and books purchased overseas. The New Age Movement, however, had gained a substantial market in leading booksellers, usually under the Body, Mind and Spirit category, and books on a myriad of New Age interests were available. It is into this category that books on Pagan interest, more especially those on Wicca, Witchcraft and magic, were slotted; a move that has had implications for both movements. Some Pagans have wryly noted that without the New Age Movement, there would still be no books of Pagan interest available. This indicates a circle whereby booksellers initially conflate the two movements, and Paganism has acquiesced to this conflation, knowing it to be the best means by which its own interests can be showcased; in other words, it indicates the

ease of encroachment on New Age territory. The other consequences of this phenomenon are that subjects like Wicca and Witchcraft have reached a far wider audience, and that this has inspired many new forms of commodification and consumerism. The New Age Movement, that consistently has brought esotericism into the public domain, has increasingly drawn on aspects of Wicca for fresh marketing opportunities, and one is now able to purchase Wiccan affirmation cards²⁸, magical calendars and do-it-yourself magic kits in many New Age forums. There is a simultaneous complicity from some Pagan quarters, and there has, of late, been a plethora of books on forms of Paganism and Wicca that broaden its market, from what York (1995: 165) calls primarily a 'subliminal' religion, into one that adjusts its position to one that fits comfortably into mainstream sensibilities. I am not aware of any such books being published by South African Pagans, with local depictions such as these more commonly being made through newspapers, television and magazines. I do foresee such developments in the future, despite the fact that there continues to be resistance to these forms of commodification and portrayal from many quarters in the Pagan community.

The influence of the internet on the development of Paganism warrants a far deeper discussion than can be afforded here, but it must be noted that this relationship has also afforded new intersections where Pagan and New Age interests can meet. In only the past three years, there has been a vast increase in the number of online groups that have been established by Pagans, and which are dedicated to the online discussion of a diversity of Pagan interests. These range from those that focus particularly on Wicca, to ones that serve a specific geographical area, or even to more narrow interests such as 'secular Paganism'. The internet remains the primary means by

which Pagans communicate with each other, as well as serving as the foremost medium in which their understandings of these traditions are developed. For most newcomers to Paganism, membership to an online chat-group becomes the principal form of community, serves as a substitute to the high cost of books, and is the site where differences and similarities between themselves and others, is explored. For such individuals, New Age language and conceptions are generally already well understood, and I have noticed the tendency to debate and question Pagan issues from this context, or, in some instances, to seek congruencies between the two traditions. In *most* of these lists, I have observed the preoccupation with more overtly New Age concerns, and a furthering of what I have already referred to as a form of 'New Age Wicca'.

There are, however, aspects that differ regarding the role of the internet in the lives of Pagans to that of New Ager. The internet is an essential tool for Pagans; it enables a freedom to articulate views that many believe will be misunderstood in broader society, it represents the most cohesive form of community (although this is not without its shadow-side), and is the most common source of information gathering. The intensely more ritualistic tendencies of Paganism are also boosted by the opportunities the internet affords for the individual to, not only to create new rituals, but also to participate in ritual online. None of these aforementioned aspects are applicable to the New Age practitioner whose views already fit comfortably into mainstream, whose primary source of community is found in the circuit of New Age activities, and who are far more inclined to opt for the physical experience of a teacher-student format.

It is undoubtedly the extremes of both movements that are inclined to attract more sensationalist press, and, in some, instances this type of press has married Pagan and New Age concerns. A specific example of this is the Pagan association with High Sanusi and Zulu prophet, Credo Mutwa, who is quoted by Donna Vos in her book *Dancing under an African Moon* (2002: 32-33) as “marrying” Paganism as practiced by Whites and Paganism as practiced by traditional healers, and denouncing the avoidance of blood-letting in ritual in the former. This relationship is raised in more detail in a later chapter, but its present relevance lies in the more recent, and publicized, relationship between Credo Mutwa and New Age guru and prophet, David Icke²⁹. Through his dialogues with Icke, Credo Mutwa has shared his beliefs in extra-terrestrial beings, alien invasions, UFO’s, and conspiracy theories regarding the proliferation of the AIDS virus and smallpox inoculations³⁰. This has gone some way to discrediting Mutwa in many Pagan circles and led many to question the Pagan association with someone who, in their opinion, is proposing little more than the most marginal and sensationalist of New Age preoccupations.

Conclusion

New Age ideas of holism, ecological concern and emphasis on the feminine principle, alongside practices that facilitate personal transformation and healing provided a valuable foundation and social context for the emergent Pagan movement in 1996. Sharing as they do in the history of Western esotericism and in the revival of ancient healing and divinatory practices, Paganism was sharply divided from the New Age Movement by its essential polytheism, the central location of the divine in the material world, and, most importantly, by a self-identification with the terms ‘Pagan’, ‘Wicca’ and ‘Witchcraft’. It is primarily on these features that the acceptance and

influence of Paganism in society has not paralleled that of the New Age Movement. New Age ideas and practices are marketed with mainstream sensibilities in mind; a process that is emulated by some sectors of the Pagan community, pointing to new syncretisms that irrevocably alter forms of both movements.

There have been many developments and changes in South African Paganism since the statement made in the PFSA *Pagan Africa* magazine in 1996. Nature remains the central referent in a Pagan identity, but there are growing currents in the movement that bring Paganism closer to the New Age “*ecological concern and commitment*” (Steyn, 1994: 306) for the environment. There has been a simultaneous advancing of Pagan interest in the healing technologies and courses offered on the New Age circuit, with a greater emphasis on magic to heal and transform the self. Paganism and the New Age Movement also share an important platform in the commodified market with the latter usually providing the models for such activities.

From the outset, the Pagan focus on Nature itself as the locus of divine presence and experience, their revival of multiple deities, and an eschewing of the need to transcend the material world for transcendent spiritual experience presented a far more marginal worldview in society. Both movements continue to draw their detractors in what remains an essentially conservative society, and both share interests that are considered evil and dangerous in conservative Christian circles. The victimisation and verbal abuse of practitioners and merchants is less frequent, but by no means absent, and from such perspectives, both movements are seen through the same lens. In most of mainstream society, however, the New Age Movement employs a language that separates it from the deviance labeling that much of Paganism is subject to. The initiatives of some Pagans to participate in the New Age arena, and to gain a more

favourable recognition in society, has led to a more frequent usage of ‘New Age language’ and the suppression of its more contested terms in the public forum. These developments within Paganism can be seen as a narrowing of the boundaries between the movements, and equally, a way for more marginalized traditions to adjust their identities in a society that still retains a large conservative agenda.

¹ Vivianne Crowley (1994: 54) situates Paganism in the New Age by associating it with the astrological change of the Age of Pisces into the Age of Aquarius, and takes it to represent a change in consciousness in which they both share. She says, “Pagans are wary of the New Age, viewing New Agers as eccentric White Lighters in turquoise track-suits...but New Age represents a much deeper and significant transformation than these frivolous manifestations” (ibid: 54). Selena Fox of Circle Sanctuary also proposes features that are shared by both movements such as the belief in the doctrines of reincarnation and karma, and the ways in which both can partake in a universal change in consciousness (taken from online conversations).

² Hutton (1999: 411) says that “pagan witchcraft is a movement which originated in the United Kingdom and attained its enduring form in the 1950s...”, but it was only in the free-festival youth movement of the 1970s that established forms of Witchcraft were linked with the smaller movement of Neo-Paganism (Wallace 2000: 91). Gordon Melton’s discussion of this linkage is also quoted in Wallace (2000: 91).

³ Steyn follows Robert Galbreath when she says, “Galbreath (1983: 17), however, rejects this distinction and points out that while ‘occultists’ and ‘esotericists’ may have different views on the merits of engaging in magic rather than in meditation, the notion of a purely abstract knowledge divorced from personal development and personal participation is alien to them both” (1994: 66).

⁴ The Theosophical Society was formed by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) in New York in 1875.

⁵ For more on this tradition see Pearson (2002: 23-31); Hanegraaf (1996: 448-454); Hutton (2002: 235-237) and Wallace (2000: 53-58).

⁶ Wouter Hanegraaf in footnote 11 to his chapter entitled *Reflections On New Age and the Secularisation of Nature* says, “In this chapter I restrict myself to the general trend of New Age religion, without taking into account the complicating factor of Neo-Paganism” (1998: 31).

⁷ Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine proposed the Segmented, Polycentric, Integrated Network (SPIN) as “a tool to investigate the reticulation of networks and horizontal growth of many new religious movements” (Wallace, 2000: 9). This was in part response to the criticism that the *cultic milieu* is not characterized by a *lack of organization* but rather by a *different type of organization*.

⁸ The holistic movement can be identified as a broad and eclectic grouping of traditions that counter traditional Western dualisms and advocates rather interconnectedness and an essential ‘wholeness’ or unity.

⁹ Steven Sutcliffe (2002: 33-43) ratifies this point when he addresses the similarity in the apocalyptic views of Semitic religions and the conceptions of transformation that can be found in the New Age Movement. Both entrench dualistic conceptions of reality.

¹⁰ See a detailed list of what Harvey considers to be similarities between the two movements in Harvey (1997: 220).

¹¹ This corresponds to Heelas’s first principle of the New Age Movement, namely that “your lives are not working”, (quoted in Pearson 1998: 46).

¹² Chrissie Steyn cites the New Ager’s “power to create her own reality” as a natural progression from her understanding of the individual self as a part of the sacredness of God, and, by extension, that “...human beings are deemed to be co-creators with God” (1994: 305).

¹³ The magazine entitled *Pagan Africa* was started in June 1997 by Pagan Federation president, Donna ‘Darkwolf’ Vos. The editor at that time was Manie Eager. There were eight publications per year; corresponding with Pagan seasonal festivals and distributed primarily to a subscribed list of persons

and through esoteric (New Age?) shops and outlets. These early issues of the magazine preceded any online publications, so printing and distribution was inevitably costly and difficult.

¹⁴ Taylor's full paper can be accessed on the website <http://www.religionandnature.com/overview.htm>.

¹⁵ I am aware of Hanegraaf's argument that adherents of the Western esoteric traditions were alienated from traditional esotericism by the secular tendencies that followed the Enlightenment (1998: 30). What he calls the "secularization of esotericism", or occultism, can be equally advanced in some emerging Pagan practices.

¹⁶ Although this refers to her discussion of forms and differences in nature religions, it is a useful and accurate pointer to very real differences between the New Age Movement and Paganism. Many scholars apply this statement to discussions of the two movements. The reference from which this is taken is Albanese (1990: 82).

¹⁷ Steyn found that many participants to her study used the expressions "Cosmic Consciousness" and "Christ Consciousness" interchangeably (1994: 241). Both however, implied the belief in a singular and transcendent 'Truth' that could be accessed by all those who seek intellectual and spiritual enlightenment.

¹⁸ Steyn quotes Richard Maurice Bucke from his 1951 work entitled *Cosmic Consciousness: a study in the evolution of the human mind* when he defined 'cosmic consciousness' as "a higher form of consciousness than that possessed by the ordinary man" (1994: 240).

¹⁹ Michael York made this statement at a panel discussion at the Parliament of the Worlds Religions held in Barcelona in July, 2004. The panel was entitled Paganism around the World.

²⁰ Spangler's four levels of the New Age Movement can be found in Steyn (1994: 37-38) and are briefly as follows: Level One is essentially a superficial level associated with consumerism and commodification. Level Two sees the New Age as 'glamour', associated with occult mysteries. Level Three is the level concerned with the transformation of society in social, ecological and technological terms. Level Four is the level where the New Age Movement can be seen as an incarnation of the sacred.

²¹ For more on this history see chapters 3 and 4 in Wallace (2000).

²² See Steyn (1994: 116-121).

²³ A traditional altar at a Pagan festival will contain a representation of the male and female/god and goddess forms of the divine; a chalice that symbolizes the womb, and an athame, or knife, that signifies the phallus are used symbolically to represent the sexual union between a man and a woman. Along with the wand, that is also a phallic symbol, these tools symbolize sexual energy in the human world and which is equally represented in the divine order.

²⁴ The online discussion group Nature Religions Scholars Network, NATREL, is moderated by Chas Clifton.

²⁵ Graham Harvey critically adds that, "While many New Agers celebrate the seasonal festivals, which Pagans identify as their own, they combine this with a redemptive and millennial metaphor or agenda that is alien to paganism" (1997: 219).

²⁶ Margot Adler's quote that "The difference between Pagan and 'New Age' is one decimal point; in other words a two-day workshop in meditation by a New Age practitioner might cost \$300, while the same course given by a Pagan might cost \$30" is quoted in Harvey (1997: 219) and, is the standard reference for what appears to have become an international sentiment.

²⁷ Many of my respondents make the point that many people come to Paganism via the New Age Movement which they have found to be 'less grounded.'

²⁸ Affirmation cards are an exclusively New Age phenomenon, and are sets of cards that provide a daily statement, or wisdom, to facilitate positive thinking.

²⁹ The full interview between David Icke and Credo Mutwa is available on the website <http://www.davidicke.net/emagazine/vol6/spectmutwap2.html>.

³⁰ On the website <http://www.world-action.co.za/vaccinate.html> Mutwa is quoted as saying "A flying saucer would fly through the sky at great speed and be seen by many men and women but the children who had been vaccinated would see nothing and I noticed this hundreds of times".

SECTION TWO

PERSONAL, SELF-DEFINED IDENTITIES

Giddens (1991) describes self-identity in the post-traditional world as a “reflexive project.” The employment of the word “project” in this description is salient in its rejection of self-identity as being fixed or static, but rather as an individual task that requires reflection, creativity and an ability to integrate ideas of the self with changes in the socio-historical context for its construction. These features are evidenced in Paganism where individuals are active agents in the construction of their identities; rejecting those prescribed according to categories of familial association and mainstream discourses, and those that are transmitted through state institutions and dominant ideologies. This section will explore notable features in the adoption of a personal Pagan identity, the creative and adaptive nature of this process, and the importance and role of narrative in these endeavours. Attention is given to the influences the socio-historical context has on the construction and development of these narratives.

CHAPTER FIVE

FEATURES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PERSONAL PAGAN

IDENTITY

PERSONAL IDENTITIES

When modern Pagans use the term “I am a Pagan”, they indicate their personal identification and resonance with a term that has held diverse, at times pejorative, meanings throughout history. Behind the reclamation of the term lies a variety of self-understandings. As there are multiple forms to modern Paganism and often equally as many options for belief and practice *within* each form or tradition, it is important to avoid an over-complication of these issues when unpacking what individuals mean when they self-identify as Pagans, the processes by which they reach this affirmation, and how they apply this identity to themselves. In this chapter, therefore, I draw on aspects that apply to *most* Pagans. Identity construction is fluid and poly-dimensional, and, in the Pagan context, is constructed, deconstructed and restructured across many domains.

A personal identity is one that mirrors ideas and conceptions that an individual holds about ‘the self’ and is therefore self-defined. Only twelve and a half percent of my survey respondents indicated that they had first used the term ‘Pagan’ to describe their belief system prior to 1995. This supports my findings that despite some Pagan activity in South Africa prior to 1994, the terms were used by only a very small minority of today’s community, and then, almost exclusively in a personal capacity. Aware of the almost ubiquitously pejorative nature of the term ‘Pagan’ in South

Africa, its usage was more often than not a closeted and private self-understanding. This 'anticipation of contestation' continues to exist on a continuum that will be discussed later in more detail.

The adoption of a Pagan identity can be described as a process, and, unlike conversionary experiences, is often described by individuals as "finding out what I was all the time." This statement is more aptly explained by Sabina Magliocco when she says in talking of Pagan leader Don Frew, "Don described Paganism as if it were somehow innate or essential, its seeds already present in childhood" (2004: 57). The process can frequently, therefore, be understood as one that looks back in time. Memories of a time when a belief in magic was unchallenged, recollections of times of feeling at home in nature and/or a recognition of a lifetime of disjunction from the teachings of mainstream religions, are among the more common experiences used by Pagans to describe the realization of their Paganism. This particular point in personal identity construction is usually arrived at as a growing awareness that aspects of a Pagan worldview are the most succinct way of 'explaining oneself'; even at the outset, if this is only *to oneself*. Within the sphere of personal identity there is a degree of 'oppositonality'. As opposed to the adoption of, or conversion to, other mainstream religion, Pagans are aware of the misunderstandings and misinterpretations that surround and are connected with much Pagan terminology. Identity construction involves negotiation and at this level, there is negotiation with the self, and the decision to embrace these terms is, in effect, to embrace being 'other'.

Despite the processional nature of adopting a Pagan identity, most Pagans are, however, able to pinpoint quite specifically, their first conscious encounter with a Pagan world. This point is described as a result of either a deliberate search, or by one or more events (retrospectively deemed as fortuitous), the most common being an introduction to Paganism through books, the media and/or the internet, that will then inspire further investigation by that individual. Some attest to being introduced through friends, whilst others, less commonly, cite esoteric fairs or public Pagan events as the source by which they first came to Paganism. Irrespective of the route taken, the claiming of a Pagan identity almost always precedes a clear defining of this identity in terms of belief or praxis. In other words, the point of ‘knowing one is a Pagan’ is, in itself, the motivation for further investigation. Through the ensuing investigation the initial identity is defined, refined and, almost always, re-defined.

Paganism is almost always described as a religious tradition that has no single spokesperson for the movement as a whole, and one that is undogmatic and devoid of prescription on either belief or practice. Exceptions to these statements will be discussed later in this study, but their pertinence at this point, is to underscore the breadth of possibility available to an individual at the initial stages of investigation, and which are ongoing in what I call ‘the Pagan journey of discovery’. The general acceptance of a lack of dogma, the wide diversity of Pagan traditions—and even within each specific tradition—and the ever-increasing volume of material available by often competing voices, provides a smorgasbord of opportunities for a newly identifying Pagan. In the face of new ideas, or dialogues with other Pagans, the individual will test these ideas against their initial understandings, and often reflect back in time for congruencies that support the continuous reassessment of their

identity. There is consequently a total lack of stasis in assuming a Pagan identity, and this can be found, not in the claiming of the term itself, but in what an individual will take this to mean at any given point in time. There are many ways in which this journey of discovery is facilitated, and, in South Africa, the primary way is through books and the internet. Local booksellers here, over the past decade, have largely increased the volume and variety of books on Paganism and/or its various traditions, and on the internet there is an almost infinite supply of information on these subjects. Other than the New Age Movement—and even here there are certain overlaps—there is no new religious movement that has even come close to commanding such a growth in available literature. The popularization and commodification of Wicca and Witchcraft in particular, is discussed later in the study, but it is important to note here how many options this factor provides for the development of a Pagan identity and can even be the point of entry for a vaguely interested or curious seeker. It also supplies the newly identified Pagans with an enormous tableau from which they can draw information to reinforce their Pagan identity as well as exposing them to a myriad of alternative ideas and practices. As such, this exposure not only seems to reinforce the individual's sense of personal identity, but also can become a site of conflict and challenge as the individual encounters methods, ideas, skills and practices that are different, or even in opposition, to those initially held. A new author has the potential to expand the self-understanding a person has of their Paganism, or can facilitate a complete change in orientation.

As soon as this new identity is assumed, the process of imbuing it with meaning will begin within the individual as opposed to being imposed from outside sources. Books and the internet, as mentioned, are the primary sources for this process, but there are

others that play an important role in this phase of identity construction. A discussion of the more prevalent and important of these follows, along with ways in which this new identity is articulated to the self.

The Adoption of a ‘Magical Self’

Religion and magic have, in most academic discourses, been viewed as distinct categories, but in the Pagan worldview they are often conflated, and the one is only infrequently seen as apart from the other. The scientific discourses that had emerged during the Enlightenment period influenced academic studies and discourses from the mid nineteenth century, and one of the consequences was that magic was seen as irrational, based on superstition, and on this basis was excluded from the category ‘religion’.¹

The reality and practice of magic is integral to most Pagan understandings of the self and the world, and is instanced in different forms ranging from the practice of the ritual and ceremonial magic of the Hermetic tradition, to the practices taken from the history of folk magic through the ages (Wallace 2000: 107). Irrespective of the form employed, Pike notes that, “Whether they believe that magic is something that happened psychologically or in the physical universe, the explanations that Neo-Pagans give for the concept of magic almost always include “change” and “transformation”” (2001: 12-13).

A prevalent idea in this understanding can be attributed to the view of occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) who “himself defined magic as ‘the art of communicating without obvious means’ - in other words, by using one’s willpower;

or, to put it in his own words, ‘Magic is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will’” (Booth 2000: 82). Crowley’s emphasis on the centrality of the individual ‘will’ has been balanced in Pagan discourses and practices with the need to synchronize their personal energies and intent, with natural energies for the desired result. With this in mind, Pagan magical practice is usually undertaken during specific cycles of the seasons, of the moon and of other astronomical conjunctions and configurations.

When Pagans engage in ritual practice, ideas of the self are drawn on with the express intention of bringing about change and transformation in the self, in others, or in the world. The self is the conduit for this process, a magical self who employs a variety of technologies to these ends and one where the boundaries between the different conceptions of the self are more permeable. To perform magic is to become a magical being; it is in the ‘doing’ that the efficacy of magic is internalized. The importance of the self as the key to this process is illustrated in the quote by Pagan practitioner and psychologist Vivienne Crowley where she says,

Magic is about creating synchronicity. Magic helps create the right conditions for you to achieve your goals, but to make it work, *you must create the necessary channels for energy to manifest on the material plane*” (2003: 18-19).

To make this connection between actions and their outcomes illustrates the reflexive tendencies found in constructing a Pagan identity. The individual, who holds certain ideas of the self, of the world, and of the efficacy of magic, will perform these ideas creatively, usually, in a ritual setting, and will then reflect on both the structure and the intentionality of this performance to assess, explain, and justify the desired

outcomes. This internal dialogue is a means of ratifying one's personal identity and of adding to the spiral of information necessary for its construction.

The adoption of magical names

Most practitioners of Wicca and Witchcraft assign themselves a magical name at some point in their journey. This point most frequently coincides with a ritual in which the individual either dedicates him or herself to honouring and following a particular god/goddess, or to whatever their conception of deity might be, or, undertakes initiation into a coven or tradition. Such dedications are usually understood to be taken for life, and are an important step in the process of the construction of a magical self. The adoption of a magical name is an important feature in the construction of a personal identity, and its usage can be one that is private to the individual, used only with the group with whom they practice, or one that is nationally known, and occasionally, one that totally replaces the person's mundane birth name. Through this process a Pagan creates a cognitive separation between an everyday life and a new, magical identity. Sabina Magliocco states that,

The adoption of a new name upon religious conversion or confirmation has a venerable tradition; it is common to Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions alike, as well as to other religions.Today, the taking of a new name symbolizes the adherent's spiritual transformation, and signals the beginning of a new phase in life (2004: 65).

The power inherent in the naming of oneself cannot be undermined. It requires individuals to reflect on their new identity in order to understand where this new self is located in terms of traditions and beliefs. Most names are therefore indicative of the orientation and interests of the individual and most evolve as a combination drawn

from a wide variety of sources. The most common sources are names of gods and goddesses with whom the individual particularly identifies, animals, aspects of nature, mythology, fairytales and/or folklore and even science fiction. Names, therefore, emerge from a process of reflexivity and investigation, or even arise in a dream. Regardless of the source(s), the name is always intensely personal and meaningful.

The power of names has long been recognized in the practice of magic, and the adoption by Pagans of sacred names underscores their identification with a Pagan, magical self. Although many international Pagan authors, for example Starhawk and Silver RavenWolf, are known exclusively by their magical names, local Pagans are often sensitive to the way these names could sound in our secular society. The process of adopting a magical name is an additional indicator of the creative and inventive nature in Pagan identity construction, and a facet that can be found within Pagan traditions themselves.

Donna 'Darkwolf' Vos² told me³ that she advises her students, when choosing a magical, or 'Craft' name, to concentrate on, a) what they aspire to and, b) what they believe words represent. The first point contains within itself the possibility to reinvent the self through language. For example, if the individual believes fear to be one of their negative characteristics, then words that symbolise courage or bravery could be incorporated into the new name and thereby into the new identity. Her own adoption of the word 'Darkwolf' in her name in fact inverts this process as she admits to a longtime fear of the dark, and, by embracing this word in her chosen name, helps her, she says, to confront her worst fears face-to-face.

I have included a written account from four local Pagans, each of whom can be situated on the continuum from the complete adoption of a magical Pagan name, to the highest levels of secrecy with its usage. Although some accounts are lengthy, each in its way is an important insight into the process of self-naming in Paganism and how integrally related this process is to a personal identity. They also illustrate the rampantly open-sourced nature of modern Paganism. Although two of these four identities are openly disclosed, one will be self-evident to many readers, and one remains anonymous by request, I have called them Name Respondents 1, 2, 3 and 4.

(The words in italics are mine. The accounts are in their own words.)

Name Respondent 1 – *This person is representative of an English tradition that claims direct hereditary lineage, and within which codes of secrecy require that magical names be known only to fellow coveners and close witch friends. There are absolutely no other forums where any, but the individual's legal birth name, is used.* As an initiate of a Welsh Traditional coven I am bound by its rules not to reveal my Witch name to any outside the group other than very close Witch friends. However, I can reveal that mine is the name of a bird strongly associated with various paths within western occultism, and partly chosen for that reason. In addition to European Witchcraft it has particularly strong links to the Northern Magical Tradition and also resonates (for me at least) with the darkness of the Left Hand Path to both of which I am strongly attracted. My Witch name reflects many aspects of my magical personality including the association with Nature, intelligence, light and darkness, the connection to the Otherworld, reflects my claimed Traditional Witchcraft practice and its understanding of familiars, a sense of freedom, and much else besides.

Name Respondent 2 – *Although Arias is the name by which this person is known in Pagan circles, her birth name is used by non-Pagan friends and family as well as in the workplace. She therefore moves quite comfortably between the two.* I use the name "Arias Indlovu of Kemet-AfriKa" as my public Pagan name. It also forms part of what is my "secret" ritual name. The Name "Arias" first came to me after a meditation session. I wasn't particularly looking for a name, it just came to me, I liked it and started using it. The Name "Indlovu" was a name I took to honor a friend of mine, who lost his life while helping others; to me this means that I keep his memory alive by carrying his name with me. I later became "Arias Indlovu of AfriKa", adding the "of AfriKa" came after I stopped trying to find Home, when I realized I was in fact home, right here in Africa. I took the alternative spelling to emphasize the Spirit or Ka of the land. When I was presented with my third level within the House of Ouroborus, I added "Kemet-" to my name as part of a reference to my "secret" ritual name. Kemet is Egyptian for Black and has a multi-layered meaning. My "Ouroborian" ritual name is divided up into perhaps 4 sections, each part revealed to a student as they progress through my Clan, leaving only the level three members with my full ritual name. I don't use this name anywhere else, other than in Ouroborian ritual, and it is almost a gift for me and for my Clan folk who

share it. The "secret" names play an important role in the sharing and bonding I have with those who work closely with me in my Clan. Only those who have worked diligently and sincerely will know my full name. My name has power, but not the kind you may be thinking of. It has the power to connect, to bind, and to transform my relationship from one level to the next, like somersaulting upwards. I believe that there will most likely be a time when I will again amend my name, or even in a specific situation, will take on another altogether.

Name Respondent 3 - *Donna Vos is known publicly as Donna 'DarkWolf' Vos, both in public and in Pagan circles. Her Craft name coexists in her everyday life.*

I do not consider 'Darkwolf' to be a name I chose, but rather one that was chosen for me. For two years before I formed the PFSA I was sick with sweats and visions, and it was already at this time that the wolf came to me as my totem animal. I was comfortable with this as I saw the wolf to be the teacher of the animals. Adding 'dark' to the word wolf is quite strange as I have always been very afraid of the dark. It was in a dream that 'Darkwolf' came to me; I saw this as a *given* name so adopted it although it has been very bad for me with public relations in South Africa. I use it in conjunction with my legal name and am referred to as Donna 'Darkwolf' Vos, a name that reflects who I am, allows me to embrace my shadow-side and to confront my fears.

Name Respondent 4 - *Fey's adoption of her magical name has almost totally superseded her birth name, even to herself. More than just a magical name, it reflects a complete and self-initiated name change. Only her closest family and friends from her youth use her birth name.*

It is not my first magickal name, but one came to me in 1998. Prior to this my magickal name was Thulani, meaning peaceful one, but this didn't ever quite feel right. Also people in the USA did not understand it's meaning, so when I was asked to be a moderator on mIRC in the chatroom #wicca I called myself Woodwitch. The name Fey Fand was, I believe, magickally given to me when I acquired a set of Faery Wicca tarot cards. Every time I did a reading, Fand the Faery Queen, Banrion of Uisce, came up representing me. Close friends started to call me Fey Fand before I introduced myself to the Goddess as this. According to Irish legend, she was married to Mannanan Mac Lir, Ard Ri of Uisce and the son of the Irish sea god Lir. Fey Fand is described as artistic and imaginative, receptive, romantic and affectionate and to quote from "Faery Wicca Tarot" by Kisma K Stepanich "spirituality actively supported by the emotional nature of masculine force in life; the female body; in the autumn of life; a mature woman between age thirty and death; woman's intuition flowing; the psychic's card..." In Scottish tradition the meaning of the word "Fey" means "off with the faeries; psychic; with second sight". According to the Oxford English Dictionary it also means "close to death". I relate to all these descriptions. I birth a huge amount of information in dreams and my intuition is very strong. Together with my third (secret) magickal name, Fey Fand adds up to the number 22 in numerology, the same number as my life path number, bringing balance to my life. When I decided to start teaching Wicca and fly out of the broom closet, I decided to use my magickal name publicly. My reason for this originally was to protect my family (who are not pagans) from any discrimination, although over time they have come to accept my path. Having been adopted and already having had two separate given names, I thought it right and just that I could now choose to be known by the name which I believe fits my shape and empowers me. My name reminds me to

always listen to my intuition and to stay in close touch with the Otherworld. It is a daily reminder to me to walk my path in strength and with good intent, wisdom and gratitude for all that is. The meaning of the word "Fey" as "close to death" reminds me that I have already had cancer once and must live in the present moment and give thanks for every day I have in this incarnation. Fey Fand fits me more than any other name I have ever had and I strongly identify with it. I carry my name with pride and thanksgiving.

These personal accounts of the adoption of a magical name bear testimony to the variety of sources on which a Pagan can draw, and illustrate the relevance of this adoption to their sense of personal Pagan identity. The degrees to which these respondents use their names in public reflect the importance secrecy is given in specific traditions, and, equally, the practitioner's individual ease at publicly disclosing a Pagan identity in all sectors of society.

--

The Pagan Sense of Embodiment

Paganism is what Graham Harvey calls "a somatic philosophy of life" (1997: vii) It is in the 'doing' that Pagan identities are forged; a 'doing' that extends to all spheres of life, and that thereby conflates many dominant dualisms with regard to what is religious and what is mundane. According to my survey, over eighty percent confirmed, in one way or another, that ritual life and everyday life, are interconnected and reciprocal, with sixty percent strongly stating that they are inseparable. These understandings support the Pagan conception of the sacrality of the natural world and are the impetus behind the various modes of interacting with that world. These interactions begin with the body, the site of all spiritual experience. Pagans attest to being 'at home in the body', and consequently use the body and the spaces it occupies as a canvas on which identity can be inscribed. The process of constructing a Pagan identity is thus inclined to move from one of inner acceptance to ways of marking this acceptance in external, material ways.

Body Adornment and Modification

Very frequently, but not always, the aforementioned procedure begins with the body that is symbolically marked and/or adorned. Through clothing, jewelry and/or body markings, Pagans make visible their identities and also celebrate the body as the site of primary connection with the natural world and the divine.

Jewellery

To my survey question “Do you have any external symbols of your belief?” eighty two percent said “yes”. Of this group, seventy four percent confirmed that they wear a pentagram. This symbol has been ascribed many meanings over the centuries, and has associations as wide-ranging as with the Hebrews, medieval Christians, ancient Greeks, Druids, western occult and ritual societies such as the Freemasons and Rosicrucians, and modern Pagans.⁴ The identification of Pagans with the pentagram cannot be underestimated, and today has a broadened connotation from Gerald Gardner’s original usage of the symbol to indicate degrees of initiation in his new religion of Wicca. For Pagans, this five-pointed star symbolises the four elements ruled over by spirit, and is associated with the feminine element, earth. In South Africa this symbol incorporates a range of meanings, and initiates a variety of responses ranging from ignorance, interest, and misrepresentation, through to open discrimination and prejudice. The latter is generally attributed by Pagans to the association, made most often by Christians, (their attribution), that the pentagram is ‘a sign of the devil’, and/or a sign of Satanic groups or activity⁵. There appears to be two primary sources for these assertions. Firstly the pentagram has a long history in occultism and magical practice, and was taken as a symbol by Anton Szandor LaVey (1930-1997)⁶, founder of the Church of Satan⁷. Worn by Satanists with the top point,

(recognized by Pagans as symbolizing spirit), pointing downwards, this inversion is seldom understood or recognized, and is a source of distress for Pagans who resent this usage by Satanists. Many media and film portrayals of Pagan Witchcraft use the inverted pentagram in illustration, thereby supporting and extending this misrepresentation. A second source is the depiction or understanding of the pentagram as a satanic symbol in a number of institutions in South Africa. This will be developed in later chapters, but an example relevant at this point, is the definition given to the symbol by Colonel Kobus Jonker in his book *Satanism in South Africa*, co-written with Lien Els. From his earlier statement that dissociates Pagan Witchcraft from Satanism when Jonker writes, “large numbers of people feel that a wide variety of unrelated, benign religions (such as Santeria, and other Caribbean religions, Druids, New Age or Wicca are forms of Satanism” (2000: 2), he then obscures the unrelatedness by providing the following definition of a pentagram.

The five-pointed star is also a very important symbol in the occult. When Satan was still called Lucifer, he was known as the “son of the morning”, the “light bearer of heaven” (Isaiah 14: 12-15). To Satanists, Satan is still the light bearer. The five points of the inverted pentagram represent the horns, ears and beard of a goat. The goat is used to represent the individual above the masses. “All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left” (Matthew 25: 32-33). Therefore, Satanism is dependent upon followers who are willing to separate themselves from the masses in an attempt to become more useful towards society. The pentagram also represents the four elements (earth, wind, fire and water) conquered by the spirit (the top point) (ibid: 107).

The wearing in public of symbols that denote personal religious affiliations is a moot issue locally and internationally. For Pagans, the choice to wear the symbol in public is seen as a constitutional right, but is also worn in participation with the contestation of meaning around the symbol. Recognition of the Pagan ascriptions of meaning to the symbol must therefore be read in conjunction with the oppositional stance taken when wearing the pentagram. Over the years many Pagans have told me quite distressing stories of discrimination they have endured due to wearing the pentagram, whereas others recount no repercussions at all beyond a general interest or query. It was with evangelical and conservative Christian individuals or groups that most of the negative incidents took place, and usually where Pagans were aware that its visibility could be provocative. This factor exacerbates the resistance of Pagans to the infringement of their rights, and most especially when this is based on a lack of understanding and/or what they perceive as the privileging of some religious symbols and traditions over others. From the earlier quotation taken from Colonel Jonker's book, it requires no explanation as to how this symbol has come to be seen as satanic, anti-Christian and that the denouncing of it biblically supported. The damage of this rhetoric lies in the widespread influence his book has achieved in South Africa.

Other symbols commonly worn by Pagans, and equally associated with Satanism by Colonel Jonker, are the Egyptian Ankh⁸, the Scarab⁹ and the Taoist yin yang¹⁰. Many persons and groups amongst whom this book has been disseminated, have attributed to him a status of authority, have no material against which his statements can be measured, and therefore perpetuate his (mis)representations. For the Pagan wearer, however, the meaning of symbols is important to their sense of self, is understood as "providing protection", "they mark my connection to the elements", and even, as

“identifying me to outsiders”. Despite the almost total adoption in South Africa of the pentagram as a Pagan symbol, there are those who, although they might use this symbol in ritual, reject wearing it publicly for a number of reasons. For some this is said to stem from a fear of discrimination, for others it is seen as “an unnecessary public statement”; an issue that highlights one of the differences of opinion within the South African Pagan community, and therefore takes on a political dimension.

Pagans are inclined to wear robes¹¹ or casual wear in rituals, but in their everyday lives are mostly indistinguishable from the non-Pagan community. The aforementioned political dimension likewise finds a place through individuals who choose to wear robes and elaborate jewelry, (and in particular the pentagram), in their mundane lives and/or when appearing as a Pagan on some public forum. These individuals are often denounced, at best as being over-theatrical, and, at worst, as directly contributing to the negative stereotyping of Pagans in some parts of society. The pentagram is, for most Pagans, nonetheless an important symbol with multiple layers of meaning. When worn, it is a primary means of identity disclosure; symbolically to the self, and also as one of disclosure as it is used as a code with which to identify oneself as a Pagan to others in the community. As Magliocco says, “Even in a nonreligious setting, those who know the code will be able to identify and understand the meaning of the symbols, and glean important information about the wearer” (2001: 36).

The body as art

Besides jewelry, bodies can also be marked and/or modified with tattoos and piercings as a way of indicating their new identity. This new aesthetic of body modification

has, in contemporary society, a range far wider than modern Paganism, and has been the subject of studies and books. Often called New Tribalism or even, as the title of a book on this subject suggests, *Modern Primitives*¹², this phenomenon is often read as ways in which bodies are used and presented to critique and challenge dominant structures in society. Despite many negative perceptions associated with body modification—particularly in white South African society, where such practices can be labelled as subversive and anti-authoritarian—for most Pagans, they reflect inner meanings as well as openly confronting cultural trends that, in their estimation, alienate the individual from the body and deny the individual full self-expression.

Through these practices Pagans make important statements regarding their identity, using the body as the site on which these statements are recorded and communicated. Very often tattoos take the form of the symbols worn as jewelry, but can include a range as wide as the depiction of power animals¹³, mythological beings, symbols of the elements, or of the astrological sign of the bearer. For some the practice takes on a deeper and more purposive dimension, when the pain inflicted during procedures is experienced as an altered state of consciousness with the end result consequently becoming an indicator of an important event or experience in the life of the individual. For this group each piercing or tattoo is described as relevant; a material mark on the body that stands as a permanent, external symbol to which internal meanings are ascribed. Many Pagans feel that in secular society and in the forms of religion most practiced in South Africa, there is a marked lack of ritualisation of events deemed important in the personal life of the individual. Body modifications can be seen as the personal and individual marking of self-identified rites of passage, and, for Pagans

who adopt these practices, are accompanied by layers of spiritual and religious meaning.

Embodied Spirituality

Pagans who do not mark or adorn their bodies do nonetheless recognize the body as both a conduit and a vehicle for religious experience. Such experiences—whether communing with deity and the elements in formal ritual, or practicing techniques such as meditation or visualizations—start *in* the body with a process widely referred to as ‘to ground and center’. This exercise is used to focus awareness on the body. On inhalation, the individual visualizes energy being drawn up from the earth, through the feet and up through the whole body where it meets with the energy points of the individual, and so centers the flow of power within the body. Used to calm and focus the individual, this process provides the starting point for either invoking the deities or the qualities of the elements into the ritual, and then into the body, for magical workings. The body thereby is the site where divine energy can work *with* the will and energy of the practitioner in order to facilitate healing, magic and transformation. This Pagan recognition of the immanence of the divine in the material is one of few defining features of contemporary Paganism¹⁴. Epistemologically, in Pagan traditions, experience and knowledge are located in the body.

Embodied knowledge is in contrast with the Western scientific tradition that supported an objective, empirical and rational basis for all investigation. Pagan epistemology inverts this statement by arguing that such endeavours can equally be subjective, non-empirical and situated in the personal, the local and the specific. This ‘way of knowing’ is succinctly described by John Broomfield when he says,

Knowledge does not refer simply to the intellect. We all have “inner knowing.” Our bodies have knowledge. They know how to be born, they know how to breathe, they know how to grow, they know how to heal, they know how to love, they know how to give birth, they know how to die. Deep wisdom is available to us if we will but listen intently to our bodies (1997: 219).

In other words, Pagans understand that experience and transcendence can be situated in embodied and natural environments that also include the body. The Cartesian notion that the body and the mind are totally separate had much influence on Enlightenment thought. Pagan scholar and environmental activist Adrian Harris comments in a paper on his website¹⁵ that,

This idea that the body and mind are entirely separate has been profoundly influential, and has helped encourage the connected idea that knowledge is something that is in the mind, and therefore, if Descartes is right, cannot be in the body (2003: 2).

In argument, Harris draws on the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty¹⁶ (1908-1961) whereby mind and consciousness are embodied in the world and, therefore, “*all* knowledge is embodied, and it’s created in the unity between subjects and objects that is the direct result of having a body” (ibid: 2). In other words, Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion that ‘mind’ is always embodied in the physical, is the starting point in Pagan epistemology and the basis for their magical practice.

The Pagan experience, spoken of as “being in the world”, endorses their understandings of embodiment and interconnectedness with other forms of life, in both the visible and the invisible realms. As previously mentioned, the word ‘Pagan’

is commonly understood by South African Pagans to derive from the Latin word, *paganus*, meaning country-dweller. This is understandable as this meaning has been the most widely forwarded in Pagan literature since the earliest of publications on the subject. As a result of international scholarship, many Pagans, although very few in South Africa, now accept this “to have developed mainly with the Romantic literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and Victorian urban growth from the mid nineteenth century” (Pearson 2002: 16)¹⁷. Historian, Ronald Hutton explains that ‘*pagus*’, as meaning ‘locality’, is the most definitive account of the word.¹⁸ This meaning, “simply denoted those who preferred the faith of the *pagus*, the local unit of government; that is, the rooted or old, religion” (Hutton 1999: 4). This definition, by implication, links the individual with the ‘spirit of place’, with the local energies of the land, and with the deity forms associated with that specific locale. Early Pagan religions were not one homogenous unit, but rather a plethora of traditions and cults dedicated to different deities in different locations. Most Pagans in South Africa are urban, and yet romantically link their identity with the rustic ‘country dweller’, and therefore with communities who they perceive live, or have lived, in a closer relationship with the land. Their eclectic revisiting and reinvigoration of pre-Christian pagan religions and traditions, and the borrowing from living indigenous and tribal religions, is quite different from Reconstructionist Pagan groups who live *on* the land of their ancestors and worship local deities. In terms of this division, one finds, in the South African context, firstly, the notion of embodiedness as the key by which Pagans connect and commune with the entire human and other-than-human world; and, secondly, an extremely low incidence of the worship of local deities and divine forms. Pagan deities are customarily drawn from an array of pantheons that often collapses geographic and temporal distances, and, fairly often are devoid of in-

depth investigation. Sometimes, rather than the appropriation of deities from pre-Christian pagan religions, Pagans draw on deities from indigenous and/or Eastern religions. Whilst Hindu deities have begun to attract local attention, African deities only rarely find their way into Pagan rituals. Paganism in South Africa is, demographically, predominantly a white movement comprised of individuals who, on the one hand, celebrate embodied reality and work with African energies of the land, and, on the other hand, mostly reach back to what they perceive to be the ritual and deity forms of their own ancestors. The appropriation of Hindu deities is a contradiction to this statement, and one I attribute more to a far wider exposure in the new South Africa to other cultural and religious forms, and yet, strangely, is combined with a relatively low exposure to African Religion that remains far more culturally bound, where meaning exists in a specific community, and where ancestor veneration, rather than the worship of deity, is the central referent.

Movement and the Body

The body is a cardinal tool in the Pagan quest for knowledge and is used in direct relationship with the spaces it occupies. Dance is another form by which such relationships can be facilitated and through which Pagan knowledge of the self and one's identity can be created, reinforced and articulated. Sarah Pike (2001: 189) quotes performance theorist Deirdre Sklar who argued that, "Movement is a corporeal way of knowing. It is loaded with significance, with who people take themselves to be, as verbal media.", and also that,

...the medium of embodied knowledge is not words but sensations in which are stored intertwined corporeal, emotional, and conceptual memories. This is

to say, that we cannot fabricate, through words and other media, sensory worlds (ibid: 189).

Dance and movement is common in many Pagan festivals and rituals, and is also extensively used for the raising of energies for ritual purposes. The most well-known of all Pagan dances is Starhawk's¹⁹ Spiral Dance²⁰, also the title of her early and significant book (1979) of the same name. This dance is one in which a line of people circle then, "...circle in and out around one another as everyone looks into the faces of the people passing opposite them" (Rabinovitch and Lewis (eds) 2002: 258)²¹. If the group is not sufficiently large for a Spiral Dance, then participants frequently dance in a circular motion, often to the beat of drums, usually accompanied by chants and songs. There are many symbolic meanings to ritual and festival dance through which individuals connect with each other that provide a means to attune the dancers with the energies of the natural world and divine energy. A notable connection with an element is brought particularly close in fire dancing; a dance where individual dancers spin flaming torches to synchronize with the movements of the body. The patterns created belong as much to dancer as to flame, uniting the Pagan body with a cardinal element. Many private and personal meanings and interpretations are held in the body and find expression in movement, dance and song.²²

Pagans encounter divinity in all aspects of the mundane, material world; not least in natural life-cycles, and in the material body. A positive affirmation of the body and the many ways in which the Pagan conception of a bi-gendered divine are, through mythologies, symbolized in ritual practice, in art, poetry and song, add a sense of personal liberation to the new identity. The individual gives him/herself permission to establish his/her own codes of conduct in relation to the body, and is provided with

the means to overturn dominant dualisms that separate spirit from matter, and consequently, from the body. This liberation coexists with an awareness of its oppositional stance to mainstream attitudes. In South Africa there appears to be a real accommodation of these attitudes and therefore a low incidence of public disclosure of Pagan views surrounding the body. The general conservativeness of South Africans also permeates local Paganism, where ritual nudity is approved of only in private or solitary rituals, and where any behaviours regarding the body and/or sexuality are no different from all other sectors of society. The perception held, however, of Pagan licentiousness and debauchery, appear to have developed from the medieval Christian maligning of early pagan mystery religions²³, and the medieval constructions of the witch as usually female, a sorcerer and one with an insatiable sexual appetite. Such attributions to modern Pagans and Witches is perpetuated in many media and television depictions, and through discourses disseminated from many of our institutions. The knowledge of this, and its effects on a Pagan identity, are in tension within the individual, with the positive, liberating yet oppositional position Pagans take regarding the human body.

Marking identities in personal spaces

The marking of personal space with their religious beliefs is a widespread practice by Pagans who also create and reflect their identities in the home. This feature leads Magliocco to say, “Paganism is therefore predominantly a domestic religion, one that requires equipping one’s domestic space with the requisite rituals tools and accoutrements” (2004: 64). One of the reasons for this is that, in Paganism, sacred space is most often created in the home, as opposed to dedicated buildings such as churches, temples or mosques. Many South African Pagans who are open with their

family and friends regarding their Paganism, have specific areas entirely dedicated to this purpose, with permanently constructed or marked circles and altars, for ritual workings. Some, who are unable to permanently allocate this much space in their homes, often use the entire dwelling as a place where they can translate their identities. Every individual is the author of his/her own translation, exercising considerable thought and creativity in the adornment of personal space.

The generally conservative nature of parts of South African society still inclines some Pagans to be reticent in the visible marking of their identities, but I believe that the process is still undertaken in more subtle forms. In some homes I have seen, for example, either water symbolized by a sea-shell, fire by a candle, earth by a plant and air by a feather. A Pagan can, in this way, project his/her identity on personal space in the home, and yet attract no detection whatsoever. Because Pagans make a connection between their personal identities and aspects in the natural world, there is an emphasis on depicting their conceptions of such correspondences in the home. To do this, very often the elements are given symbolic representation in a myriad of ways. Colour²⁴ can be used in specific locations to indicate the colour associated with a particular direction; minerals and crystals are selected for their unique properties, but also as tools to understand or heal the self, others or the earth; fragrances in the form of incenses or oils can abound, each selected mindfully so that their properties correspond with the intent of the individual. The doctrine of symbolic correspondence, that is both developed and internalized by Pagans, is an influence taken from the history of western ritual magic, and one in which symbolic correspondences are understood to exist between all parts of the visible and invisible universe (Hanegraaf 1996: 398). This principle is called the Hermetic Axiom and is

ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus²⁵, and “describes the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm. It is expressed, “As above, so below.”” (Drury 2002: 140). The ‘divine spark’ is found *in* the body, itself a metaphor of the world. Adrian Ivakhiv extends this point by quoting Morris Berman who said,

The world was seen as a vast assemblage of correspondences. All things have relationships with other things, and these relations are ones of sympathy and antipathy... Things are also analogous to man in the famous alchemical concept of the microcosm and the macrocosm: the rocks of the earth are its bones, the rivers its veins, the forests its hair and the cicadas its dandruff. The world duplicates and reflects itself in an endless network of similarity and dissimilarity (1996: 244).

Pagan Altars

The construction and decoration of an altar in the home is customary for Pagans, with eighty six percent of my survey respondents affirming this custom, and twenty percent of whom attested to having several. There is no prescription as to where the altar is placed; it can be indoors or outdoors, simple or complex, permanent or temporary, rigidly or flexibly decorated, and used or not, as a working ritual altar. Speaking of the history of altars in religion, and that they are commonly “sites of interaction between sacred and secular.” Magliocco further explains that,

Neo-Pagan altars and shrines have their roots in these historical sites, in the magician’s altars of Renaissance occult practice, and in the home altars characteristic of vernacular Catholicism and other mainstream religions. Yet they also depart from these traditions in significant ways, forging their own unique path which embodies the poetics of this emergent movement (2001: 8).

In this quotation Magliocco demonstrates the open sourced nature of much Pagan practice, and yet also draws attention to the active process involved in identity construction. Sarah Pike (2001: 66) interestingly calls Pagan altars “the smallest and most personal festival places”, and it is certainly one of the most tangible disclosures of a Pagan identity. It is on altars, whether for formal rituals, as features in a home, office or garden, that Pagan identities are most visibly encoded. They are creative and expressive, and, when decoded, provide a rich narrative of the individual’s particular religious identity, intentions and concerns.

Pagan altars incorporate symbols of the elements, and Wiccan and Witchcraft altars, in addition, will represent the god and the goddess/masculine and feminine aspects of the divine in a number of eclectic and personal ways. The subject of ritual tools and altars is more central to the next chapter, but must be mentioned here for the role the altar plays in the articulation of a Pagan identity. Ritual tools such as the athame²⁶, the chalice or cup²⁷ and wand, along with candles and incense and other accoutrements, are combined with the above to form what Magliocco calls, “liminal spaces that serve as gateways or points of access to the world of the deities” (2001: 12). Ritual tools are consecrated for use in ritual and are used both as symbols and as channels for divine energy. In so doing, the Pagan performs his/her identity as a magical self who can a) facilitate connections between the individual and the natural world and b) experience unmediated, embodied encounters with the divine, and, in so doing, c) affect change on the self and the world. It is apposite to note that on the Christian website (<http://www.actup.co.za>) there is an article²⁸ by Christian counselor F.H.Havenga in which the pentagram, knives, cups and candles are listed as objects that denote Satanic activity without any reference to their histories and usages in other

religious traditions and practices. Colonel Kobus Jonker is named as advisor on this list.

Conclusion

Pagan personal identities are mostly understood as innate and essential, and are developed through a process that looks back for reaffirmation, forward for consolidation, and which are then expressed and articulated in creative and changing ways. The ongoing development of personal Pagan identities is a feature I metaphorically call, the Pagan 'journey of discovery'. Belief in the immanence of the divine in all material forms is expressed in connections made between the self and the natural world, in a celebration of embodied reality and through the practice of magic.

Standing, as it does, outside of mainstream traditions, the adoption of a Pagan identity in South Africa is always contested and oppositional, despite whether this is expressed only in the most subtle of ways, or whether it is the site for deep schisms and tensions with other groups or individuals in our society.

As a personal Pagan identity is explored, developed and adjusted, it is usually accompanied by the external manifestation of these stages on the body and in the personal surroundings of the practitioner. Very few, if any, Pagans restrict their identities and beliefs to the cerebral, but mark and perform them in visible, highly symbolic forms. The two most important of these, and the subject of the next chapter, is through ritual and mythology.

¹ In South Africa today belief in the efficacy of magic is still high in African Religion. The State denial of witchcraft simultaneously compounds its identification with the non-rational and non-empirical.

² Donna Vos was first president of the Pagan Federation of South Africa, and is the founder of the Circle of the African Moon, generally referred to as CAM. She has a high public profile as a Wiccan priestess and Pagan leader, and is the author of the first book on Paganism in South Africa (2002).

³ Telephonic conversation 22-08-05.

⁴ For more on these associations see Hutton (1999: 67-68) and Magliocco (2001: 36-39).

⁵ I myself have been present at a talk on security given to a Writers Circle by a member of the South African Police Services, who used Colonel Jonker's book as a source to inform the group that a pentagram is an indicator of Satanic activity. No mention was made of the inversion of the pentagram, nor that there are any other possible associations with the symbol. He named Jonker's book as the source of his information.

⁶ Anton LaVey's real name was Howard Stanton Levey.

⁷ Nevill Drury says of the Church of Satan that "it was located on California Street in San Francisco, and claimed an affiliated membership of seven thousand supporters. It encouraged the development of the animal instincts, self-indulgence, and free sexuality, and included in its rituals a satanic 'mass' (2002: 50). A breakaway group from the Church of Satan founded The Temple of Set in 1975.

⁸ Jonker says that the Ankh is, "An Egyptian symbol symbolizing life and fertility and the building of lust within a person. It is also called the Long Life Seal. The bottom part of the cross indicates the male form of life and the upper circle the female form of life. The Ancient Egyptians used the sign while worshipping the sun god, Ra. Satanists used it during sexual rituals and see it as a sign of the male penetrating the female" (2000: 114). This definition is an important one for the manner in which it links the very strongly held Pagan views on life and fertility with conceptions of Satanism. A definition of the ankh, given by Nevill Drury, clearly shows how usage of language can be used to create very different associations and meanings. It says an ankh is an, "Egyptian symbol resembling a cross with a loop at the top. The ankh is a symbol of life and every major Egyptian deity is depicted carrying it. It has been suggested by some that the symbol has a sexual origin, combining the penis and vagina in one motif; however, Egyptologist Wallis Budge regards this interpretation as "unlikely". The ankh is also known as the *crux ansata*" (2002: 13).

⁹ Els and Jonker say that, "This design is based on the dung beetle and is the ancient Egyptian symbol for reincarnation. The scarab is also associated with Beelzebub, Lord of the flies (Satan). It is worn by occultists to show that they have power and is a source of protection" (2000: 115).

¹⁰ In a definition in which he introduces New Age usages alongside (purportedly) Satanic usages, Els and Jonker define this symbol as, "The yin yang... in its Taoist origin symbolises the unification of opposites: black and white, good and bad, male and female and Satan and God. It is a symbol used mainly by the New Agers to symbolise the unification of the male and female spirit. Once this unification has been completed, the "new person" of the New Age will emanate (Marss, 1989: 120-121). Satanists, however, use it as a sign that Light and Dark are uniting, that man and woman can be heterosexual and that there is actually no difference between God and Satan. ...a Christian should not associate himself with this sign" (2000: 120).

¹¹ In chapter six there is a more detailed discussion of Pagan dress in ritual.

¹² Vale, V. *Modern Primitives* Re/Search Publishers, 1989.

¹³ "Power Animal. In shamanism, a creature which appears on the spirit journey of the soul while the shaman is in a state of trance. The power animal usually resembles an actual species but may sometimes be a mythical or imaginary creature. It is invariably regarded as a personification of magical power and may be summoned in rituals and ceremonies" (Drury 2002: 254).

¹⁴ Despite the recognition of the divine as manifesting in the material world, this does not exclude some transcendent and/or gnostic experiences in some parts of the Pagan community. The debate on whether overtly gnostic practices can be included in the Pagan category, is not discussed as widely by Pagans in South Africa, as has been done so by their overseas counterparts. For a detailed discussion see York (2003: 157-161).

¹⁵ <http://www.thegreenfuse.org/harris/notions-of-ek.htm>. The article is called *Notions of Embodied Knowledge* and was originally written for a presentation at University College Winchester in February, 2003.

¹⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty was the youngest chair of the College of France when he was appointed to the position in 1952, a post he held until his death.

¹⁷ For more on the various interpretations of the word Pagan see Pearson (2002: 16-20).

¹⁸ For this finding he acknowledges the work of French academic Pierre Chuvin in his work *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

¹⁹ Starhawk (1951-) was born Myriam Simos. She is widely attributed as the leading inspiration behind the development of Goddess Spirituality in Witchcraft, and for the political slant to her theology that underpins her feminist and peace activism. She is co-founder of the Reclaiming tradition of Witchcraft and a well known figure in international movements that work for social change.

²⁰ See Magliocco (2004: 122-126) for an account of a Spiral Dance held by Starhawk's Reclaiming Movement held in San Francisco. This account is taken from her field notes, October 29th, 1995. Also refer to page 110 of this text. For further information see Salomonsen (2002: 207-209).

²¹ For more information see Rabinovitch and Lewis (2002: 258).

²² Whilst there is no Pagan festival culture yet in South Africa, Pike describes other dimensions of Pagan ritual dance (2001: 183, 191-5). Some of these can already be seen in rituals in South Africa and others will no doubt find place as new structures of communication develop here.

²³ One example is the cult of Dionysus who, as Greek god of wine and fertility, was worshipped in orgies, held particularly in the spring. Nevill Drury says that, "Dionysus symbolized freedom and spontaneous impulses, and encouraged a distinct lack of reverence for the other gods. Dance, music, and wine were regarded by his followers as a release, a real surrender to the pure, unfettered joy of being alive" (2002: 74).

²⁴ Colours can be used in a room to represent the four cardinal elements to which they are assigned. There is no prescription as to what element is assigned to a specific direction, but rather rationalized to make sense to the individual practitioner or group. In the northern hemisphere it is most common to find the following; north=earth=green, south=fire=red, east=air=yellow and west=water=blue. Here in the southern hemisphere, where the sun is due north at midday, the elements of fire and earth are inverted so that north=fire=red and south=earth=green. There is, however, a wide range of diversity and interpretation.

²⁵ Nevill Drury describes Hermes Trismegistus as, "Thrice-greatest Hermes", the principal figure in the mystical literature collectively known as Hermetica. He is thought to be a combination of Greek Hermes and the Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth; and takes the role, in the Hermetica, of a prophet or spiritual leader who can save the world from evil" (2002: 140).

²⁶ An athame is a double-edged metal dagger used in the casting of sacred space. Introduced to Wicca by Gerald Gardner, Ronald Hutton (1999: 229) says of the name, "This is derived from the *Key of Solomon* but only in a few recensions of the work". For more detail see pages 229-230 of the same text. The athame is associated with the masculine element.

²⁷ The chalice is a ritual tool that is associated with the feminine, with water and with receptivity.

²⁸ This can be accessed on the website <http://www.actup.co.za/pages/infodesk.htm>.

CHAPTER SIX

PAGAN NARRATIVES: THE ARTICULATION OF MYTHOLOGICAL AND MAGICAL IDENTITIES

Pagan personal identities are linked to the broader social context, largely through narrative processes in the form of story-telling, song and verse. Through these processes personal Pagan identities are articulated, explored and expanded. They are also ongoing and changeable as the individual relates his/her self-understandings to a wider context. Mark Gover in his paper on *The Narrative Emergence of Identity* says, “In the crafting of personal stories: narrative language practices are a constituent of identity development” (1998: 7)¹. Most Pagans are consummate story-tellers, whose stories reflect the relationship between their developing personal identity and a variety of artefacts on which they draw for both reinforcement and legitimization of this identity. The role played by myth and magic in this process, and the way in which both feed into Pagan practices and discourses, will be central to the discussion.

The narrative process is integral to the construction of identities and involves the “sewing together of events (past, present and future) for purposes of meaning-making and identity construction, and is ultimately a narrative pursuit” (Gover 1998: 4). This statement of Gover’s is generalized, but has wide implications in the Pagan context. Pagan identity narratives are both fertile and dense, and draw on multiple sources for their construction. Whilst they are constructed and narrated in the present, ideas from the past frequently conflate both centuries and cultures alike. The breadth of such appropriations in their narratives provides a valuable template of Pagan self-

understandings. Central to this are what can be called foundational myths, or myths of continuity, in which a number of themes can be identified, with many issues between them overlapping.

Myths of Continuity

The Old Religion

A central feature found in Pagan narratives is their claim to be either a survival, or revival, of ancient pre-Christian religions, folk-customs, and, for some, of magical systems. This cognitive link with the distant past was a primary discourse in the development of the contemporary movement, has featured prominently in investigations into its history, and continues to inspire the Pagan mind.

Although not the first to use the term ‘The Old Religion’, in his book entitled *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959), Gerald B. Gardner describes the process by which he came to use the term ‘Wicca’ to describe the religion of witches. Drawing heavily on the work of Charles Leland², Egyptologist Dr. Margaret Murray³, and Sir James Frazer⁴, Gardner recounts meeting a group of people who substantiated their theories of a surviving Old Religion by telling him, “You belonged to us in the past. You are of the blood... back to where you belong” (2004: 3). Gardner continues,

I realized that I had stumbled on something interesting; but I was half-initiated before the word ‘Wica’ which they used hit me like a thunderbolt, and I knew where I was, and that the Old Religion still existed. In this way I made the discovery that the witchcult that people thought to have been persecuted out of existence, still lived. I found, too, what it was that made so many of our

ancestors dare imprisonment, torture and death rather than give up the worship of the Old Gods and the love of the old ways (ibid: 3).

This statement of Gardner's fed into and ratified certain ideas that had been in circulation since before the turn of the century, in occult societies, folklore groups, academic works and popular fiction of the time.

The Golden Age

The ideas of an Old Religion and a witchcult that had survived almost two centuries of Christian dominance were often conflated with ideas of a Golden Age and of the Noble Savage. Ideas of a Golden Age appeared to take different forms; from a time of a matriarchal Goddess culture⁵ that had spread across Old Europe, to a period when humankind had lived in a closer relationship with the natural world. The latter gave rise to conceptions of the Noble Savage and an attendant resurgence in interest in indigenous communities, both past and present. Modern day Pagans identify their religion in terms of its ability to revive and restore a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world that has largely been lost or forgotten over two millennia. Much importance is consequently given by Pagans to communities who have sustained indigenous practices, and to nature-venerating, polytheistic societies, both ancient and modern. Their appropriations can take the form of true reconstructions, or be an eclectic appropriation of ideas and practices from different societies and cultures. Although direct talk of a Golden Age is uncommon in Pagan narratives, the inherent features of the mythology are close to the surface when Pagans talk of bringing a spiritual connection to the alienations in modern societies.

The myth of matriarchy

An enduring mythology in Paganism is that of a pre-Christian matriarchal, Goddess worshipping society. The myth of matriarchy was given support by the work of J.J. Bachofen who “postulated three evolutionary stages that society had gone through from a general ‘promiscuity’, through matriarchy up to patriarchy” (Rees 1995: 24). The fact that goddesses have taken form in many archaic societies has not been reinforced by archeological findings that there ever was a society in the past, unified by a single goddess. Although an idealization of the past, the myth does have value for modern Paganism in the present as it subliminally supports feminist theologian Mary Daly’s view that a religion, in which the God is male, creates societies that support the male as God.⁶ Pagans argue for a Goddess-centered religiosity as a corrective to patriarchal systems in which many contend ‘the earth, the body and women are denigrated’.

Besides being formative to central themes found in Pagan discourses, these mythologies are an important part of identity formation in the movement. The employment of these mythologies in their narratives seems to authenticate a Pagan identity through validating the present with evidence from the past. They also seek to legitimate the beliefs and practices of modern Pagans by situating the individual in a line of ancestry which, although the object of discrimination and persecution through the ages, has been a vestige of ancient wisdoms and teachings. These myths of continuity have been the site of some tensions within Paganism as research in the field since the nineteen eighties has challenged the discrepancies between (re)created histories and objective fact. These myths were the bedrock of Pagan narratives until

presented with challenges that came from within Pagan scholarship that largely discredited the idea of a single surviving Old Religion.

Many Pagans in South Africa have not had access to the type of material that carried such information, and their narratives continue to reflect mythologised histories.

Some Pagans, who extend their investigations more broadly, now reflect these developments in their rhetoric and writings, raising little to no comment or discussion from the community where parallel histories circulate in relative comfort. This is because Pagans in South Africa, as in other parts of the world, appear to internalize the idea of being part of the Old Religion, from the earliest steps on their Pagan path. The rhetoric is carried on many websites, in the greater number of books available on the subject, and is also taught in some Wicca courses offered in the country. I have found that when confronted directly with facts that dispute positions they hold, some individuals can become quite defensive and question the credibility of the author of the these ‘facts’, create new narratives to incorporate this new knowledge, or discard them entirely. Few, if any, totally relinquish their emotive attachment to the past.

Besides being formative to central themes found in Pagan discourses, these mythologies are an important part of identity formation in the movement. Pagan narratives, in this way, tend to conflate the past and the present with visions of the future.

Pagan attachment to the notion of being present-day representatives of an ancient religious tradition has much symbolic significance.

1. These mythologized narratives that are perpetuated in books and on websites, in discussions and within the private sphere of the individual become ‘a shared

narrative'. Even a practitioner in isolation is cognitively part of a larger whole. It concretizes the notion of a community of other like-minded individuals, and inspires the individual to be 'the difference' in a world that is perceived to be often alienating and destructive. I intend no value judgment on commenting on this perception, as global warming, threats of nuclear warfare, deforestation, gender discrimination, religious intolerance and the increasing anonymity of the individual in society, all feature in Pagan narratives of the present. It is to the past and to ancient societies that they look to for correctives.

2. In linking themselves with the past, Pagan also authenticate their religion in a predominantly Christian culture. The Old Gods, or the Gods of their ancestors, are re-appropriated in a myriad of forms by different traditions, each according to its own needs. The veneration and celebration of pre-Christian pantheons of deities in modern traditions is a corrective to Christian conception of a singular male deity that obscures and/or obliterates the feminine dimension of the divine and of multiple forms of religious expression.

3. Both narrative and myth are valuable tools that serve the community in the exploration and articulation of their beliefs, as models for relating their mundane and spiritual worlds, as foundational templates for ritual, and, consequently, to employ in the construction of their Pagan identity. As Donna Vos says,

As with all Pagans, the role of myth cannot be emphasized enough. It is a vehicle of journey into the deeper world of the psyche, and disperses archetypal meaning for people of all religions (2002: 37).

The veracity of the myths, legends and folklore drawn on by Pagans in their narratives is therefore less important than the point made by Toby Johnson, who refers to Joseph Campbell's statement that, "What determines a guiding myth is how it manifests and

explains the place of human life in the mysterious universe” (1992: 199). Through these modalities, the Pagan life is contextualized in a large frame that encompasses the past, present and future, and is constantly changing as the individual develops on his/her chosen Pagan path.

Myths drawn from historical events

Pagan narratives are distinctive in the amount of personal sentiments that are expressed. Besides the myths of continuity that permeated most Pagan narratives from the earliest days of the movement, there are other central motifs born out of historical events in the past that are drawn on by Pagans, often in a mythologised form. It is within these myths that contemporary issues faced by Pagans can be found, and the narratives around these myths move the narratives from ‘the self’ to a wider framework of meaning. This process of narrative and identity construction is therefore social.

Myths of continuity situate individuals as living members of a religious tradition that has developed throughout world history. Other myths have developed that are grounded in actual historical events in the past and feature strongly in Pagan identities. Two related events—the medieval Witch-Hunt era that occurred from the fifteenth century to the late seventeenth century, and the related conflation of witchcraft and Satanism—continue to influence Pagan narratives and stories in the present. The mythologies that surround these events can be the site of division and contestation among Pagans, but, more importantly, they point directly at contemporary Pagan preoccupations in a modern age.

The myth of the 'Burning Times'

Also known as The Great Witch-Hunt, this episode in human history is central to Pagan mythology and is referenced in a plethora of narratives, songs and chants. Taken by many Pagans to have been a period when there was "...a systematic effort on the part of the Catholic Church to eradicate the remaining vestiges of Pagan Goddess religion and its veneration of the land" (Rabinovitch and Lewis (eds) 2002: 32), this myth was fuelled in the development of modern Paganism as, "...the Wiccan claim fitted into an academic semi-orthodoxy; that the people persecuted as witches in Europe's Great Witch Hunt were members of a surviving pagan religion" (Hutton, quoted in Pearson 2002: 225). What entered into its mythology was that the total number of individuals who lost their lives was approximately nine million⁷, and that the majority of these were women. Scholarship from the 1980s onwards⁸ has revealed that figures are most likely to have been between forty and sixty thousand, and that the persecutions were not aimed at the eradication of pagan religion(s), but rather that,

...during the European witch trials, the Inquisitors interpreted age-old popular beliefs in terms of Satan worship, and that it was this fantasy that was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in the witch trials (Cohn, cited by Greenwood 1996: 279).

Medieval 'witchcraft' had, however, differed conspicuously from modern forms of Paganism and Wicca; the Mother Goddess had not yet re-emerged, and emphasis on fertility cults and mystery religions were notably absent.

The survival of the myth of the Burning Times, as this period has been so labeled, signifies its psychological and sociological importance to contemporary Pagans and

Witches, and underscores other dimensions of their narratives. The connection can be found in solidarity with the suppression and victimization of females in society, and with the persecution for religious beliefs that is encountered by many modern-day Witches. Local Pagans are often inclined to both perceive and anticipate discrimination and/or persecution for their religious beliefs. This can occur when it is the result of other causes, or even in their absence. In my survey, sixty two percent attested to having been discriminated against as a result of their Pagan affiliation. The themes of marginality, opposition and gender bias are therefore commonplace in their narratives. The sentiments attached to identifying themselves with the Burning Times, has a very galvanizing effect on Pagans, often in spite of the overturn in its historicity. For many, the historicity is irrelevant. A local Pagan, quoted in Donna Vos's chapter entitled *Let the Witches Speak* says,

I am a traditional witch, like all the women from my mother's side of the family. I have always been involved in the Craft. One of my great-grannies was burnt for practicing. All of this information and the lore that my family practiced have been handed down from generation to generation (2002: 93).

The power of this myth is the significance it has for issues such as addressing the abuse and prejudices against women, either physically, emotionally or socially, and as an emotive harness when facing religious discrimination and prejudices.

What is apposite to this discussion is the way Pagan identities are permeable to the knowledges they gain and to the myths and stories they value. Whilst there is no single mythology that integrates all Pagans, it is myths such as the Burning Times that have become seminal in their identities and narratives.

Myths from the medieval witch-craze era

Vital to this study is some discussion on a phenomenon that arose during the medieval witch-craze era. This was the association of witchcraft with Satanism during this period, and the role this continues to play in modern Paganism. Russell (1980: 3-71) outlines the historical development of sorcery into witchcraft and describes the mythologies that came to be absorbed into the persecutions. Most of these associated certain ideas with the concept of the Devil. Russell describes this development in the following quotation.

Theology was the fifth major element in the witch concept. Theological concern with the problem of the Devil had been increasing from the mid twelfth century onwards, largely in response to the introduction of Catharism in the 1140s. Though rejecting the extreme dualism of the Catharists, Christian writers began to place greater emphasis upon the Devil's power as the chief of an army of demons who roamed the world actively attempting to undermine the saving mission of Christ and tempting people to sin. Renunciation of Christ and adoration of the Devil constituted the worst possible sin. The scholastic philosophy and theology that dominated Europe from the twelfth century onward, though it brought few new elements to the concept of witchcraft, refined details, established rationales, and provided a coherent and authoritative intellectual structure that the witch hunters could draw upon for support for their ideas. Scholasticism emphasized the idea of pact. It also firmly established the idea of ritual intercourse between the witches and Satan (ibid: 66).

Developing from this thesis were the ideas that such agents were likely to be women⁹ who engaged in ritual intercourse with the Devil and were therefore heretics. Witches

were believed to meet in groups, or covens¹⁰, where they engaged in diabolism and malefica, or evil sorceries. Contemporary Wiccans and Witches have adopted the term ‘coven’ to refer to their working groups and have also adopted usage of ‘Sabbats’¹¹ for the eight seasonal festivals on their calendar. Whilst the latter usage appears to have arisen with Margaret Murray (Hutton 1993: 303) it was also “a term used to describe meetings of witches by the early modern demonologists (because the same writers held the Jewish faith to be the antithesis of Christianity)” (ibid: 303). The myth of the Burning Times had not only given Pagans a common history of persecutions, but also put them into a dialectical relationship with Christianity. The roots of contemporary confluences between Paganism and Satanism that remains rife in evangelical Christian communities, in sectors of the general population and which is frequently perpetuated in the media, lie in this period of history. Despite the fact that “Paganism is not Satanism, it has no place for a devil or for belief in ontological evil” (Harvey 1997: 218), this association remains a consistent theme in Pagan narratives when they articulate themselves and their religion in wider society, albeit to negate the association.

The importance of this short history here lies in the affective language used by Pagans on this subject; a subject infused with mythologies and perpetuated in many forms of popular culture. Modern Satanism, a religion that itself has only the most tenuous relationship with the Satanism identified during the Witch Hunt, is a religion popularized and developed by Anton Szandor LaVey (1930-1997) in 1966. Equally tenuous are its links with Paganism, although these two are commonly conflated. Survey results indicated that in response to the question, “Do you think there is a clear understanding in society of what Paganism is all about?”, ninety four percent

answered “No”, and almost every respondent attributed the tendency to associate Satanism with Paganism as the root cause of this lack of understanding. Sixty nine percent specifically labeled the accusations at Christian teachings. Simultaneously, many words used by Pagans, for example ‘coven’, ‘sabbat’ and even ‘witch’ are drawn directly from the witch-craze era, and so ratify this association. This indicates the affective association with that phenomenon and becomes a point of contestation in their identities and narratives. The appropriation of words that have held ‘victim’ status can also be seen as a political act that underscores the issues central to an identity, despite these links often being based on a fictitious history of associations. Even though some Pagans in South Africa, and particularly many of those who offer Pagan and Wicca courses, do make very clear corrections to the history of the origins of Paganism and to many of its central mythologies, it is my finding that they remain emotionally pertinent to Pagan identities and pervasive in their narratives. The overwhelming majority accept these mythologies as an accurate portrayal of their history.

Mythical and Magical identities in narrative and ritual

Language itself is described by Gover (1998: 4) as a cultural artefact that is ‘taken up’ by individuals when constructing an identity. Language, signs and symbols in the world of the individual are available to be sourced for information, for practical use, in order to convey meaning and equally to be imbued with meanings themselves. Such emphases are not static, but specific to individuals, groups and even cultures and are exemplified by change and fluidity. This dynamic interplay between the individual and his/her social world is exemplified in ritual where mythico-magical identities are created and explored.

Having no unifying mythology, the choice of myth in narrative is always a group or individual choice, and dependent on the particular Pagan worldview held by that group or individual. Mythologised ‘Pagan-speak’ can therefore vary from one circle of individuals to another, highlighting the diversity of orientations and understandings in the community. Rees contends that, “It is the personal myths of the seekers operating in conjunction with the variable manifest mythos of the groups in question which effect a choice for the person – or not” (1995: 22). When these myths are contested from within a specific circle, tensions, and often schisms, can occur. In this way these are often the site of fundamental changes within Paganism. There is, however, the need for a coherence and consistency in narratives and this is achieved through various mediums. The primary medium through which this is achieved, is the performance of a magical identity in ritual.

Pagans also take up material aspects of the culture, and, in this way, further extend their Pagan identities beyond the self. In the previous chapter mention was made of the Pagan penchant for marking their personal space with artefacts of religio-spiritual significance. Many of these artefacts hold metaphoric associations and frequently make appearances in narrative and in ritual. Of these, ritual tools, depictions of deity, and songs and chants are the most central.

Ritual tools

The tools used in most Pagan rituals are highly symbolic and mirror the cosmology and ontology of the individual or group. The primary tools are the pentagram, the chalice, the athame (a short double-edged knife), and the wand. These tools represent the elements of earth, water, fire and air respectively as well as being locative

indicators dependent on the persuasion and/or geographical location of the practitioner. Due to the multi-layered symbolic nature of ritual tools, they are used to 'raise' and 'direct' energy in the creation of sacred space. Alongside their mundane identities, the tools and the practitioner acquire a magical identity in the performance of ritual. The elements and the tools are coterminous with the individual body as the ritual circle is cast, the cardinal points of the compass being 'charged' with the respective elemental tool, and, the divine, in which they share, is called on to participate in strengthening the ritual¹². This theurgic¹³ impulse in Pagan ritual supports the antinomian suggestion that each individual is themselves God or Goddess. This aspect of the religion situates it in the category of New Religious Movements where the immanence of the divine is a pronounced feature. It is also contrary to mythologies of ancient practices as,

It would have been inconceivable to any ancient European pagan of whose thought we have evidence, that the purpose of religious ritual was to 'raise' a deity and 'work' with her or him. No ancient goddess or god worth the name could be summoned by worshippers to a particular place, and there employed (Hutton 1993: 335).

Notwithstanding this fact, Pagan rituals are symbolic of their understandings that they are gathering to honour the ancient deities in the ways of their ancestors. Such mythologies are never far from the surface in rituals where Pagans revisit and revise ancient myths. This 're-mythologizing' can be spoken, performed or symbolized and is a device also used to bring current pre-occupations to the fore. Gender issues are an important focus in most Pagan rituals; either through the ritual tools, or through other artefacts that depict deity or, for Wiccans, the God and the Goddess. The chalice, besides corresponding with the element of water, and with the direction of west, also

symbolizes the feminine; with the athame representing the element of air, the direction of east, and the masculine. In Wiccan circles candles are usually lit to symbolise the God and the Goddess, and these masculine and feminine aspects of the divine are represented by artefacts such as deity statues or figures. The conscious representation of both genders in ritual is applied to deity as much as to the human participants, the elements, and to the other-than-human entities that share in this sacred space. This idea is carried outside of rituals, where Paganism can often be identified by its inclinations to address gender imbalances, and provide a corrective to a patriarchal society.

The wording in rituals, as a narrative form, is representative and symbolic of Pagan ideas and preoccupations. Ritual tools and deity symbols are addressed and honoured as sacred referents. The words used in Pagan rituals can be drawn from pre-existent Gardnerian or Alexandrian rituals, from later written rituals, or be totally new and eclectic, but each can be seen as a narrative that organizes and coalesces Pagan beliefs into a visible and concrete form.

Mythologies of deity

Pagan narratives on deity demonstrate the intimate relationship Pagans have with the divine, and their polytheistic and duotheistic proclivities. These are elevated in the seasonal cycle festivals, or Sabbats. Parallel to being times to synchronize changes in an individual's life with the greater changes in Nature, lies the mythology of the God and the Goddess. Drawn by Gardner primarily from the work of Sir James Frazer and Margaret Murray, it was this mythology that mostly earned Wicca the designation of 'fertility religion'. Although the Goddess had appeared in many forms throughout

history, in the late nineteenth century She had popularly developed into the Earth Mother; creator, nurturer and source of all life. Integrally associated with the female body, She manifests as Earth Mother, as Queen of the Heavens, and, importantly, as Luna – the Moon. This latter manifestation was introduced to modern Wicca through Robert Graves's poetic novel *The White Goddess* (1948) from which the threefold nature of the Goddess as Maiden, Mother and Crone was drawn. Affirming the life cycle of the human, and particularly the feminine body, the Goddess of the Witches, ...is the Mother of Fertility in *all* its forms, whether it be the fertility of the earth, of cattle and human beings, or the material prosperity of some venture, or those more subtle forms of fertility which germinate in the mind and bring forth poetry and the arts (Gardner 2004: 152).

Despite there being no singular archetypal God and Goddess in ancient religions, but rather a plethora of culturally specific pantheons, modern Paganism often collapses these differences into a comfortable co-existence. Traditional Witchcraft ritual formation gave form to Murray's thesis of the practices of witches in ancient cultures. The Pagan ritual cycle, known as The Wheel of the Year, follows the mythical journey of the God and Goddess to the underworld; a journey that has roots in many pre-Christian religions. The God and Goddess who are joined in union at Beltaine¹⁴, and who give birth to a child at winter solstice, mirror natural cycles of birth and death/summer and winter/waxing and waning. This broader mythology incorporates other mythologies drawn from many different cultures, and so each Sabbat festival is as capable of featuring an eclectic selection of myth to draw on and enact, as it is of following the central mythology. Through observance of the seasonal festivals the Pagan attunes his/her personal life-cycles and stages to the greater cycles of Nature.

By doing so, 'being Pagan' becomes less about belief held, than it is about reinforcing the web of interconnectedness between the self and the processes of the natural world.

Myths of the ancient gods have a psychological importance for Pagans, as they are seen to embody the spiritual truths of human cultures throughout time. Unlike Paganism in other countries, where reconstructionist groups have developed around specific pantheons—in particular the Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Norse and Celtic—South African Pagans exhibit more eclectic appropriations and draw on the mythologies required for different purposes. In ritual and in narratives, Pagans demonstrate the personal relationships they have with the deities of their choice, and thereby mark their notion that they both share with them in a single divine energy.

Mythologies in songs and chants

Within rituals and festivals, many songs and chants are often used that collapse both temporal and cultural forms of deity into one unified form. One example is the chorus from the song *Burning Times* that goes, "Isis, Astarte, Diana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali, Innana," where deities from different pantheons and from different periods of history, are synchronized into a single, vocal celebration of female deity. In South Africa this chant is mostly sung independent of the entire song, in order to raise energies in the group and conveys Pagan unity with the feminine divine in any form. It also functions to reinforce a sense of community.

Chants and songs are used in ritual to raise energy, to honour deity with whom they share the ritual, and to underscore the formalized, shared world of participants. This feature, often in combination with dance, is a primary expression of Pagan identity

(Pike, 2001: 5), and, as cultural artefacts, reproduces Pagan culture and meanings. Some examples that most emphasize the aforementioned narratives and mythologies, and which are self-evident in their titles, include the songs *Burning Times; We Do Not Die, Air I Am, Fire I Am, Water, Earth and Spirit I Am*¹⁵; *We Are The Old People, We Are The New People, Stronger Than Before*; and *We All Come From The Goddess/Hoof and Horn*. The last three, in particular, are well known in Pagan circles in South Africa, illustrating the way Pagans worldwide create a common culture through narrative forms. This dimension of Pagan religion(s) is typical of its creative and re-creating tendencies. Chants and songs are also indicators of the oppositional inclinations in Paganism and are a primary medium where mainstream conceptions are challenged and even inverted. The latter is also one of the ways in which Pagan mythology operates, and is a basis for its survival. Mythologies that will, and do, serve the community, are continually in process.

The role of fiction and fantasy in Pagan narratives

It is not only myths of continuity and myths based on historical events that inform Pagan identities, but aspects drawn from fiction and fantasy are also influential in enhancing the magical worldview. The role of fiction on the development of modern Paganism has been addressed by many scholars (Hutton 1993, 1999 and 2003; Pearson 2002; Harvey 1997; Pike 2001 and Rees 1995). A narrative of Pagan practitioner, Kelly, bears testimony to this when she says,

I have been and always was, attracted to the unknown, especially the supernatural, goblins, gnomes, faeries and elves. As a child I lived the majority of my life in a fantasy world, whereas myths and legends were just make-believe in adult's lives. But somehow and somewhere I believed I was

going to find them and show the world that they really did exist and not just in a child's wildest fantasies (quoted in Vos 2002: 125).

Her statement challenges the aforementioned binary of truth or falsity in myths of many genres, indicating her desire to establish continuity between her mundane world and the world of fantasy, and underlines the centrality of these features in modern Paganism. She is no exception in these pursuits, with almost all Pagans showing a high level of engagement with these genres and concepts. The historicity of the roots for these tendencies in Paganism is complex but can in part, be traced to the Romantic movement, where literary expressions attracted a revival of interest in many circles from the second half of the nineteenth century¹⁶. Much of this genre drew upon ancient images for inspiration, most notably in this context, being the celebration of Nature in its pre-modernized forms, the revival of interest in deities such as Pan, the Horned God,¹⁷ and Gaia,¹⁸ the feminine deity who transformed herself into Mother Earth/Mother Nature. These themes were celebrated in much of the poetry and literature of the age¹⁹; ideas that were mutually influenced by scholarships of the time. Fictional works such as Jules Michelet's *La Sorciere* of 1862, that revitalized ideas of a feminist, pagan witch religion (Pearson 2002: 234-5), and Charles Leland's 1899 publication of *Aradia* on much the same theme, merged comfortably with the academia of Murray and Frazer, and together created a cultural milieu that combined ancient mythologies, folklore and fiction. A work that traversed the boundary between fiction and scholarship was Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* that became the source of Gerald Gardner's concept of the Triple Goddess that he introduced into the new religion of Wicca. The themes of his work that resonated with Wiccan interest was subtitled, *A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*. Graham Harvey writes that in 1955 Graves is said to have written to a stranger saying, "Someday scholars

will sort out the *The White Goddess* grain from the chaff” (2004: 128). Historicity notwithstanding, the work has been of formative influence on Paganism.

The modern Pagan movement sourced this milieu for its own insights, absorbed many of the mythologies as its own, and creatively employed many fictive myths as a springboard for new innovations. The modern Pagan identity is, consequently, intrinsically linked to this worldview. Rees says that “Paganism rests on mythic foundations because of the use it makes of traditions, all of which embody mythological symbolism to a lesser or greater degree” (1995: 29). Self-reflexiveness enables the Pagan to identify the self with these magical and mythical worlds, a psychological device that facilitates a number of outcomes.

Most modern Pagans concede the verity of what Harvey calls “other-than-human” people (1995: 172). Aside from those of the animal world, are “those drawn from folk and faerie tales, myths and legends” (ibid: 172). These figures were given form and foundation in the folklore tales of Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm²⁰, Hans Christian Andersen²¹, in revised mythologies of the ancient world, and, later, in the mythico-fantasy works of Tolkien²². Yet another whose work has exerted influence on Paganism is that of Terry Pratchett, author of the *Discworld* series²³. Harvey qualifies this interest in Pratchett by saying,

I will argue that Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* series not only observes and describes a world recognizable to Pagans, but also that it enables a more participatory, perhaps transformative, knowledge and experience. In other words, Pratchett contributes to Pagan thinking and living in this world as his narrative unfolds the Pagan world of the Disc (2000: 2)²⁴.

The list of other fictional works that have inspired Pagan engagements with fantasy, myth and magic, is extensive, and reinforces Harvey's point that Pagan experience "is more adequately expressed in imaginative stories than in dogmatic assertions" (ibid: 10). Science fiction has also played an important role in modern Paganism, with the philosophy of the Pagan organization, The Church of all Worlds²⁵, being based on the writings of science-fiction author Robert A. Heinlein in his book *Stranger in As Strange Land*. In its most contemporary forms, the investigation of alien life-forms has entered some Pagan rhetoric.

There are a number of ways in which Pagans relate to the literature that, even if they have not read the works themselves, the ideas are woven into the fabric of what they read in Pagan books and on websites, and often in general conversation with other Pagans. For some, the boundary between their mundane world and the world of myth and magic is ill-defined, and individuals transpose the latter into their own personal narratives. Vivienne Crowley cautions against this by saying, "If fantasy becomes a replacement for reality, it saps our ability to make reality what we want. This is described symbolically in myth and fairy tale" (2003c: 262). For some, it is an unseen realm that mirrors human existence in its concerns and challenges, and one that can be accessed as a model and/or guide.

The doctrine of positivist idealism of philosopher Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933) provides a valuable insight on such a process. John Macquarrie describes his doctrine by saying that it is,

...the philosophy of "as if", by which he means that when thought oversteps its limits – as it may do – and forms ideas which cannot be other than false, we

may sometimes accept these ideas *as if* they were true, because we find that they have a practical value. Such ideas Vaihinger calls ‘fictions’. They are to be distinguished from hypotheses, which have some relation to facts, whereas fictions have no such relation and are unverifiable. They do not represent anything in the world, but they may nevertheless be useful (2002: 81).

I contend that, irrespective of the relationship between the individual and their literature, the central role played by these narratives is to ratify the magical and mythical dimensions of Paganism. Through them, not only are personal identities extended, but they also designate to Paganism, a religious identity that challenges and subverts dualistic boundaries such as true/false and rational/irrational.

The role of ‘context’ in Pagan narratives

Both narrative and identity increase exponentially with the breadth of the context in which they develop (Gover 1998: 7). Paganism is often described as a religion of ‘seekers’ and, just as a Pagan identity is, ‘a journey of discovery’, so are the narratives that are constructed and employed. As Gover says,

A discursively impoverished context, for example, may preclude the development of identities that draw upon wider cultural artefacts; artefacts through which one’s identity becomes more varied and complex (ibid: 7).

The progressional component to Pagan identities and narratives is a defining feature of the movement. As a Pagan individual participates in a wider Pagan community, whether this be physically, virtually, or through books, so do their Pagan identities and narratives become more intricate and subject to change and growth. These processes always, importantly, occur in relation to others.

Through ritualized lifestyles, Pagans sacralise the material world in a form quite unique in modern religions. This sacralisation lies, not only in the mind or intent of the practitioner, but relies on narrative forms such as myths and metaphor, songs and chants, on artefacts and performance for its realization. In Paganism there are no formal organizations or canonized texts that encompass the whole movement. Beliefs and ideas are transmitted through informal modes, and therefore, in this context, storytelling and narratives assume a specific significance.

The construction of narratives is what an individual *does*; it is an embodied act that incorporates a number of dimensions, and can be seen as pivotal to the construction of identity. In his article *The Narrative Construction of Reality* (1991) psychologist Jerome Bruner suggests that there are two primary modes of thought, and that, “in narrative thinking, the mind engages in sequential action-oriented, detail-driven thought...Thinking takes the form of stories and “gripping drama.””²⁶ From personal identities through to group and social identities, narratives are created and re-created; these narratives are seldom fixed but change as individuals acquire, develop and produce identities. The vast number of books available on Paganism and Witchcraft and the breadth of the internet sources, create a context in which Pagan narratives are extended and enriched.

As narratives and identities are born out of the relationship between the individual and the world, it is important that equal emphasis be given to the context in which they are formed. Pagan identities, as they emerge in South Africa, are, despite the generic influences from northern traditions and from myth, folklore and fairy tales, are equally reflective of their sense of place. There has been a concentrated attention on ‘identity’

in South Africa since 1994. There is a quest to authentically recognize the sovereignty of independent parts in a highly diverse society, with this intent simultaneously subsumed under a single identity, as the ‘rainbow nation.’ The ‘Africanization’ of our society is manifest in tiers of government, in social institutions and in arts and literature. One of the consequences of this, has been a reexamination of the question “Who is an African?” The Pagan community is essentially comprised of whites, who, as a rule, proudly claim their ‘African-ness’ whilst drawing on their northern ancestral inheritance for religious inspiration and practice. Although this point is discussed in more detail in a later chapter, the tendency to actively balance these two identities must be noted.

The role of reflection in Pagan narratives

The period of transition in South Africa has instituted a self-reflexiveness and, equally, an active engagement with the question of identity. Unlike Pagan development in Britain and Europe, South African Pagans bear more in common with the American model, where representatives lack their own ancestral indigenous paganisms on their own soil. This too, raises questions of authenticity in the movement and also inspires the appropriation of beliefs and practices from indigenous communities who appear to be more ‘authentically linked to the land.’ I believe this factor is behind many conscious and unconscious borrowings from indigenous traditions. The rapid changes in our society also account for the reassurance that the past has as a source of comfort and belonging. For local Pagans, this past lies in the ancient world of their ancestors, and is never associated with the past history of our country. This process is, nonetheless, relevant to the movement as a whole, where the rapid advancements in technology and the commensurate changes they have brought,

(re)create and (re)invigorate interest in a safer world, less negatively affected by human interventions.

The meanings that inhere in these processes find their articulation in Pagan narratives, wherein they actively *choose* narratives that are coherent in the broader society of which they are part. This component to identity and narrative underlines the centrality of place in their constructions, but is, nevertheless, itself always changing. The degree of reflection, given to the fact that their Paganism is rooted in South Africa and not abroad, varies from practitioner to practitioner. For some, locating Paganism in the broader issue of being a part of the social and religious transformation in the country, is central to their narratives and practices. Most, however, make little reference to any issues outside of their religio-spiritual practices that remain centrally informed by northern modes of belief and practice. As it is a common cultural milieu, all Pagans are cognisant of differences between their Paganism and the prevailing, generally conservative religious climate in South Africa. Pagans themselves are mostly active members within mainstream society and explore a variety of ways in which to articulate their religious differences. New narratives develop in the process.

The vast array of Pagan personal narratives and stories are thus always context dependent with the teller effectively negotiating the territory between the self and the world in which narratives are prescribed. The personal stories that are formative to a Pagan identity are altered by the ability to add to the narrative by incorporating events and myths from the past, the experiences of others, and even from fictional tales. The role of the imagination enables narratives to transcend any form of stasis, and the individual to balance and maintain a variety of ‘personal selves’ simultaneously. In

this process of self-reflexiveness, Giddens says that “reflexivity generates an impermanence of knowledge, thereby undermining the stability of identity. But if this is the case, then self-identity is susceptible to fragmentation and unlimited innovation” (Giddens 1991: 28).

Furthering a magical identity in narratives

The construction of a mythico-magical identity is achieved beyond ritual as it develops through the way Pagans speak about themselves. This is evidenced in reconstructed personal histories and in occult practices.

Reconstructed personal histories.

Because identities are able to be drawn from a dynamic multiplicity of sources, Pagans are very apt to firstly draw on the most personal, i.e. on their personal backgrounds or childhoods. The commonality of the narratives from this source has given rise to the phrases, “I have always been a Pagan,” and, “It was like coming home.” What enables the first, are the ubiquitous references to being a continuation of surviving, ancient religions, a phenomenon that has given rise to many traditions, widely referred to as FamTrads, or Family Traditions. Whilst this is not widespread in South Africa, the sentiment certainly is. Narratives that conform to this idea usually refer to the matriarchal line of the family, with grand-mothers being highlighted. An excerpt from the personal story of local Pagan, Kelly (Nissa) (quoted in Vos 2002: 125-130) is a useful example on which to extend this characteristic in Pagan narratives. She says the following on describing her experience when sorting through the belongings of her recently deceased grandmother.

The more I scratched, the more I found. Then, in a drawer of old papers I found an old box. I opened the box and inside the box were tarot cards. I could hardly believe my eyes. So my grandmother must have been some kind of gypsy, or even a fortune-teller or something exotic. Finally, we had someone fascinating in the family..... I found incense burners and idols of gods and goddesses, especially Chinese ones (ibid: 126).

She recounts later, furthering her investigation in the attic, and finding some old books; one, an old recipe book dated 1884. In this she sees recipes for natural remedies, for warts, cuts and head colds, and finds this inconsistent with a recipe book. She continues,

I turn the pages and again see 'pork pie' and 'konfyt'. Just as I am about to turn another page, the world Candle jumps off the page. There are short instructions on how to make a candle, and the secret to letting it burn longer. Before I put the book down, I see: 'To Get Rid of Beetles'. That was the ultimate. I then realized that this was a book passed down from generation to generation with spells and charms concealed as recipes.....So this is it. My grandmother was born into a witch's family and yet somewhere along the line the tradition was broken (ibid: 128-9).

She concludes her story with the following information.

During the years I saw my grandmother I always remember that whenever I spent the evening at her house, she would put a glass of water next to my bed. However, I was never allowed to drink the water and, in the morning, she would pour the water down the drain. Again, only now do I realize it was a protection spell to keep us safe while we were sleeping.....I cannot say that she is my idol, but I am fascinated with my lineage (ibid: 130).

The inclusion of this narrative is important in the richness of its mythology and, as such, is an interesting example of how the speaker moves between her present preoccupations and her past, and how, in her personal dialogue, she validates experience in the present by reflecting on the past. In situating herself in a 'lineage', it is not merely her grandmother's past she recounts, but it becomes equally her own. The fairly typical 'home-remedy' healing methods of a previous generation, are reflected on and effortlessly slotted into a witchcraft context as Kelly finds these methods consistent with her own. To re-contextualize events and practices is part of the process by which Kelly reinforces the myth of continuity. This process is congruent with Gover's contention that,

As we share our personal stories with others, fantasize future scenarios, and identify with or partake in the stories of others, we constitute and reconstitute our identities within their physical, cultural and historical contexts (1998: 7).

Kelly's 'Witch' identity is now perceived as being part of an historical stream, giving her Paganism an aspect of being 'unchosen'. Although more latent, this aspect of Pagan narrative is more commonplace than those that speak of family lineages. Accounts of finding past events congruent with "who I am now", often cast a tone of 'innateness' to Pagan narratives. Witchcraft, therefore, is frequently seen and articulated as 'a calling' or as denoting innateness.

Tanya Luhrmann, in her seminal study of ritual magic in England, coined the phrase 'Interpretive Drift' that has bearing on this discussion. She describes it by saying,

I call this 'interpretive drift' – the slow, often unacknowledged shift in someone's manner of interpreting events as they become involved with a particular activity. As the newcomer begins to practice, he becomes

progressively more skilled as seeing new patterns in events, seeing new sorts of events as significant, paying attention to new patterns (1989: 312).

A part of this phenomenon relates to the undertakings of Pagans to rationalize their religion and to provide a frame of authenticity to their practices. I by no means wish to infer that any practices are 'inauthentic', merely that this genre of story-telling is a linguistic device that stands outside judgments of truth or falsity, whilst providing means of legitimacy and validation. This authentic/inauthentic binary is one that has roots in many Enlightenment ideas that have equally influenced modern discussions regarding the relationship between religion and magic. Recollections such as Kelly's are infrequently raised in debate within the community, are a site where authenticity is linked to a personal identity through claims of an inherited, therefore 'unchosen', tradition. Some practitioners urge that, "We can't re-write our history any which way", illustrating that there are attempts to challenge such narratives, but no avenues for their invalidation²⁷.

In South Africa the childhoods of Pagans were inevitably lived during the apartheid years when race, religious, and cultural groups seldom were in authentic contact with one another as a result of segregationist policies. Contact by white South Africans in those times with the practices of the diviners and Sangomas of African religion and with the holistic and polytheistic worldview of Hindu traditions was, for the most part, rare. Local Pagan recollections of childhood are influenced by these religious worldviews; thus being different from many overseas narratives I have read, wherein there is often a 'remembered' influence from indigenous, and other traditions. This fact highlights a local difference in the correlations that can develop between a personal history and the wider cultural milieu in which it develops. Political changes

in South Africa have facilitated the possibility for such factors to emerge later in an identity construction. For example, in Donna Vos's explanation of the root of her magical name (in the previous chapter) she says, "For two years before I formed the PFSA, I was sick with sweats and visions, and it was already at this time that the wolf came to me as my totem animal." Such symptoms are common in African religion where an individual is 'called' to be a sacred specialist, or Sangoma. Such a 'calling' is preceded by illness and sweats. Donna's description is a later development in her personal narrative, and illustrates the integral link between a self-identity and changes in the social context.

The language of the occult in narratives

Another prominent activity in Paganism, and one highly articulated in their narratives, is that of the use of many occult practices²⁸, such as the divinatory systems of tarot²⁹ and astrology.³⁰ Divination is the method or practice of seeing or revealing the future, and also for explanation of past events through omens, oracles and other occult systems. The practitioner actively chooses a divinatory and/or predictive system and uses reflective techniques to relate the information to their constructed languages of the self. Astrology, in particular, becomes a form of narrative, a feature not only found within Paganism, but in the broader culture itself. Daily horoscopes have become a common feature in our modern world, and are found in most daily newspapers, in magazines and at esoteric fairs. This speaks to a greater acceptance in society of astrology than of some of the other occult practices. For Pagans, astrology is extended beyond this lay usage, to degrees of engagement that can be expressed on a continuum of high to low.

Pagans discern, in the waxing and waning cycles of the moon, a mirror for cycles in a human life. It is the zodiacal position of the moon, at any given point in this cycle that determines the personified qualities of the moon; a position always relational to the position of the sun and other planets, and that provides specific conjunctions understood to have influence on human life. Almost every Pagan is well-versed in the qualities of their own individual zodiac sign, a quality brought into play when doing astrological readings. These activities often have a high degree of fatalism about them and reinforce the link between the individual and a magical realm of possibilities. Each zodiac sign is associated with a different element and assigns to an individual the qualities apportioned to that sign³¹. These confer on the individual a selfhood that includes elemental qualities, and the potential for prophetic wisdoms from the astrological realm. The infinite number of conjunctions also situates the individual in a web of relationships with humans, the other-than-human world and the cosmos³². These are all the working tools of magical practice. The doctrine of correspondences³³ has a long history in the practice of High Ritual Magic and Ceremonial Magic³⁴, both of which were important feeders into modern Paganism. The correspondence of different deities with each of the zodiac signs adds a dimension of sacrality to the practice of astrology and facilitates a process whereby an individual can participate in a relationship *with* the sacred, and share in qualities with the divine. Although this practice is widespread amongst Pagans, analysis to the point of drawing up an astrological chart is low, and, for the most part, is conducted without in-depth investigation of the science. Many Pagan narratives, however, employ ‘astrological language’, and, in particular, the personal narrative. If narratives are embedded in social contexts, then in Pagan narratives it must be understood that as stories emerge

from the relationship of the self with the world, and that this world includes a magical and mystical web of relationships.

Conclusion

Pagan narratives can be viewed as a key guide to understanding a Pagan identity. They are cultural artefacts that have mythological, oppositional and magical dimensions, uniquely brought into play as individuals both constitute a personal identity and communicate this identity to others. Narratives are fluid and permeable to a wide variety of influences that are used to bring into existence accounts of the self that serve specific purposes. Both the narratives themselves and the myths they draw upon and create are actively chosen for the value they apportion to a number of different, yet congruent, identities. The boundary between fictional histories and objective fact is often obscured by the function served in choosing and endorsing certain stories. For example, the myth of the Burning Times, whilst not grounded in historical accuracy, positions Pagans and Paganism in the politics of resistance, and is accordingly valued. Contemporary issues such as discrimination on religious grounds, gender imbalances and oppression by mainstream ideologies are weighted by this mythology. What it does, simultaneously, and with not always positive consequences, is associate Paganism with some of the important mythologies of this period.

Pagan narratives are rich in thick descriptions, couched in symbol, myth and metaphor, and provide pivotal insights into Pagan self-understandings. They can be found in Pagan festivals, rituals, songs and verse, where they function as a vehicle to draw on the past as a means of highlighting their central concerns and their critiques of the present. Also embedded in Pagan narratives is the understanding of their

inclusion and participation in a network of relationships, accessed through encounters with the natural world. The complexity of this issue brings personal identities into a far wider context. That Paganism is a Nature-based religion is a shared assumption in the community, but one which raises unique problems in the South African context for understanding the boundaries of a Pagan identity. The factors and issues involved in the construction of a Pagan collective identity are the subject of Section Three.

¹ Accessible on the website <http://www.msu.edu/user/govermar/narrate.htm>.

² Charles Leland was author of *Aradia: the Gospel of Witches* that was first published in 1899. For the material for this work, Leland claimed to have been provided with evidence of a surviving witch-cult in Italy by a so-called hereditary witch named Maddalena. Hugely instrumental in ratifying the survival of an ancient pagan religion, Leland's work also drew on the Italian folklore of the time and on the Roman pantheon of deities for inspiration. For more on this history see Hutton (1999: 141-148), and, for an excerpt from *Aradia*, see Clifton and Harvey (eds) (2004: 61-66).

³ Dr Murray was an Egyptologist who, on her return to England, began investigations into the idea that victims of the early witchcraft trials were in fact members of a pagan fertility religion that had survived into the modern era. In 1921 she published *The Witchcult in Western Europe* and in 1933, *The Goddess of the Witches*. These two works informed many elements found in modern Wicca, importantly in this context, the idea that the Old Religion had survived the Christian era. On the basis of her first book, Murray gained an insert in the Encyclopedia Britannica in which she asserted her thesis of the Old Religion. For further discussion see Clifton and Harvey (2004: 90-91). Murray's work has largely been discredited by modern scholars as relying on a flawed methodology in her collection of data and on the construction of evidence to suit her claims. For a fuller discussion see Hutton (1993: 301-306, 331-334) and Hutton (1999: 194-201).

⁴ Author of *The Golden Bough* "who's most important argument of the whole work was that ancient peoples had believed in a dying and reviving god, who represented the animating spirit of vegetation..." (Hutton 1999: 114).

⁵ The work of Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994), gave more recent support to this thesis. Her archeological research, presented from the late 1950s, has, despite rousing widespread academic criticisms, has been of inspiration to feminists, Goddess Spiritualities and ideologically important to many strands of Wicca and Witchcraft. Also see Hutton (1999: 338-339).

⁶ This statement of Daly's was taken from her 1973 book *Beyond God the Father: towards a philosophy of women's liberation* published by Beacon Press, Boston, 1985.

⁷ Hutton (1999: 141) informs that that the figure of nine million is attributed to feminist activist Mathilda Joslyn Gage, who, in 1893 published *Witchcraft, Church and State* which creatively associated the phenomenon with misogyny and asserted that nine million European women had died over the period.

⁸ See chapters 3 and 4 in Russell (1980).

⁹ The infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, written in 1486 introduced explicit sexism into the legal system and decreed that witchcraft was an inspired plot against the Church. Written by Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, the document was used in the trials of individuals suspected of practicing witchcraft.

¹⁰ "In Scotland, the term coven, a variant of convent from Latin *conventus*, 'assembly', was introduced about 1500 as a name for the witches' meeting and then, by extension, as a name for the local group of practicing witches. The term was seldom used until the modern witchcraft revival" (Russell 1980: 76).

¹¹ In 1435 a treatise called *Errores GaZariorum* gave the first elaborate description of a witches Sabbat; linking such meetings with diabolism, fornication and other deviances.

¹² These aspects of ritual, alongside the construction of the altar and ritual scourging, appear to have been drawn by Gardner from his associations with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a nineteenth century occult order of which he was a member. Read more in Hutton (1993: 332-333) and Hutton (1999 75-83).

¹³ 'Theurgy' is taken from the Greek word *theourgos*, a 'divine worker'. The word theurgy has come to denote magic that is performed with invocation of the gods.

¹⁴ Beltaine is an ancient fire festival and is one of the cross-quarter days on the calendar. For more on this history see Hutton (1993: 176).

¹⁵ Attributed to EarthSpirit founder Andras Corben Arthen. Additional information can be found in Pike (2001: 5).

¹⁶ For more information see Hutton (1995: 9-10).

¹⁷ Pan, the Greek god who was the son of Zeus and Callisto, was half-man, half-goat. The word 'pan' meaning *everything*, was intimately associated with nature.

¹⁸ Gaia, who was the Greek goddess of the earth, was the inspiration for James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis's Gaia Hypothesis that "envisions the surface of the earth as more like a living body, than like a rock or machine" (Rabinovitch and Lewis 2002: 149).

¹⁹ One of the most notable of these was Kenneth Graham's personification of "...Nature in the form of the horned god, Pan, who intervenes in times of need in his fictional society of clothed-wearing, boat-rowing, small animals who fill the pages of his 1908 book *The Wind in the Willows*" (Clifton and Harvey (eds) 2004: 83).

²⁰ Jakob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) Grimm, besides being linguists, were authors of a collection of tales known as Grimm's Fairy Tales that were written over the period of 1812-1822. Many of the tales were drawn from German folk traditions.

²¹ Hans Christian Andersen (1806-1875) was a Danish writer of a collection of fairy tales that bear his name.

²² J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) was a philologist who published his work *The Hobbit* in 1937 and the trilogy sequel *The Lord of the Rings* in 1955.

²³ The *Discworld* series is based on a fictional world supported on the back of a giant turtle, and is one populated with witches, wizards, dragons, elves and other non-human creatures.

²⁴ This was from a paper on the online journal DISKUS, a series of academic papers on the website <http://www.uni-marburg.de>.

²⁵ The Church of All Worlds (CAW) was founded by Tim G'Zell and his partner Morning Glory Zell.

²⁶ Taken from the website http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome_Bruner. The full article can be found on the html version of the file <http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit4/papers/worth.pdf>.

²⁷ These contestations come almost exclusively from within the Pagan community itself, and become part of the challenges to legitimacy within the movement.

²⁸ The word 'occult' is taken from the Latin *occulere*, meaning 'to conceal'. Used as an astronomical term, the occult has come to mean practices that are secret or hidden, except to initiates, and, in many circles, has taken on a pejorative connotation.

²⁹ Tarot is a divinatory system using a medieval deck of cards. See a detailed discussion of tarot in Rabinovitch and Lewis (2002: 79-80).

³⁰ "The ancient science of astrology was transported from ancient Babylon to Egypt, and it was here that the notion of cosmological determinism was born. Astrology henceforth focused on the correlation between celestial movements and terrestrial events, and was applied on the basis that the planets exert influences on the earth that effect individuals, groups, natural phenomena and even planetary destiny" (Wallace 2000: 50).

³¹ The correspondences of elements to zodiac signs are: Fire – Leo, Aries and Sagittarius; Air – Libra, Aquarius and Gemini; Earth – Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn; Water – Pisces, Scorpio and Cancer.

³² For more on the relationship between astrology and tarot with the practice of magic, see Luhrmann (1989: 147-160).

³³ This doctrine is part of the hermetic philosophy of Hermes Trismegistus that posits that the human is the microcosm who reflects the macrocosm of the universe. It is encapsulated in the slogan, "As Above, So Below" that is very central in Pagan ontology.

³⁴ "Much of the history of High Ritual and Ceremonial Magic lies in the mystery religions of ancient Egypt, Sumeria and Babylon, and has consistently informed occult practices in the West. Paganism is illustrative of the magical worldview that there are unseen relations between all elements of the cosmos; an idea intrinsically bound to the history of High Ritual magic and in certain aspects, to that of associated secret societies" (Wallace 2000: 49).

SECTION THREE

COLLECTIVE, SHARED IDENTITIES

Personal Pagan identities are extended from the individual to incorporate the idea that they share certain features of this identity with others. It is around these features that collective, shared identities are constructed, and which incorporate notions of difference from those who do not share in those features. The South African Pagan community has yet to come together to address mutual concerns, undertake united initiatives or hold combined festivals. Despite this, all are aware of the existence of others who share their worldview and practices, and who share with them the challenges of articulating their new religious identities in South African society. Over the past decade there has been a rapid growth in the movement and many changes in organisation and structure. This has resulted in categories of “sameness” and “difference” being applied within the movement itself as much as they are applied to other groups in the country, and the construction of a collective identity being very much in process. It is the internet that has widened opportunities to create communities in a non-physical environment and has been of particular significance for groups whose ideas are not easily articulated in mainstream society, or who lack, or resist, participation in a physical community. Issues regarding collective identities are therefore looked at with particular emphasis on the internet.

For Pagans, Nature, the self and the divine, share alike in the five elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit, and, within this conception, all are intrinsically connected. This connection radically extends ideas of “community” for Pagans who engage in a

myriad of relationships in the seen and unseen world. The individual can equally belong to a physical community as to communities that populate the natural and spiritual world. Both of these conceptions are addressed in this section. A related and important debate in local Paganism is the question of whether practitioners of African Religion can be included as part of the Pagan community. Fundamental to this question is the idea that indigenous communities live in a closer relationship with the natural world. This issue raises questions on the boundaries of the Pagan movement.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PAGAN COMMUNITIES AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET

Individual Pagan practitioners and small groups can be found in almost all South African towns and cities as well as in the rural areas. In most large centers there are larger, often public, groups and/or organizations. To date there have been no venues that have brought these groups together into a single community, as has the festival movement abroad. In its absence, it has been the internet that has played an important role in uniting disparate groups and individuals into a single community, and where notions of a collective identity have most been shared, debated and contested. From its exponential growth in the 1990s, and through the new possibilities it offered for human communication, the internet, as ‘new media’, has become a domain engaged in by the secular and the religious alike. This domain, that has altered conventional spatial and temporal boundaries, is now a primary medium for both the dissemination of information and for new forms of communication and socialization. According to Giddens (1991: 24) the increased use of electronic media, from radio to television to the internet, is an inseparable consequence of modernization. This consequence has created new social structures that Castells identifies as “*the network society* because it is made up of networks of production, power, and experience, which construct a culture of virtuality in the global flows that transcend time and space” (2000: 381). The virtuality of the online experiences has raised questions and preempted investigations into traditional understandings of identity, culture and community (McLuhan 1967, McLuhan and Powers 1989; Giddens 1991; Rheingold 1994).

Giddens describes the population of this world of computer-mediated technology by saying that,

Users of the internet live in ‘cyberspace’. Cyberspace means the space of interaction formed by the global network of computers which compose the internet. In cyberspace, much as Baudrillard might say, we are no longer ‘people’, but messages on one another’s screens (1997: 395).

The word “cyberspace” was coined by William Gibson, author of the 1984 futurist novel *Neuromancer* in which he “was anticipating that the human imagination would create its own perpetual ‘realities’ within a technological setting” (Drury nd: 1)¹.

These changed conditions for contemporary society have equally facilitated new forms of inter and intra religious expressions and dialogue, and have provided the first media site where all adherents have an equal opportunity to participate in mediated communications. New religious movements, and, in particular, those that lack the formal institutional structures of mainstream religions, have gained a unique forum where their traditions can be articulated, shared and debated.

The Internet and Modern Paganism

The development and expansion of the internet has had a profound effect on the Pagan movement worldwide. In social structure and organisation, Paganism conforms to what Hine (1977)² designated as SPIN, or a segmented, polycentric, integrated network. Whereas all traditional and non-traditional religions have embraced the internet as a new technology through which their religio-spiritual identities can be explained, debated and even contested, it is this feature of Paganism that specifically facilitates its integration with the internet. Lacking in formal structures and eschewing the elevation of a priestly class to represent a Pagan laity,

Paganism operates as a network of independent, diverse, and, occasionally, discrepant cells within which individuals value the independence to develop and sustain their own personal belief systems.

The emphasis given by Pagans to self-development and the propensity to self-create meaningful belief systems within a Pagan framework is enhanced by the range of diversification on the internet. Descriptions of the internet as a ‘networked’ communication system, or, as the World Wide Web, parallel Pagan self descriptions and metaphors of both their community and of their beliefs. Pagan ontologies speak of a ‘web of relationships’ where each part is integrally connected to, and influenced by, the other. Whereas communication with deities, elements and the balance of the other-than-human world that share in this web of existence is facilitated through private practice and ritual, it was the internet that facilitated communication amongst a previously dispersed community of self-identified Pagans. The multiplicity of Pagan traditions has embraced the internet as a vast resource of networks that can be sourced for self-description, self-promotion, information sharing, dialogue and debate. In addressing the ways in which internet usage is particularly suited to Paganism, Cowan (2005: 23) applies, by analogy, the history of the open-sourced movement³ on the internet to the modern Pagan movement. Developing this analogy, he proposes that,

Like open sourced programmers who freely modify and then just as freely distribute computer software, encouraging its continued alteration and improvement, modern Pagans are “hacking” their own religious traditions out of the “source codes” provided by pantheons, faith practices, liturgies, rituals,

and divinatory processes drawn from a variety of cultures worldwide

(ibid: 30).

The open sourced nature of Paganism has been further elevated by the features of the internet environment that are conducive to the ability to add to and change any and all information and ideas. This has brought about changes within Paganism, particularly through the new challenges and possibilities it affords for identity construction.

Having described the assumption of a Pagan identity as a 'journey of discovery', cyberspace has been able to extend this journey exponentially. Thousands of websites exist on general Paganism, on specific traditions, and on detailed aspects of traditions such as rituals, seasonal celebrations, divinatory practices, deities, mythologies, magick and spells. For South African Pagans for whom the cost of books is a prohibitive factor and/or who lack the opportunity to meet and confer with other Pagans, the internet provides a wealth of options to increase knowledge, advance one's practices, or even, to adopt new ones. A shadow side to this advantage is the tendency towards indiscriminate appropriation from such a plethora of information sites, whereon the information can be totally subjective, unverifiable and/or historically inaccurate. Individuals whose sole knowledge and practice of Paganism is derived from the internet often consequently perpetuate false histories and mythologies that have largely been corrected in published works by established practitioners.

TechnoPaganism

In Margot Adler's broad study of Paganism in America she found that occupations in technical and computer fields were highly represented in Pagan subcultures (1986: 446-9). This phenomenon has been instrumental in an emergent trend called

TechnoPaganism⁴ that embraces many metaphors from modern technology to describe spiritual phenomena and uses technological devices as magical tools. TechnoPagans can vary in their conceptions of cyberspace, with some seeing it as a virtual space that can be navigated as a tool in advancing their beliefs and practices, and others ascribing to it, an independent and spiritual reality. In the first category are those Pagans who embrace internet technology as their primary means of communication and of information gathering. They participate in online discussion groups, disseminate articles/magazines of interest among the community, and some build websites to advertise their specific group, tradition or services. Most, but not all, do not use the internet for online ritual and/or for spiritual experiences. Those who do, recognize the internet as another form of human consciousness, and as able to facilitate spiritual and magical encounters. In the abstract to her paper *TechnoPagans: Hybrid Identities on the Net*⁵ Susan Gallacher alludes to the contradiction in the term “TechnoPagan” in the following statement.

At once technophile and nature-worshipper, the technopagan is an identity formed in the intersections. It is an identity which actively seeks to find possibility and potential in convergence: the convergence of the ‘natural’ and the ‘technological’ – even the spiritual (nd: 1).

Many Pagans are adept at reconciling their identification with Nature and the natural with the advantages offered by modern technology. For the TechnoPagan, the internet is just a further extension of divine reality presenting no incongruity in the very ‘unnatural’ nature of its construction and manifestation. Cowan’s (2005: 79) assertion that cyberspace is an environment of the mind is consistent with the TechnoPagan view of it as a mystical landscape that can, as on any landscape, be transformed into a sacred space through the power of imagination. Terrestrial magic

is transplanted into the virtual realm of cyberspace with little to no modification. Although Margot Adler's occupational statistic regarding Pagans in computer and technological fields was not born out in my survey of South African Pagans, the relative difficulty in locating physical communities is bound to stimulate similar local developments amongst the computer networked Pagan community.

South African Pagans Online

Besides online courses, information on South African Paganism is disseminated through online magazines, dedicated websites and on online discussion groups that are dedicated to a specific topic or interest group. With only one book on South African Paganism ever published⁶, the internet is the sole resource for local information. The fact that seventy seven percent of my survey respondents indicated that they had read little to nothing on South African Paganism, is an indication that only a minority of the population interact and communicate online with a broader South African community, instead confining their development to small physical communities and/or to information from books and websites from overseas. The issues and debates that concern the local community are thus located amongst a smaller percentage of local practitioners, ratifying the fact that individual development appears to take precedence over a need to forge a unified local Pagan community.

The central issues that are addressed online are situated primarily with individuals who have stronger offline Pagan identities, and are often issues that have been faced and raised by the international Pagan community, more than they are of uniquely South African concerns. Through debating issues online, Pagans further their

understandings of issues that confront Paganism in western societies, and, in the process, create and re-create ideas for their own local communities. How they are perceived, and their personal experience as self-identified Pagans in South Africa, are regularly brought into discussions. Their Pagan identities have emerged in a Christian culture and, most often, from a personal Christian background. For many, the transition is problematic, whether or not these problems are perceived or grounded in reality. Eighty eight percent of survey respondents declared that they were open about their Pagan beliefs with friends, over and above with family, colleagues and employers. Internet communities come to self-identify as ‘communities of friends’ and it is this feature alongside the anonymity afforded in cyberspace that co-create an unparalleled location for sharing deep-seated personal issues and anxieties. For many, this location counters the anonymity of their Pagan identity in the mundane world. The reticence regarding disclosure of a Pagan identity appeared to be based more on a fear of disclosing that one was ‘not Christian’ and not related to any personal disconcertedness regarding Paganism. Cowan’s point that, “External behaviour leads to external identification as an adherent, which may occur with or without relinquishing religious positions formerly held” (2005: 158) is salient in this instance where, in the process of constructing and instantiating their Pagan identities, many Pagans search for congruencies with aspects of the worldview into which they were born and raised. The ability to share these issues online mostly precede external presentations of their identity (Cowan: 2005), which in some cases, never occurs at all, raising the value of the online experience even more for the individual. Whilst Satanic theologies form no part of Paganism, and are almost never the subject of discussion in Pagan circles, conversations regarding this conflation in society and in the media, is raised in many contexts in online groups. In this forum Pagan

conversations often reflect the stereotypical assumptions of a Christian culture, more than they indicate a real understanding of modern Satanism.

Extending identities beyond the self

Not only has the internet been a tool for defining and re-defining a personal Pagan identity through the diversity of options offered by the internet, it is frequently where disclosure of a Pagan identity is first made. A lack of social acceptance of Witchcraft and Paganism and a (often *perceived*) fear of discrimination in society, means that a forum of fellow Pagans is the place where Pagan affiliation can best be shared safely. As Pagan elder Macha Nightmare notes,

The internet has become the world's town square, where we are free to speak with our own voices - to present the truth of who we are, what we believe, how we practice, and what our values are, uncensored by the prejudice of fears of others. And what we say is now accessible to anyone who wishes to listen, anywhere in the world, at any time (2001: 16).

Whilst most Pagans who play leading roles in the movement, either in South Africa or abroad, use the internet as a tool to share their Pagan identities and/or that of their specific tradition or practice, the internet is of significant value to newcomers to the movement, and to those who are exploring their new identities and seeking a community of other likeminded individuals. Over sixty percent of my survey respondents indicated that the internet was the primary source through which they were introduced to Paganism, with fifty seven percent indicating that the internet provides their reading material on Paganism. Most Pagans in South Africa would assert the difficulty in meeting other Pagans with seventy seven percent affirming that contacts are mostly made online. These contacts are mostly established by becoming

members of a Pagan online group where their Pagan identities can be explored, affirmed or even challenged. Newcomers to online groups that are earmarked for debate and discussion on Pagan topics are generally reticent to express their views alongside others perceived to ‘know much more.’ What exacerbates this phenomenon is the virtual nature of internet communication that appears to afford a greater degree of opportunity to express opinions, over physical encounters. Through what Timms (2002) calls “the disinhibiting effects of cyberspace”⁷, the absence of physical encounter appears to intensify the ability to vilify the opinions of others and to openly critique their knowledge, or the lack of it. Whether party to such attacks, known as ‘flaming’⁸, or whether it is observed between others on the group, newcomers are often disinclined to further communication and become ‘lurkers’⁹ on the list, or, leave the list completely. Unless an individual resurfaces on another list, it is difficult to assess whether such retreats indicate that the individual has left the Pagan movement, or whether they have merely disengaged from the cyber-community. Such transience is common to the community and can lead to the demise of an online group entirely. Those for whom a cyber-community has played an important role in their Pagan identity are inclined to gravitate to new groups whose profile is deemed to more suit their needs. Through these processes Pagans discover intra-Pagan differences and similarities, leading to the subsequent establishing of new boundaries around small self-contained communities within the larger whole.

Identity deception online

In the absence of a physical community and/or a disinclination to divulge a Pagan identity to family, friends and/or colleagues, the internet is, for many, the sole location for such disclosure. Online disclosures raise a new problem for identity construction

through the absence of physical and visual cues that are generally formative in the construction of interpersonal identities. Scholars such as Lovheim (2004), Dawson and Cowan (2004) and Cowan (2005) have all noted the implication for identity construction in the disembodied virtual world of the internet that supports the ability to construct and maintain multiple identities; a factor that makes the question of authority and authenticity more problematic. With a lack of visual cues there is the potential to recreate the self across any number of human dimensions, such as gender, age, and race. Interests, physical location, and even education qualifications are all also open to (re)invention and exploration. As a result of the deceptions possible on the internet, those who wish to start an online group, but lack an offline status, face a difficulty in claiming the authority to do so. In such instances it appears that support is often contingent on offline affirmation of an individual's Pagan status. This factor supports Cowan's contention (2004, 2005) that online identities are inclined to replicate those held offline.

For those who merely wish to engage as members of an online group, the ability to embellish or misrepresent oneself online has other outcomes. Again, with no visual cues available or the information that is gained from personal encounters, opinions are frequently formed on the basis of what a person *chooses* to disclose of him/herself online. Relatively scant information can be taken as evidence that there are wider congruencies between one individual and another, than would possibly be borne out in physical encounters. This phenomenon has influenced a number of online liaisons in South Africa, particularly in the search for support in a new Pagan initiative, or in debates on a specific issue. The criteria employed offline in choosing Pagans with whom one would associate are suspended, and online presentation becomes the new

ground on which sectors of a community can develop, however incongruous or 'unworkable' some relationships might be in 'the real world.'

Another form of identity deception afforded by the nature of the internet is the ability to support a number of aliases. Many Pagans on local lists use their magical Pagan name in discussion groups, with all details of their mundane lives being subdued or absented. The separation and presentation of multiple selves is unique to the internet environment and extends the possibilities in Giddens's proposal that "a name is one of the most important social markers of an individual identity" (1997: 382-3). Names in cyberspace can be independent of conventional social markers, and a single individual may appear on a number of lists, under a variety of names. This 'masking' of identities allows for an observation of list discussions, permits infiltration into cyber groups, and enables an individual who has been excluded from a group—for whatever reason—to resurface with a new name and identity to promote.

Authority and Authenticity online

Authority in physical communities is assured and exercised by individuals whose own personal development within Paganism has afforded them the recognition that they possess certain knowledge that puts them in a leadership position. Alternatively, the individual is accorded authority by virtue of certain verifiable trainings undertaken, with the accordant accreditation. The authority to claim and disseminate information can be challenged from within a group, or by an outside group, usually on the grounds that the individual is exercising his/her own 'power over' the group, or that there has been a misrepresentation of credentials, or, a lack of support for the teachings of certain traditions on political or personal grounds. In the context of the internet, this

raises the opinion of Dawson and Cowan that, "...the shift from the offline world to the online indicates two very important social consequences of the Internet: a crisis of authority and a crisis of authenticity" (2004: 2).

The authority to form and moderate online groups in South Africa lies primarily with individuals who run offline Pagan groups or organizations. In some instances the group is an extension of their offline identity and role, for others, it is a means to broaden their role and instantiate their authority in a wider forum. Online discussion groups are often the site of contestations to the authority of another to make certain pronouncements or to assert the legitimacy of their own beliefs and practices. The open sourced nature and multiplicity of Pagan traditions allows for any number of competing viewpoints, with no external source to either affirm or invalidate them. The authority conferred on the individual by his/her group, both offline and online, on the basis of knowledge, expertise and/or training, does not necessarily translate into the wider community. Challenges to the authority of certain individuals can arise from disputations regarding the authenticity of their specific tradition or group, or from a challenge to the authenticity of their credentials. For example, whether a Pagan individual conforms to a more traditional interpretation of what constitutes 'authentic' Wicca or Witchcraft, or whether they allow for broad eclecticism in their definition, influences the way they perceive that their own identity is congruent with another. When incongruencies are perceived the authority of one individual to self-identify with certain terms can be openly contested by another. The extent of an individuals networking with, and knowledge of, groups and traditions abroad, can hinder the development of a tradition in South Africa, particularly if the movement abroad has been discredited in some way. Online relationships with individuals from

the international Pagan community, have, on occasion, also been perceived as attempts to extend an individual's authority among local Pagans. A number of online contacts have been made with leading individuals in Britain and the United States, either to advance personal training and development, or for support in local initiatives¹⁰. These contacts can bring about changes in South African Paganism through the introduction of new ideas into the local environment. That some individuals have been publicly denounced for these initiatives has resulted in their keeping these relationships a private matter for themselves or their group, or publicly denouncing their critics. For many, the authority to address the issues that impact on South African Paganism should be situated within the local community. A central challenge to individuals who established international contacts was to their authority to speak on behalf of all local Pagans. Despite the fact that some individuals see associations with leading Pagans abroad as an attempt to bolster an individual's own standing in the community, others privately maintain such relationships in order to learn what is unavailable in the rampantly eclectic and new local context. In support of her forays into the international community, and in retaliation to local criticism of her initiative, the practitioner concerned stated on the online group Five Feathers that,

We also have the experience and expertise of the global village Pagan elders who are willing to help us find solutions. These are the self same elders whose books and teachings many of us have based our practices on (28-1-05).

By this statement she cogently affirmed the dominant influence of northern traditions on local practices; an influence that often appears more welcome in the form of books and 'non-communicative' websites, than it does in direct, personal communication.

A prevalent form of authority exercised online is that of the Pagan teacher, or what Cowan calls “pedagogical authority” (2004: 185). Independent Pagan and Wiccan courses are offered in various parts of the country, some groups offer training and/or initiation, and certain practitioners offer their services in Pagan interests such as astrology, runes, tarot, tool making, and others. Prior to the advent of the internet, the above were held in fixed locations around the country. The potential of the internet to not only source information, but also to disseminate it, enabled these services to be extended to individuals beyond fixed geographic locations. Although a few courses are held that require strictly physical attendance, Pagan teachers have increased the range of possible recruits by advertising on the internet, or in online magazines. Other courses are directly available online, offering certificates after successful completion. Many practitioners who teach such courses do so more on the basis of their acquired knowledge and experience, or for monetary gain, than on any specific credentials. With no standardization to the material covered in online and offline courses, authority is often appropriated through the adoption of the role of teacher. The assumption of this role and the responses that affirm the authority of the practitioner to do so, become a primary way in which different roles in the community are forged. Lovheim cites Hewitt as saying, “This location of an individual relative to a social group and system can be termed her ascribed social identity” (2004: 60). The disembodied nature of the internet promotes the ease with which online claims to authority can be made, that may not always be supported offline. Avenues to question the authenticity of personal claims to authority and experience, and to the authenticity of the material/information being offered, are reduced in the online environment where any individual making fraudulent claims can quite simply ‘disappear.’ Problems in definition of central terms again play a role in the contestation of

authenticity. Whether an ‘authentic’ Wiccan is one who has been personally been initiated into a traditional lineage—as yet not available in South Africa—or whether the term is open to appropriation through other diverse definitions, has been the topic of debate on many local lists. The debates have highlighted the relative inability on the internet to ‘flesh out’ issues. Again related to the choices of disclosure on the internet, certain individuals who recently subscribed to Wicca as singularly referring to Gardnerian and Alexandrian lineages conducted an online poll asking individuals to indicate their particular path or tradition. The option of ‘Wiccan’ was not offered outside of the aforementioned definition, leaving the majority of the online members with no other options with which they could identify. Translation of results indicated that there were no Wiccans in South Africa, whereas in fact, it is the predominant term of self identification. Incidents such as these, dispute the authentic use of certain labels by individuals who are frequently unaware of the history of the information that lies behind this dialectic. They also reinforce the boundaries around small self-defining communities as a result of the difficulties the community face in endorsing definitions that reflect the greater South African Pagan community. The lack of authoritative texts in Paganism, the absence of a forum to provide uniformity in the ideas that disseminate among local Pagans, and discrepancies in the resources available to individuals, increases the divide between individuals who possess certain knowledge and information, and those who are excluded from it. Many debates initiated by the former are therefore misunderstood and/or misinterpreted by the latter. It is on the internet that these differences in understandings are revealed; initiating debates that seldom achieve resolution due to their lack of grounding in common information.

Building Pagan Communities Online

Lorne L. Dawson addresses the issues involved in ascertaining whether communities, and in particular, religious communities, can exist online and argues that, according to Howard Rheingold, virtual communities are,

...social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry
...public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs
of personal relationships in cyberspace (cited in Dawson 2004: 81).

Communities were historically understood as having geographic and spatial boundaries; an understanding now extended to groups of individuals who share common interests in any given society. Cyber communities are text-bound, disembodied and open to transience; factors that institute changes to conventional modes of communication, but nonetheless allow many features, sometimes new, of a “community” to be developed and sustained. Although not geographically available to all, the festival movement¹¹ has been instrumental in the formation of a sense of community in the United States, Britain and Australia. In these countries there is also a greater wealth in the number of Pagan structures available for gatherings and physical encounters, than currently exists in South Africa.

On the internet, the term ‘Pagan communities’ takes on a range of possibilities; from large organizations, to groups with even small memberships who practice together in the mundane world and further their dialogue online, to disconnected individuals who belong to common e-groups to debate and discuss Pagan issues, share beliefs and practices, or to promote initiatives. Whilst it is possible to group all the above as a single South African online Pagan community, some online groups remain small, closed communities that have little or no contact with the others. Politics between

individuals and/or groups that precede the internet community can play a role in this phenomenon, with offline schisms being ratified online. Pagan contact in South Africa in its early development was often fortuitous, relying on word-of-mouth and occasional inserts in esoteric and alternative magazines, with the aim of linking with other likeminded individuals. The two first Pagan magazines in South Africa, namely *Penton Pagan Magazine: Exploring Pagan Paths since 1995* by Ariel Damon, and then *Pagan Africa* by the PFSA, were both printed in hard copy and reached limited audiences¹². It was only from the late 1990s that the internet was more widely embraced by Pagans as a tool for greater communication, and as a forum on which to articulate their interests, opinions, and developing beliefs and practices. Individuals and groups from one geographic location were able to network with those elsewhere and an internet ‘community’ became an alternative to the physical communities forged, for instance, in Pagan festivals abroad. There are now many online groups dedicated to diverse Pagan interests that newcomers can join, in the hope of developing their community membership. These groups have mostly been started, and are moderated, by individuals who have a publicly open Pagan identity, and who are known, at least by name, to be involved in other Pagan initiatives in the country. In only some cases do group moderators have an exclusively online identity. Such individuals are tacitly recognized as leaders within the community, even in the presence of sustained divisions between their group and another. The online community replicates many patterns of the offline community, in the representation of independent, self-authenticating individuals and groups. Although a minority of online initiatives does bring disparate individuals and groups together, the internet has not succeeded in bringing all parties into a single community, any more than offline,

physical attempts. For some, it is nonetheless, the only Pagan community of which they are a member.

In Max Weber's sociology, in order for a social organisation to survive, some form of bureaucratization must occur. In order to establish a niche in the South African religious landscape requires the clarification of definition of terms, and, being identified as a religious movement, inevitably brings Paganism into public discourses of ethics and morality and creates the need for this religious community to establish semantic boundaries around their many discourses. The only initiatives in these regards that have attempted to embrace the entire South African community have been conducted online, and again have rested mostly with individuals who have strong offline identities. Most initiatives have been unsuccessful due to, 1) the lack of consensus and agreement as to what constitutes authentic Pagan definition and practice, 2) the void between online and offline communities, 3) a rejection of the development of hierarchical structures within Paganism, 4) challenges to the right of any individual to speak or act on behalf of other Pagans, 5) division between those who reject all forms of institutionalization in favour of self determining individualism, and those who seek to conform with conventional structures. The wide discrepancies in the resources utilized by different individuals and groups in the construction of their Pagan identities, and the proclivity of Pagans to self-create their personal beliefs and practices, work against resolution of these factors. This in turn thwarts attempts aimed at unifying the local community, and at bringing aspects of the movement in line with models and structures in society. It is important to note, however, that for most Pagans, these issues are either unknown, or they are irrelevant to the ability to practice their religion in solitary practice or with smaller, closed communities.

Pagan activism, be it social, political or environmental, is therefore consequently marginal to the movement. Individuals who are so predisposed, have only the internet through which to garner support for Paganism to be articulated in society through a more unified voice. Equally limited are attempts to establish ethical guidelines within the community. An online initiative was extended to the South African Pagan community to become members of a Pagan Guild; an initiative that proposed that a Code of Conduct could be subscribed to by Pagan individuals and groups, that would afford protection against malpractices and misrepresentation within the community. This initiative was abandoned due to a wide lack of support for such a body, with the feeling that such structures run counter to the basic self-authenticating nature of Paganism. Misunderstandings also arose as to how far the authority of the Pagan Guild would extend, with some fearing, without grounds, that there would be interference in their actual practices. A specific goal specified by the proposed Guild was to provide protection against individuals who have misrepresented their credentials in the community. This was the first direct challenge to the authenticity assumed by certain individuals, who rejected membership out of hand, understandably under other pretexts. This attempt to provide a governing structure for Paganism died under accusations of control, victimization and witch-hunts. A lack of resolution on how violations of the proposed Code of Conduct would be handled by the Guild also featured heavily in its lack of fruition. Pagans online tend to replicate their offline identities and resist initiatives perceived to jeopardize their right to create, interpret and practice their religion as they, or their particular group, see fit. A unified Pagan community is, as yet, an ephemeral concept that rests on the acknowledgement that “there are others like myself out there.” This understanding of a community identity is related to constructions of a personal identity in that both involve a negotiation of

the features by which individuals differentiate between “sameness” and “difference” in individuals and groups outside of the self.

Concentration on the aforementioned issues online is marginal to the more central preoccupations with magic, spell work and healing, and it is through these that a sense of community is enhanced. Healing online takes the form of the sharing of natural curatives and extends to emotional support for other list members, whether this be an acquiescence of solidarity, the offer to perform a healing spell on another’s behalf, or an online agreement to participate in a group healing ritual offline. With the increasing anonymity in many modern societies, the online community provides many of the traditional features of concern, care and support for other members. The internet not only facilitates the sharing of magic and spells, and, in this way, performs a cohesive function in small independent communities, but can itself be integrated into “the most ancient human technology of all: magic and spellworking” (Cowan 2005: 59). Macha Nightmare’s advocacy of computer networks as energy networks that can be harnessed for the performance of magic (2001) is a concept that has not been as widely articulated by Pagans in South Africa. In dialogues on Pagan online groups, magical identities are also sustained to a far greater degree than in the mundane world where such articulations are sometimes never made. In a society where Pagans are aware of their own marginalization, the internet can perform an integrative function in the construction of a Pagan identity; a venue where Pagan magical identities are given expression.

Where the more long-standing members of the Pagan community, who have well established practices offline, might use the internet for research and discussion, it is

amongst teenagers and newcomers that a Pagan internet subculture is more likely to develop. Practicing Witchcraft and magic online was introduced into popular culture on the teenage television show *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* when the character Jenny Calendar reveals that she is a member of a cyber coven, and, as such, is a “technopagan.” The vast resources in cyberspace and the anonymity and convenience of the internet for teenage Witches (Berger and Ezzy 2004: 182) are factors that make the internet a central domain where teenage religious identities can be explored and developed. For all users it is where their personal Pagan identities are explored and maintained through a computer-mediated communication system that promotes “the capacity to keep a particular narrative going” (Giddens 1991: 54). By virtue of the medium itself, these narratives are extended and explored through diverse and plural options.

Experiencing ritual online

Books and the internet are the prime resources for information on rituals, providing a multiplicity of examples from which ritual design and wording can be drawn; with often extreme eclecticism being exercised to suit the seekers need. This phenomenon is more prevalent in South Africa due to a widespread unavailability of training covens and increases the level of unbounded eclecticism in local practices.

Computer-mediated rituals are a virtual space where solitary practices intersect with group participation, satisfying some, but not all, of the needs that are not attainable in the material world. The performance of ritual online has drawn the interest of scholars (Dawson 2004, Cowan 2005), and is a phenomenon now embraced by practitioners of varying religious traditions. With respect to Paganism, Pagan elder

Macha Nightmare informs that, “Experiments with online ritual began in the United States in the 1990s” (2001: 191), and that Witchcraft notions of interconnectedness are ideally suited to an environment wherein,

The Web is a living example of what we Witches are always yapping about; everything is connected, you can’t do anything without affecting something else, and so on, and so on” (ibid: 66).

Through a process of cooperation between participants, Pagans draw on their imagination and on visualization to perform a cyber-ritual; a ritual shared by individuals separated geographically, each in a sacred space of his/her own creation and yet united in intent and in real time on the World Wide Web. Pagans refer to the circles they cast as sacred space¹³ as “the realm between the worlds” with some strongly advocating a similarity with cyberspace. Macha Nightmare shares the opinion of one such practitioner Shawn Arthur who maintains that,

The “realm between the worlds”, which is a phrase often related to sacred space, can be theoretically transplanted into the realm of cyberspace, especially if one’s use of cyberspace is for the same reasons. In other words, the realm between the worlds in a Wiccan ritual is the same whether or not one is in a physical circle with physical friends, in a physical circle with cyber friends, or in a cybercircle with cyberfriends (2001: 207).

Although online rituals have been conducted amongst individuals in South Africa, it is only currently (June, 2006) that an offer to participate in an online ritual has been advertised on a local website. With a strong desire to share ritual, and with the problem of locating individuals with whom to do so, the responses to such invitations could be high among the so-inclined Pagans whose computer skills are advanced enough to participate. Local opinion varies on the efficacy of online ritual, with most

practitioners who are experienced in terrestrial ritual identifying certain disadvantages to a solely cyber experience of ritual. One practitioner saw online ritual as a valuable extension to forms of Pagan ritual experience, with another advocating that it could be a useful introduction to Pagan ritual for more reticent individuals who, through gaining experience online could progress into seeking its physical counterpart offline. Most reservations concerned a lack of uniform preparation for the ritual, the inability to ascertain a single intent between participants, the fact that the representation of one participant could mask the presence of any number of persons at the ritual, and that a lack of offline experience in ritual aspects such as energy raising and visualization could jeopardize a successful outcome. There was very little blanket exclusion of the possibility for fruitful online ritual alongside the belief that this possibility was advanced when participants had established relationships that went beyond the ritual, either online or offline. With respect to Pagan online ritual¹⁴ Cowan argues that, “There is so little substantive difference between the content of ritual that occurs online and that which takes place off-line” (2005: 150), but nonetheless concludes that,

...for all but a very few technopagans, computer-mediated ritual is likely to remain at very best a poor second cousin to real life circles, groves, and kindreds (ibid: 150).

The Online Commodification of Paganism and Witchcraft

The commodification of Paganism and Witchcraft is ideally suited to an internet environment due to the size of its communication field, leaving little today that cannot be accessed in cyberspace. Pagan courses and magazine subscriptions are more readily available online than off, and an online store is now trading in Pagan ritual

tools, incense, general Pagan artifacts and books¹⁵. Independent vendors advertise their skills, and, usually for a price, personal astrological charts can be acquired. The ethics of charging for services is a contested issue within Witchcraft traditions, with many arguing that only material goods should be subject to cost, with training, healings and spiritual services being free of charge. Pagan elder Janet Farrar maintains that, ““You do not charge other members of the Craft” is one of the old laws dating back to Gerald Gardner” (2004: 243). Her assertion that this pertains strictly to coven training and not to courses and workshops offered is a general rule, but not one universally agreed upon and implemented in Pagan communities, although the issue is occasionally debated online.

Claiming to be “the first truly online school dedicated to Wiccan, Pagan and magical thought”¹⁶, Witch School, an online initiative started abroad by leaders of the Correllian Nativist Tradition, offers Wiccan degree courses and an array of online services and supplies, at a cost. Local advocates for Witch School have promoted the school through online groups, enrolling many more students in a project that claims that “163570 people have registered as students of Witch School since September 4, 2001”¹⁷. With opportunities to gain credentials in Witchcraft practices being extremely difficult to find in South Africa, and the fact that this is deemed worthwhile by some Pagans, Witch School has held appeal for some sectors of the community. It is through such projects that the early practice of Wicca as a mystery, initiatory tradition conducted in small groups has been transformed into new global and commodified forms. This trend is widely criticized; not only *despite* the growth of Witch School, but *because* of it. Witch School is perceived by many as solely a consumer capitalist venture, with the credential attained by students, consequently

being designated as inauthentic. This can result from criticisms that center on the rapid advance an individual can make in gaining credentials through this online venture.

Discussions of “African” Paganism Online

Pagan online discussions do not, for the most part address their relationship to witchcraft in African religious communities in any cogent way. Informational postings regarding the persecution of witches in indigenous communities seldom initiate debate, with exception being the plight of victims accused of witchcraft in Helena Village that was broadcast on television. Pagan convergences with African Religion were most contested during the Pagan Freedom Day celebrations that were initiated online. The first such event, proposed by Ariel Damon to coincide with National Freedom Day on April 27th, 2004, was planned to allow Pagans to celebrate a decade of religious freedom in the context of a national celebration of democracy. Its second purpose was to,

Foster a positive and holistic South African Pagan identity, encourage Cooperative Community building amongst Pagans and between Pagans and non-Pagans, and to promote understanding and tolerance amongst Pagans and between Pagans and non-Pagan South Africans (Pagan Freedom Day Charter: clause 2.2)¹⁸.

When the press pack for this event was released, there was more material included from the Traditional Healers Organisation (THO) than on information on modern Paganism. This issue, alongside pre-existent schisms within the community created tensions resulting in independent events being held around the country outside of the national Pagan Freedom Day initiative. What it did do, in light of the fact that scores

of Sangomas had been invited to participate in the Gauteng event under a unified Pagan banner, was to initiate online debates and (dis)agreements on whether Sangomas could, or should, be identified as Pagans. In one online discussion on the Freedom Day website, one member said, “ISangomas and nYangas are the real African Pagans – it is we who are the neo-Pagans” (6th May, 2004), whilst another more cautiously stated that,

Of course I count a Sangoma and an Inyanga as a Pagan, but then I haven’t asked THEM directly, and I have an itching feeling that perhaps they wouldn’t be happy with the term” (ibid: 6th May, 2004).

A poll was conducted on this same website as the discussion was held, asking whether Sangomas can be regarded as Pagans. There were a total of only seven responses to the following options. The response options and results were as follows.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| Most certainly, they live as close (if not closer to Nature than most Eurocentric Pagans.) | (6) |
| In certain ways “yes”, in others, “no” | (1) |
| Absolutely not. They have too many practices and beliefs that differ from ours. | (0) |
| No opinion, I don’t know enough about this matter. | (0) |

Six, of seven, affirmative responses statistically represented eighty five percent of the poll. The practitioner who conducted the poll appeared on a live radio interview the following Saturday evening, and was joined by Pepsile Maseko of the Traditional Healers Organisation, to discuss this issue with the public. When asked if the South African Pagan community would agree with the principle of identifying Sangomas as Pagans, the Pagan’s response was, “Yes. In fact we have just conducted a poll online,

and eighty five percent agreed.” That this statistic constituted the opinion of only six individuals failed to convey the extent to which this issue was, and is, contested within the Pagan community. The fact that there are no online or offline forums for debating these issues between modern Pagans and practitioners of indigenous African Religion, perpetuates the inability to achieve consensus on these matters of contention. It also invites the question as to whether a Pagan community should be delimited to the self-identifying modern Pagans or whether it is sufficiently flexible to include those with whom Pagans share some congruence.

Conclusion

A major difference between computer-mediated communications and the mass media of television, newspapers and magazines is that content is directly in the hands of the online practitioner. The internet is not only approached as a tool to gain knowledge and advance self-development, but as a means to share in a wider Pagan community. It is frequently where personal Pagan identities are first shared and from where understandings of the local Pagan community are drawn. For some, it is the only human Pagan community to which they belong. On the internet Pagans can pass opinion, dialogue and introduce new ideas and practices into the community, thereby bringing change and diversity into the movement. As an important site for identity disclosure it is where religio-magical identities can safely be articulated, shared and supported; often where this is not facilitated in the mundane world. It is also the site where Pagans are able to deliberate on the issues that concern their identities, both from inside and outside the community. Through online interaction with others, new forms of community are developed as individuals engage with virtual communities that support the Pagan identity they hold and project. It is through the process of

testing these identities in virtual space that individuals reflect on their representations in the light of the reaction of others, and, by so doing, expand and revise their own Pagan identity. This process often results in the reinforcing of boundaries between diverse individuals and groups in the wider Pagan community, thus enhancing the proliferation of small autonomous communities and the phenomenon of the solitary practitioner. The location of communication in a non-geographic, social space elevates opportunities to construct and support multiple identities and relationships, yet also enhances the scope for deception and misunderstanding. South African Pagans who have strong offline identities are inclined to replicate this status online, and, in the process, extend their role as leaders in the emergent movement.

Pagan identities are most challenged by the multiple discourses and the meanings ascribed to the terms 'Pagan', 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' in South Africa, and the internet is the only forum where this problem can be brought into broader discussion. The fact that the majority of the South African Pagan community is not involved in inclusive local online dialogues and debates inhibits resolution. The lack of consensus in the community on a definition of terms, on how to clearly articulate themselves in society, and on establishing the boundaries around modern Paganism, are issues that will continue to challenge the local movement and will be issues that continue to be debated both online and offline. Through these and other endeavours, notions of a unified Pagan community remain tenuous at present, while individuals and small groups continue to pursue and develop their own particular interests and initiatives. The internet is, however, the only location outside of private groups where Pagans are able to relate their community identities to those that have emerged in the social context. Their representations in the media, incidences where they are labeled as Satanists in the public sphere, and personal experiences of religious discrimination are

dialogued and debated amongst individuals across different traditions; but again fail to incorporate the views of the whole online community. Only rarely is traditional witchcraft raised in discussion.

In the absence of Pagan gatherings and festivals at which the Pagan community could come together to share ideas and address mutual concerns, the internet offered the potential to meet these ends. Initiatives on the internet to create such a forum have mostly failed to achieve these objectives due to offline schisms and the problems inherent in addressing individual differences in virtual relationships. Noted for their own celebration of diversity, South African Pagans have become adept at creating small communities of people who share their beliefs and interests, and excluding those that don't. Even in the absence of a workable human Pagan community, Pagans have the resources to express, perform and expand their identities through their connection and interaction with the other-than-human and spiritual world

¹ This quotation was taken from Nevill Drury's online paper *Magic and Cyberspace: Fusing Technology and Magical Consciousness in the Modern World* on the website <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Volume1V/MagicCyber.htm>.

² For more on Gerlach and Hine's SPIN theory, see York (1995: 324-327).

³ For the definition of open-sourced programming on the internet, Cowan cites the World Wide Web inventor, Tim Berners-Lee, who described the phenomenon as, "software for which the basic building blocks – the source code – is freely available for modification" (2005: 29). For a lengthier discussion see Cowan (2005: 28-35).

⁴ The term TechnoPaganism is used by Stephen O'Leary in his chapter *Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks* in Dawson, L and Cowan, D *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004, p 49

⁵ On the website <http://www.conferences.aoir.org/viewabstract.php?id=554&cf=5>.

⁶ Vos, Donna Darkwolf *Dancing Under an African Moon* Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2002.

⁷ Professor Duncan Timms uses this phrase in his paper *Identity, Community and the Internet* that was presented at the 6th International Conference on Social Representation (27th August 2002 – 1 September 2002). It is available on the website <http://www.psychologie-sociale.org/6cirs/Timms.pdf>.

⁸ 'Flaming' is described as "A deluge of critical email, the directing of a large volume of abusive and insulting emails at somebody, often as part of a flame war" (*Encarta World English Dictionary* London: Bloomsbury Publishing PC, 1999).

⁹ 'Lurkers' is the term given to members of groups who silently observe group discussions and do not participate in list dialogue and exchanges.

¹⁰ The initiative that drew the most dissension and debate in the local community was the establishment of an online group called African Round Table, started by a local Pagan who was also editor of an online magazine. Identifying the lack of distinction between Pagan Witchcraft and witchcraft in indigenous communities as the central "problem" facing the community, this individual sought the

“expertise” of key members of the international Pagan community for advice and support on this issue. Local responses to her initiative were mostly negative, with some Pagans openly stating that they were insulted by the implication that they needed external advice in what was an essentially local issue. The practitioner involved was accused of attempting to bolster her own position in the community through this initiative.

¹¹ Sarah Pike’s book *Earthly Bodies Magical Selves* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001 is a study of the festival movement in America.

¹² *Penton Pagan Magazine* is now available online, and *Pagan Africa* has been discontinued.

¹³ Stephen D. O’Leary’s chapter *Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks* discusses the problems inherent in online religious rituals, the problem it presents for many contemporary theories of ritual, and suggests ways in which this feature transforms both religious beliefs and practices (2004: 37-58).

¹⁴ For a more in-depth discussion see Cowan’s chapter *Among the Stones of Cyberhenge: Modern Pagan Ritual on the World Wide Web* (2005: 119-152).

¹⁵ A more recent Pagan online store can be found on <http://www.vuya.net>.

¹⁶ This statement is made on the Witch School homepage <http://www.witchschool.com/main.asp>.

¹⁷ This was the number of members given on the Witch School homepage in May, 2006.

¹⁸ The Pagan Freedom Day Charter can be found on the dedicated website <http://www.geocities.com/zapfdm>.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PAGANISM: FINDING COMMUNITIES IN NATURE

The South African Pagan community can be identified as a network of small, autonomous groups that have little to no interconnection other than what has been afforded by the internet. Many individuals identify as solitary practitioners, either out of choice, or, as a result of the absence of a physical community in their location or of their liking. For Pagans, however, the lack a physical community cannot be equated to an *absence* of community, as their personal identities are interwoven in a web of relationships that are developed and experienced through Nature. Pagans likewise extend this notion of collective identity to include others whom they perceive to share in similar relationships with the natural world.

In response to my question “What do you perceive to be the most unifying feature of all Pagan traditions?” seventy three percent answered “the reverence for Nature”, and, “the synchronizing of the individual with these cycles of Nature”. A further twenty six percent mentioned the theme of ‘interconnectedness’ between Nature and the self. However, only forty percent stated that it was the fact that Paganism is a Nature/Earth-based religion, that most drew them to the movement. Their responses revealed the centrality of the idea that Nature is a central feature of Pagan identity; but also that it is, in fact, other features that attract people to Paganism. This discrepancy underlies the differences that lie between ideas of Paganism, and Paganism as a ‘lived religion’. It also accents the need to explore the role of Nature in Pagan identities, and what implications ensue from following a Nature Religion.

In this chapter I shall start with a discussion of Nature Religion as a generic term, and then explore the role of Nature in modern Paganism in South Africa. Nature will not be looked at solely as the natural environment, but as a category that includes the body-as-Nature, the gender issues raised by this association, and the nature of deities. Importantly, it will address how *through* Nature Pagans construct a collective identity that embraces categories beyond the human world. Also raised is the debated question in South African Paganism as to whether, on these grounds, other communities share with them in this collective identity, and, if so, can be included in the category 'Paganism'.

Nature Religions

Although 'Nature Religion' as a category emerged in the 1970s, its roots lie in ideas that have been developing since the late nineteenth century in occult groups, in opposition to mainstream religions and in literature. The environmental crisis of the nineteen seventies, highlighted the consequences of humankind's relationship to the natural world, and spearheaded new developments in religion, along with the resurgence of investigation into the relationship between religion and natural environments. Peter Beyer (1998: 11-21) provides a discussion of the social context in which Nature Religions have gained prominence, "and therefore how nature religion participates in that context, helping to form and being formed by it" (ibid: 11). Specifically referring to a global context, Beyer cites the changes to the capitalist economic system, the exponential growth in communication and information technologies, as well as the processes of, what he calls, "cultural homogenisation" (ibid: 12)¹. Globalization has been the impetus for both progress

and change; not least to religious systems. Nature Religions have developed with and through these processes, as can be witnessed in the forms of modern Paganism in South Africa today.

Paganism as a Nature Religion

Religions and spiritualities involve conceptions of the general order of existence, and, in Paganism, an understanding of this order is gained through the observation of the natural world. This tendency enables Pagans to be described as having pantheistic and animistic inclinations. Pantheism is described as the belief that God is identifiable with the forces of nature, and with the natural world, and in essence is highly evidenced in what is known of the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Celtic and Teutonic mystery and fertility religions (Wallace 2000: 99). Pagan relationships with the divine are consequently not hierarchical, but grounded in the belief that “no understanding or relationship with divinity can begin without entering into a relationship with Nature itself” (ibid: 99). Nature then, is the *a priori* condition for what York says “allows the divine to be manifested in and as the material, whatever else it may be” (2003: 162). This radically pantheistic orientation differentiates Paganism from religions that are Gnostic and seek transcendence of the natural order. Creation myths and ponderings on a First Cause are hence largely absent in Pagan traditions, that invert the elevation of spirit over matter. The idea of transcending Nature for spiritual experience becomes an extraneous endeavour. Pagan scholar Barbara Davy, clarifies this point when she says,

It’s not that I would deny the reality of transcendent experiences – far from it – but that I personally classify these experiences differently. Extraordinary experiences do not need to be described as transcendent of nature to be

experienced as transcendent. They can transcend the ordinary without implying any sort of exit of being, nature or the material world (Natrel discussion: 3-4.2003).

This position is oppositional to that in mainstream religions, and emphasizes the ‘this-worldly’ stance of modern Paganism, born of its valuing of physical place.

Think globally, act locally

Pagan narratives on Nature are usually presented in a global framework. Nature is seen as an indivisible whole where what affects one part, affects the entire network of relationships. Spiritual disjunctions between humans and Nature are as equally negative to the whole, as are the effects of global warming, the extinction of life forms, and global practices that operate to the detriment of the natural world. In spite of the range of these concerns, Pagans attach specific and unique value to their locality. A natural corollary to this fact would be that Pagans ‘live locally’, in accordance with their global concerns and agendas. Foremost to both positions, is the Pagan understanding that the sacred is manifest in matter; in the universal and in the particular, and that this should inspire a unique way of living *in* the world. Extending this argument is the idea that the divine is as much in Nature, as in the subjective self.

Paganism exhibits a range of relationships between individuals and their natural environments; from direct environmental activism through to localized activities such as recycling, indirect support for animal rights groups, and/or environmental organisations such as GreenPeace International.² When asked if they were involved in environmental activism, sixty five percent of survey respondents said “no”, with only four claiming any direct involvement. The most significant of the latter are the

initiatives undertaken by Pagan practitioner, Ariel Damon, who founded the Aradian Planetary Cooperative³ (APC) in 2001. This group, inspired by the South African Bill of Rights, says in its charter,

We embrace a Charter of Planetary Rights, that enshrines the inherent rights of the Planet Earth and affirms the necessary values of respect, tolerance, restraint and responsibility required specifically of the human species towards Nature, and toward all Her animate and inanimate manifestations (2001: 1).

Stating as their objective that,

We recognize the importance and vital role of access to information and environmental education in empowering and liberating the Planet, and in countering global trends towards rampant consumerism, species enslavement and environmental degradation (ibid: 2).

The APC works through four primary methods of direct, non-violent action, namely education, petitions, active non-violent resistance and magical meditation. In terms of their charter the human shares in a community of all life forms, albeit with a unique responsibility. Although the APC comes closest to it, there are no global initiatives on the scale of the radical engagements of Pagan feminist activist, Starhawk, who argues for the inseparability of religion and politics. Her particular tradition, known as Reclaiming Witchcraft, is the impetus for direct activism against global injustices, and is grounded in her opinion that,

The first set of assumptions is those about the earth and our role in it as humans. One view sees human beings as separate from and above nature. Nature exists as a resource bank that we are entitled to exploit for our own ends. She is of value only in how she can be used for our increased comfort, gain, or profit. This philosophy is held by many religions, but also by both

capitalists and classical Marxists. It has resulted in unprecedented destruction of ecosystems and life-support systems all over the planet, from the clearcutting of ancient forests to the building of unsafe nuclear reactors (2004: 8).

Her more extremist position can be found in her statement that,

Studying the language of nature can be a dangerous undertaking. For to become literate in nature's idiom, we must challenge our ordinary perceptions and change our consciousness. We must, to some extent, withdraw from many of the underlying assumptions and preoccupations of our culture (ibid: 8).

South African Paganism is inclined to an apolitical stance in this broader sense, and there is no consensus in what levels of environmental and social engagement are perhaps necessitated by being affiliated to a Nature Religion. Living a Nature Religion, is, for most, an attuning to the changing cycles of Nature through ritual expression, and the valuing of the natural as an expression of the divine. This relatively unorthodox position contests ideas that Nature itself has to be transcended for religio-spiritual experiences. Importantly, it also locates religious authority in the individual. In South Africa the tendency is overwhelmingly to both act and think locally, with real encounters with environmental concerns being of the passive variety. This factor is also borne out by the fact that Pagans are not, with small exception, a part of environmental organizations and initiatives in the country. Far more address has been given to issues of environmental concern by mainstream religious and secular groups, than has come from within the Pagan community. Andy Letcher poses the salient question,

If Paganism as a movement is not at the vanguard of environmentalism then surely it can be labeled as ‘virtual religion’, a faith without substance or credentials (2000: 1).

The issue of ‘virtual Paganism’ is an important one for Pagans, who, despite undertaking worthy endeavours such as recycling, conserving energy, petition signing etcetera, are possibly instrumental in a lifestyle of which Adrian Harris cynically says, “Ultimately, it can do no more than slow the process of destruction” (1995: 150). If low to nil engagement in environmental activism does indeed lead to a “religion without credentials” then it is important to ask what alternative understandings of Nature exist in Paganism, and whether these hold a greater attraction for drawing adherents.

Nature, gender and the body

The term Nature is not only extendable beyond the natural environment, but can refer to dimensions of the self and to questions regarding immanence. Deep Ecology, founded by Arne Naess, is a movement that espouses cerebral and radical non-distinction between humans and Nature. Not necessarily a self-identified Pagan tradition, Deep Ecology makes a political statement that contests the privileging of the human over any other form of life⁴. Such initiatives have become a part of what is called Green enterprises, again not necessarily linked to the Pagan sphere, but equally spread across secular and mainstream agendas. The ‘greening’ of religions is a phenomenon that has arisen over the past two decades in response to the dire consequences of human abuses of the environment. Paganism takes both the question and the answer to this phenomenon to other dimensions of inquiry that mostly stand outside science-based, rationalist worldviews.

Paganism is an embodied spirituality in which humans connect to the physical, the intellectual and the spiritual, through one or all of the senses. The body becomes the site of all experience, elevating conceptions of the self as human nature, in a relationship with the nature of others, and the nature that constitutes the whole environment of the individual, both seen and unseen. Many Pagans do, as Harvey notes, “talk about “connecting with” and “tuning in” to something in Nature, but this radio language better represents the New Age” (1997: 136). He eschews this loss of identity in favour of a “Mutuality” that brings the self into an equal and reciprocal relationship with other life forms. The self that is brought into such relationships is a composite of many features that include the intellectual, the emotional, the spiritual and the physical. There is little separation in understandings of the physical and the spiritual, hence a rather unique focus on the body-as-Nature, sharing mutually in its attributes.

Humans are gendered life-forms; a statement that encompasses a range of forms and possibilities. Embedded in the issue of gender, are discourses about the body and about sexuality. Within Paganism, Adrian Harris advocates a Sacred Ecology⁵ “which moves beyond the cerebral to bring us to a direct experience of a wholeness rooted in the body” (1995: 151). Moving beyond positions taken by secular environmental philosophies, Harris asserts “a Somatic philosophy which respects the knowing of the body, the knowledge, memories and wisdom held within our muscles, flowing with our hormones, through our nerves (ibid: 152). This position advocates direct experience as much as direct action. Such ways of knowing, are apprehended

by many Pagans, primarily through ritual, wherein the boundaries between the physical and the spiritual are symbolically and performatively collapsed.

Ahead of ritual, most practitioners advocate the taking of a ritual bath to cleanse and purify the body. The self-as-body and what Nikki Bado-Fralick calls “nature-as-person” (2005: 125), is able, in a ritualized context, to interrelate with aspects of a wider Nature that precede, and coexist with, the individual. Purified and blessed, the body is equally subject and object in the ritual experience. Bado-Fralick cites anthropologist Thomas Csordas’ employment of the term “somatic modes of attention” to refer to “culturally” elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others” (ibid: 130). ‘Others’ in a Pagan ritual is expanded to include all that share in the ritual space; no less the gods, than the spirits of the elements. Deity and Nature are made manifest in the experience of the body in ritual where the psychological and the somatic are reconciled in a non-dualistic encounter. Such connections can be facilitated outside of ritual through the hyper-awareness of a Nature that exists within and without the body. Some of these connections are made through song, dance, the performance of sacred myths and sexuality.

The latter is only obliquely referred to in South Africa Pagan society. Historically, third degree initiations into traditional Gardnerian Wicca covens, incorporated The Great Rite, or ritual sex, which Gardner proposed be enacted symbolically or literally. The roots of this practice lie in the rituals of late nineteenth century occult orders, such as the Ordo Templi Orientus⁶, in the influences of occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) as well as in Charles Leland’s *Aradia*. South African groups and covens

enact the union of the Goddess and the God symbolically, in a manner described by Rabinovitch and Lewis as,

More commonly, the Great Rite is performed “in token.” In this case the Priestess holds the chalice filled with drink, and she invokes the spirit of the Goddess. Her partner holds the blade, symbol of the phallus, while invoking the spirit of the God (2002: 119-20).

Ritual nudity in Paganism is referred to as “skyclad.” Whilst this is still a practice in traditional Gardnerian groups, due to the absence of any such groups in South Africa, ritual is conducted either in robes or in everyday dress, occasionally adjusted to the specific ritual, either in colour or to fit into an overall theme. The purpose behind ritual nudity has been proposed as eradicating class distinctions, being ‘at one’ with the powers of Nature, and inverting mainstream constructions of identity; either as a deviance, or, of being attached to overt sexuality.

The manifest nature of gender and sexual symbolism in Pagan rituals is itself an oppositional stance to religions that divorce spirituality from Nature and the physical. Christianity is most frequently blamed for the development of the dualistic dichotomy of spirit/nature, and for discourses that objectify the gendered body, associates sexuality—and primarily female sexuality—with deviance, and which then function as what Foucault calls “regimes of truth.” The influence of Calvinistic forms of Christianity in South Africa is pervasive, and, alongside the conservatism in African indigenous religious groups, creates a climate of conventional restrictions on the body, on sexuality and on the feminine. The Pagan redress to these attitudes is cautionary, understated and largely unexplored in South African Paganism as a result. When questioned in my survey on attitudes to ritual nudity, whilst only twenty three

percent responded with an emphatic “no”, there was not a single affirmative response, with the balance mostly advocating tolerance alongside personal discomfort.

Yet a further unexplored debate in South African Paganism is the feminist implications of associating the Earth with the Goddess, and with the female body. In this association the Goddess is Earth Mother, She is Nature; depicted as having the procreative and nurturing qualities of motherhood. Ronald Hutton validly states that “in periods when Women stood for virgin, mother, nature or the source of fertility, she seldom seemed to stand for more ‘emancipatory’ roles such as woman as surgeon, director or politician” (1998: 97). The attribution of such roles to the Goddess can itself be a form of sexual stereotyping and a branch of feminist theory that Val Plumwood suggested, “had just replaced the myth of woman as ‘the angel in the house’ with the equally restricted one of ‘the angel in the ecosystem’” (quoted in Hutton1998: 99).

Whilst Pagan discourses employ Nature as their central rubric, it is frequently the Divine Feminine that is foremost in their beliefs and practices. In a panel discussion at the World Parliament of Religions, Barcelona 2004, Grove Harris, director of the Harvard Pluralism Project, expanded the notion of the Goddess as Earth Mother, to one that included what she called “the whole body of the Goddess”. As opposed to restricting discourses on the Goddess and on females to fertility and motherhood, she appealed to a range of possible expressions that included and combined the body, the spirit and the intellect, and so freed depictions that exclusively embed the feminine within the material universe. Grove Harris’s feminist stance marries “women and the earth as both being colonized victims in male dominated societies”. Harris ratified the

position that disjunctions between humans and Nature have political and societal roots that demand radical correctives. In her panel paper she explained that,

A non-sentient Nature provides the ideological justification for domination, and this mindset has a direct link to misogyny. When a male Godhead has dominance over the Earth, then society is bound to reflect that model with dire consequences for humanity and the Earth.

Harris's argument has not yet found real expression in South African Paganism where the primary models of divinity in society are of a masculine Godhead, and where conceptions of Nature, in secular and religious discourses, range from the utilitarian to one of stewardship of natural resources. The implied hierarchy and 'power-over' Nature in these discourses can be seen in metaphors regarding Nature, such as "the rape of the Earth", and, in such, the woman/nature link is intensified. Historically, this link mostly embodies negative connotations, from modern science⁷ in the sixteenth and seventeenth century that ratified the need for mastery over Nature, to the associated uniting of ideas of both women and Nature as either passive, or wild, untamed and unpredictable. Local Pagans are not beyond highlighting these very qualities themselves in poetry and song, as the first and last verses from a poem entitled *Pagan Protest* by local poet Michelle McGrane illustrates.

Do you understand
That I will not be confined.
I will not be restricted
By your expectations and conventions.
I will not change my soul and conform
To fit your rigid ideals.

I will stand on my mountain under the shining moon,
And howl like a wolf.
I will hold my head up high,
Hair streaming, laughing like a banshee.
With my last breath –
I will call out my Pagan protest.

(Vos 2002: 210)

These verses highlight the resistance to mainstream authority and organizations that lies on the surface of Paganism. They also locate the Witch, itself a politically reclaimed word, as standing outside of traditional conventions. Here, female 'nature' and Nature itself are equally powerful and equally unpredictable. Abuses against women in South Africa are amongst the highest in the world and subliminal associations with both women and Nature as commodities could be perilously close. It is my contention that without invalidating the enormous progress South Africa has made since our change in dispensation, I believe there is still in place, what Judy Harrow calls "a dominator culture" (1996: 21) whose language, values and attitudes are so ingrained in the fabric of our society that they are often dangerously invisible. In such a culture the principles of balance and partnership are eroded by the privileging of one gender, class, religion, institution or ideology, over another, resulting in the abrasion of social conscience and of concern for the environment. Catherine Neuschler, in her eco-feminist paper⁸ ratifies this position when she says,

Throughout history, with the privileging of rationality, and market economies, the west has come to think of the earth only as the earth can be useful to mankind and society.In large part, this is due to the continuing association of women and nature. In a society where man is dominant, a female earth simply cannot be highly valued for any intrinsic worth. It therefore becomes merely instrumental, something that exists for the use and good of the dominant class (2001: 9).

Pagan healing through Nature

The ability of Nature to heal has been portrayed in Romantic literature and in science, and entered into religious and secular discourses in the second half of the twentieth

century. Indigenous societies have long advocated the healing properties that inhere in the natural world. Industrialization, pluralism and the transformation of societies, globalization and rapid technological advances, have produced personal and social tensions that have found an outlet in religious and secular developments.⁹

Technologies for healing the self have, over the past two decades in particular, grown into million dollar industries. In South Africa the two most important developments in regard to healing in the religious context have been, (i) the growth of the African Initiated Churches that grew exponentially in the face of urbanization, apartheid structures that split families and communities, and the erosion of indigenous forms of religious practice through Christian conversion and modernization. The development, and the associated healing technologies they offered, sought to facilitate healing the individual as much as the healing of dislocated communities. (ii) The New Age Movement that drew on modern science, Eastern philosophies and religions, and on forms of western esotericism, has developed from the nineteen seventies. Ideas of healing the body, the mind and the world are key issues in the movement, and ones that have permeated many sectors of modern society. New Age conceptions of healing are closely associated with ideas of transformation; again of the self and of the world.

Adrian Harris, radically connects healing, Nature and the body by saying that,

...healing through ecstatic Pagan ritual is what lies at the heart of Sacred Ecology. ...We act to protect our Earth because we know, in every cell of our bodies, that our lives, our communities, and our land are sacred. We act from a grounded strength that reaches beyond intellectual awareness and yet reinforces it, rooting deep within us (1994: 6)¹⁰.

As previously mentioned, Pagan activities in South Africa to ‘heal the Earth’, generally do not involve direct action, but focus on the personal space and location of the practitioner. The overwhelming majority of Pagans are urban, living with the attendant stresses of city life. Nature is often something ‘one escapes to’ in order to relax, to restore the connection between the individual and the natural world, and to heal oneself from this dislocation. Rituals conducted in urban centers, even if outdoors in gardens, parks or beaches, are seldom without the noise of traffic and urban restrictions on noise and the lighting of fires.

South African Pagans do not speak *overtly* of healing the self, but provide, primarily through ritual, the means to this end. For many the role of Nature is curtailed to symbolic representation on altars, in ritual and in the home, and there is an infrequent association of Nature with quintessential urban environments. The importance of these symbolic representations cannot be over-emphasised in the role they play in practices that are ultimately concerned with healing. Such practices can include localized Earth-healing rituals, magic performed to address a myriad of concerns from illness through to a job loss, and psychic healing that aims at the reconciliation of body and mind. The energy raised in Pagan circles through dancing, chanting and drumming is purposive, and, as Graham Harvey notes, “can be used for what can broadly be called “healing” – of a sick person, an endangered rain-forest, a meadow or a hill threatened by road-builders or a sick Earth” (1997: 117). Ritual space is often where the problem in an individual life can be addressed, and where the focus of the practitioners combines with natural resources to this end. The following, called Thoth’s Healing Spell, illustrates this point.

1. Prepare by taking a cleansing bath in hyssop (or smear hyssop over yourself if you are in a shower).
2. On your high altar light two blue candles.
3. Burn myrrh and healing herbs for incense. (eg. Carnation, eucalyptus, gardenia, lotus, rosemary, violet, spearmint and olive).
4. Chant: 'Isis, send healing over my body'.
5. Inhale the incense with rapid short breaths until you are slightly light-headed; then inhale the incense with four deep slow breaths.

(Vos 2002: 143)

Although such forms of sympathetic magic¹¹ have existed in all societies throughout time, they were popularized in folklore through tales of the cunning-folk. These were individuals, also known as wise-women and wise-men, who were adept at magic and natural healing. Their spells and remedies were frequently accompanied by chants and incantations, often of the Christian variety, or taken from medieval magic grimoires. Belief in the ability of these practitioners to heal was accompanied by the general societal skepticism and mistrust often leveled at magic practitioners.

Rabinovitch and Lewis assert that "Modern Witches and psychics can be described the true inheritors of the cunning folk tradition, using both folklore and intellectual and academic sources in history and philosophy to craft their skills" (2002: 70-1).

Ingredients for magic and spell work are taken from Nature, and are seen to have not only curative, but also magical properties. Scott Cunningham, author of the *Encyclopedia of Magic Herbs* (1984) says that herb magic can only be practiced when the individual knows the power inhering in the plants. Whilst some Pagans do grow their own herbs, most purchases are made at commodified outlets where the conditions under which the herbs are grown and harvested are not known. Nature, in this aspect, has value for addressing individual needs and for supplying the demand in a consumerist culture, more than it has value in, and of, itself. This fact points to the

statement Catherine Albanese made when she “showed that often the expressed desire for harmony with nature masks a mastery impulse (over non-human nature or other humans)” (quoted in Taylor 2000b: 4). Herbs and other natural products are grown, harvested, burnt, infused and their energies harnessed, in accordance with the goal of the practitioner, and the healing facilitated by such practices belongs to the individual. Healing is seldom reciprocal and, in this instance, does not constitute a relationship based on mutuality. This argument can be applied to all examples of humankind’s usages of natural resources, and can follow an illogical circle of reasoning. What I intend by the example is, however, that even in a Nature Religion such as Paganism, the ultimate beneficiary of most healing practices that involve using natural products is inevitably the individual and that this outcome inheres in much of the practice of Pagan magic in South Africa.

Such magical technologies first developed in Paganism outside of the healing techniques embraced by the New Age Movement, such as Reiki¹² and Shiatsu¹³. . . Gerald Gardner introduced the notion that the magical and healing properties of herbs were part of early witchcraft practices (2004: 102), and although still very central in modern Witchcraft, attention has increasingly been broadened to include healing techniques that were more commonly ascribed to the New Age Movement.

The Nature of Deity

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to provide a lengthy analysis of Pagan conceptions of divinity¹⁴, but important to note the ways in which they articulate the nature of deity. The immanence of the divine in matter provides the framework for these understandings.

Pagans are united more by practice than by theology, and, despite the place of deity in their beliefs and practices, engage in very little investigation into the nature of these deities. Experiences of divine reality can be pantheistic, panentheistic, polytheistic or animistic, or, a combination of all or some of these orientations. The differences in inter, and intra, Pagan traditions is partial explanation for this phenomenon but, more importantly, it highlights the fact that in Paganism, *doing* is valued more highly than *believing*. ‘Belief’ in the idea that deities are ‘true’ or ‘real’ is a somewhat redundant term in Paganism due to the nature of the individual/divine relationship.

Consequently, the nature of deities is an aspect of Paganism that incurs the least dissension amongst practitioners.

Most Pagans share their mundane worlds with a deity/deities of their choosing. The nature of these divine entities is experienced in embodied existence and in the outer cycles of Nature. Experiences such as menstruation, eating and drinking, and sexuality are equally experienced by the deities as much as they share, alongside humans, in the seasonal cycles of winter/summer, birth/death, growth/decay. Wicca, originally more a fertility religion than a Nature Religion has, as its central mythology, the journey of the God and the Goddess through birth, growth, union, death and rebirth, and simultaneously imbuing the seasons with attributes commensurate with each stage.

The inherent duotheism in Wicca is not found in all Pagan traditions, as some exhibit animistic or even atheistic persuasions, but it is the most common expression in South African Paganism. Both the God and the Goddess can be, as individual constructions,

collapsed into a single divine unity or life-force, or be anthropomorphized into a plethora of independent deities who may, or may not, be reducible to the more generic terms. Irrespectively, Pagans share in intimate, unmediated relationships with their Gods and Goddesses and, in their radical eclecticism (locally), investigate deities across many centuries and cultures. Some Pagans will attest to deities “being of their own making” or “thought forms”, whilst others argue for their independent existence. Independent deities who are invoked in ritual, or who act as models and guides for practitioners raises the question as to whether this is evidence of a transcendent dimension, making Pagans more exhibitiv of panentheism. The important point is that Pagan deities are seldom worshipped, but are divine entities who, although bearers of the mysteries of the Otherworld,¹⁵ can participate in lived experiences, and “manifest more clearly in physical nature than in supernatural ways” (Harvey 1997: 169). This immanence adds variance to monotheistic doctrines of salvation where there is a single transcendent male deity. The this-worldly orientation in Paganism gives it little place for ideas of release or escape, from the earthly realm. Harvey notes that,

Pagan deities are not intervening to give Pagans access to a more perfect world, they are not taking Pagans to a more spiritual unearthly home. They are empowering Pagans to consider themselves and their place in the web of things, to honour the richness and enhance the diversities of life (1997: 169).

It also follows that Pagan deities do not impose authority nor are agents of revelation of the divine world or of divine plan. Pagans are not urged to model their own lives on the nature and lives of the deities. Authority is located in the individual who is open to transformative possibilities through communication *with* their chosen deity/deities who are located and experienced in Nature.

Pagan deities, accordingly, equally populate the natural as the preternatural, and the nature of deity can be coextensive with the nature of the individual. This means that not only positive qualities inhere in the nature of deities, but they also can be, at times, inconstant, envious, tempestuous and unpredictable. Pagans do not recognize an external and independent source of evil in the universe, and do not usually interpret negative occurrences as retributive of divine agency. Pagans celebrate with equanimity, that all Nature—the human, the divine, the other-than-human and the natural world—can all manifest a ‘dark’ or ‘shadow side’. All qualities, the positive and the negative, are part of the nature of existence. The ascription of gender to deities often confers human gender stereotypes, an example of how some practitioners impose their own personified models of deities onto a singular divine energy. For others, who argue for independent deities, there is a high incidence of the attribution of gender essentialism in their narratives about deity, and in their practices.

The divine feminine is elevated in Paganism, and most particularly in Wicca and Witchcraft. That She is the ‘first among equals’ alongside her consort, the God, is the more common attitude in South African Paganism, despite narratives that speak for the equal representation of both genders. Despite this, there are no dedicated Goddess Spirituality groups in South Africa, although I am aware of a local Wiccan teaching group who elevate the Goddess to an almost singular deity. The rhetoric of this group approximates much of that of monotheistic religions with a male Godhead; a feature that has given rise to accusations of some conceptions of the Goddess as being no more than “God in a dress.” Many converts to new religions are inclined to take with them both the models and the language of the religions in which they were raised.

Most South Africa Pagans come from a Christian background, and for all, Christianity is the religious landscape on which their Pagan identities have been formulated. The restitution of the Goddess is, in such a climate, itself an oppositional and political statement, and models of the divine and of divine nature that approximates mainstream models, can be a form of redress and a means of articulation in wider society. Importantly, it is the ascriptions of gender to deity that parallel ascriptions of gender to the natural world. As previously mentioned, the Goddess is ubiquitously associated with the Earth and the lunar cycles, and, whilst the God is associated with the sun and as the God of Vegetation, or the Horned God, the articulations of the latter are less clear. A description, and one in which the gender essentialism to which I refer is inherent, is given by Pagan authors Janet and Stewart Farrar in their book *The Witches God* where they say,

What do we mean by ‘the masculine principle’? Briefly we would say that it represents the linear-logical, analyzing, fertilizing aspect, with its emphasis on Ego-consciousness and individuality, while the feminine principle represents the cyclical-intuitive, synthesizing, formative, nourishing aspect, with its emphasis on the riches of the Unconscious, both Personal and Collective, and on relatedness. In human terms, these two principles can be said to correspond to the left brain and right brain functions respectively (1989: 2).

The divine feminine and the divine masculine have become intimately related with Nature, with fertility, and with the human body. Ronald Hutton cites the work of pre-historian Glyn Daniel who, in 1958, ratified popular academic conceptions that

...lay in an archaic Greek myth about the making of a male sky and a female earth to make the cosmos. From time to time classical philosophers referred to Mother Earth, as an abstract concept based upon this old tradition (1993: 37).

This conception that had been popularized in the work of Margaret Murray closely associated this figure with fertility and with ancient festivals such as Lughnasadh¹⁶, the opening of harvest. The development of the God in fertility religions came through sculptures found on medieval buildings, and, in particular, those of the Green Man. Hutton says, “The Green Man is a human head almost always male, with foliage entwined about it and often sprouting from the mouth and nostrils too” (1993: 310). He adds,

In a very influential article which appeared in 1939, Lady Raglan proposed that the Green man (a name which she herself gave to the carvings) was an equivalent of a character who danced covered in foliage in May Day processions. The purpose of that figure was itself not very clear, but folklorists were then inclined to view it as a representation of a spirit of fertility (ibid: 310).

A mythology of Horned Gods likewise have a history in pre-Christian and Hellenic architecture¹⁷, some of the foremost being the Celtic Herne, the hunter, Cernunnos and Pan. “Horned fertility gods such as the Greek Pan, or the Celtic Cernunnos, are fairly common in religion, and it is reasonable that they should be prominent in neo-Paganism” (Russell 1980: 159). The attributes of this figure were drawn on by Christians for depictions of the devil, although the two figures have an independent and separate history¹⁸. Most elevated as oppositional to Christianity in its depictions of Satan, Pan, the Greek God of the Wild, is a central figure in modern Paganism. The union of these gendered divine figures as God and Goddess, are celebrated in Pagan rituals and in seasonal festivals, albeit the articulation of the God, being far less developed. Pagan author, Phyllis Curott, exemplifies this point when she said,

Unlike the biblical model of transcendent, masculine divinity, the Goddess resides in the world. She *is the* world, in all of its myriad forms and expressions. *You do not “believe” in the Goddess, you experience Her.* The Goddess is visible in the rhythm of women’s bodies, and in their capacity to give birth, and in the man’s capacity to create, love and nurture (2001: 117).

Regardless of their respective emphases, the God and the Goddess manifest *in* the natural world, and conceptions of divine balance provide a model for the mundane world and the potential for healing. Even Pagans who do not participate in talk of deities find in Nature a community of life forms with which the human can interact. Alongside physical communities is a world populated not only by deity, but by what Harvey (1997: 172) calls the “other-than-human world.” These can include the elementals,¹⁹ faeries, elves, and/or figures drawn from myths, legends and fiction, and play an important role in Pagan understandings of the diverse communities with whom they share their world.

Paganism and African Religion: extending collective identities

The Pagan interest in indigenous religion covers a range of issues, the foundation of which is the notion that such communities live in a closer relationship to Nature and to the Earth. With no intention of digressing into a comparative study of Paganism and African Religion, it is vital to unpack this notion in the context of South African Paganism and to address the question whether African religionists can be included as part of the broader Pagan community.

The term ‘Pagan’ has been used as a classificatory category for many diverse spiritual practices and it has been argued that,

...subsuming primal religiosities under a Eurocentric label is not “politically incorrect” but an ethnocentric blinder that prevents us from being able to appreciate the natural kinship between indigenous tribal religion and European paganism” (York 2003: 6).

This statement raises complexities in the South African context, some of which have been addressed by factions within the Pagan community. When the PFSA was first established it formed an early alliance with Zulu High Sanusi and Prophet, Credo Mutwa. According to their then president, Donna ‘Darkwolf’ Vos, Mutwa “‘married’ Paganism as practiced by whites and Paganism as practiced by his Sangomas and healers” (2002: 32). Vos, now leader of The Coven of the African Moon, continues this association and states on their website that, “the CAM tradition draws heavily from the rich South African Black African/Tribal Paganism/magical inheritance and consciousness.” Andi Fisher, editor of the Pagan online magazine, Five Feathers, likewise speaks of “African Paganism” and “Black Pagans.” This position is by no means unanimous and is contested from many quarters. Paganism, in the process of its development in the West, has often looked on, and drawn from, indigenous spiritualities for inspiration; and it is consistent with this phenomenon that local Pagans have turned their attention to African Religion in South Africa.

African Religion and nature

The African engagement with the natural world takes many forms, and is inspired by many beliefs associated with the spirit world. African religions on the southern continent, can be described as religions in which ancestor veneration is the central rubric, and it is the relationship between the living and the ancestors, or ‘living dead’, that underlies most beliefs and practices. Ideas and myths of a creator God have all

but disappeared in favour of the conception of a single, impersonal energy, *umoya*, that permeates the natural environment and may be harnessed for good or evil. This gives African Religion a strong animistic tendency, but which I contend, is less primary than the focus on the role of ancestors in daily life. Animism is the ancient philosophy that views everything in nature as having an in-dwelling spirit or soul. The term, coined by anthropologist E.B.Tylor (1832-1917), was seen as the earliest stage in the evolution of religious thought, and is also frequently referred to as the foundation of shamanism. It is in the engagement with, and maintenance of this relationship, that the natural world plays its part.

Paganism can be pantheistic, panentheistic, polytheistic and/or animistic, but all positions accord divine reality as manifest in matter. African Religion, as practiced in South Africa, reflects a *deus otiosus*²⁰, and an increasingly marked absence of polytheistic deities. These changes have been a religious response to increasing urbanization, modernization and the intense Christianization of South African society over the last century, that has eroded indigenous African religiosity to the point where now, only 125,898 individuals affirmed being African Traditional Religion practitioners in the 2001 census. Historically, Nature deities such as the Zulu Nature Goddess, *Nomklubulwana*, played a stronger role in harvest festivals and rituals in the past, and ‘free spirits’ who populated the natural world,

...now appear to be *ad hoc* beliefs that, as far as can be ascertained, are unique to different tribes and are presumably the result of local speculation on the awesome or uncanny impression given by such things as caves, mountains and groves, or are attempts to explain natural phenomena such as the seasons (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 321).

Notwithstanding the early date of this scholarship and some inherent inaccuracies in Hammond-Tooke's explanatory theory, a belief in nature spirits has indeed become increasingly random and marginal in African Religion, and is not structured into the word of the *amadlozi*, or ancestors. Unlike Paganism, the African relationship with the natural world is progressively more determined by contemporary needs, than it is by supernatural beliefs, or by any valorization of Nature.

Nature and healing in African Religion

The erosion in indigenous practices and beliefs has been arrested by the growth of the AICs where they are syncretic with African Christianity, on a continuum from high to low. Healing in African Religion and in the AICs is concerned with restoring the balance between the living and the departed, a break which is seen as causative of misfortune, illness and even death. (A secondary cause of these afflictions is witchcraft practices.) African Religion is less a particular set of beliefs than it is about ways of being in the world, and healing—whether it is psychic, social or physical—is therefore aimed at the restoration of the individual to a point of equilibrium with the forces that have disrupted wellbeing. Individuals turn to sacred specialists in order to redress imbalances in African society. Unlike Pagans, who value the contemporary idea that the individual has access to techniques to heal the self, others and the world, African Religion employs the sacred specialist. These individuals are herbalists, *izinyangas*, and diviners, *izangomas*, often called witchdoctors in colonial discourse. Whilst herbalists work with a deep knowledge of the medicinal properties in herbs and plants, they often work outside of the religious framework of the diviner/*sangoma* who communicate with the ancestral world in their practices. Traditional medicines, *umuthi*, can be prescribed and administered by both

specialists. Social dislocations from traditional communities, growing unemployment, and the advance of HIV/Aids in the country, have given rise to an exponential demand for traditional medicine; a factor that continues to have serious consequences on the environment. The conservation of plants used by traditional healers was historically governed by traditional practices such as taboos, religious beliefs and seasonal availability. Whilst this position is still argued for, and supported by, some traditional healers, the demand for *muthi*, and social change, has rendered their attempts as insignificant against the actions of unscrupulous practitioners and *muthi* gatherers. On its website²¹, the KwaZulu Natal Wildlife society states that,

According to recent research done by the Institute of Natural Resources, the value of the medicinal trade in KwaZulu Natal alone is conservatively estimated at sixty two million rand per annum (approximately one-third of the value of the annual maize harvest) and is rising as demand increases. This figure is inflated to approximately five hundred million when traditional healers' consulting and dispensing is included (ibid: 1).

This body cites the reason behind this phenomenon as,

...population growth coupled with rapid urbanization is creating an ever-increasing demand for traditional medicine. This together with the high rate of unemployment being experienced is forcing many people to turn to gathering and selling medicinal plants to eke out a meager living. This is resulting in the over exploitation of many species, some being driven to the brink of extinction. *IsiPhephetho* (*Siphonchilus aethiopicus*) is one species that has been overexploited to the brink of extinction in the wild in KwaZulu Natal (ibid: 2).

This exploitation of the environment has a number of serious consequences, both socially and ecologically, and has resulted in the catastrophic depletion of many ingredients for traditional medicine, and to the consequent threat to the livelihood of healers who face potential non-delivery of services. The reconciliation of Pagan obligations to the natural world, in the light of their understanding of deity as immanent in Nature, and their need to live in harmony and balance with Nature, are in opposition to these practices. For one, balance is achieved in reconciliation with Nature, for the other, it is achieved in reconciliation with ancestral spirits, often at the expense of the natural world. According to my survey, twenty one percent of respondents cited the use of herbs as a similarity between Paganism and African Religion and this is indeed reflected by the number of Pagans who have established relationships with traditional healers to learn more on the properties of indigenous plants and of African healing technologies. The ethics that underpin the harvesting of these products and its consequence on the environment do not appear to enter into these dialogues.

What does not appear to be shared for religious purposes is the use of entheogens, or psychotropic plants, in order to induce altered states of consciousness. Sangomas, in a fashion similar to that in traditional shamanism, use the inherent properties in certain plants in order to induce a trance state for healing and for divination. They also play an important role in Sangoma training and initiations. The use of entheogens played a role in the pre-Gardnerian traditions of witchcraft in the British Isles, and individual usage in neo-shamanic practices and in some Pagan traditions, is explored. South African practitioners tend to take a conservative stand with regards to drug usage, which is also not a Pagan accompaniment to divination. Altered states

of consciousness that can be achieved in Pagan circles is done through drumming, chanting and/or dancing; always in a sacred space where the use of drugs (and alcohol) is vehemently frowned upon in most South African circles²². Twenty five percent of survey respondents gave approval to the use of marijuana, deemed a natural substance, but joined the majority in opposing any mind-altering drugs. It has often been said to me in conversation that “drugs are possibly used as a crutch by the lazy or sloppy practitioner.” Whilst both African healers and modern Pagans use trance mediums, a local practitioner wrote to me saying that “We both use trance but in different ways....the modern Wiccan/Pagan prefers not to use substances, rather the power of the mind and intense concentration” (3-2-2003). Pagans, who make a study of dreams, likewise do so without the use of oneirogens, or dream-inducing plants.

The commodification of natural products in the *muthi* trade, also extends to animal body parts. The KwaZulu Natal Wildlife Society conducted a study on the trade of wild animals for *muthi* purposes and held a symposium²³ on their findings. The scale of the *muthi* trade in the province alone, was illustrated by the fact that animal trade was evidenced in eleven of twelve towns sampled, as well as in twenty additional townships (ibid: 5). The demand for animal parts has put numerous species under threat, and, in some cases, disregards legislation that identifies certain animals as a protected species. The symposium noted that the highest trade was in vultures, Cape fur seals, striped weasels and hyenas, pythons, mambas, the Nile crocodile, and, in most demand, the baboon. The animal trade is a multi-million rand industry that is closely allied to the illegal poaching, most often in protected areas. Alan Howell, officer-in-charge of KZN Wildlife in the Monks Cowl area of the Drakensberg, informed me telephonically that *muthi* collection by gatherers and some traditional

healers is the biggest threat facing the area in terms of diminishing resources in indigenous plant and animal life.

Pagans speak metaphorically of a web that connects humans to all other life forms; a system of relationships and community in which the animal and the other-than-human world are all kin. There have been numerous occasions over the years when Pagans have engaged in direct or indirect action²⁴ in order to protect, or save, a threatened animal. There is a virtual silence from Pagans with regard to the animal *muthi* trade, despite its activities having the direst of consequences on animal populations, and the means of death, being illegal, being done outside of consideration on ethical modes of taking the life of animals, if indeed there is one. Recognising animals as kin does not mean that most Pagans are vegetarian, as this appears to remain an individual choice²⁵. Most Pagans purchase their meats in supermarkets and I know of none who kill for their private meat supply. The most common opinion would be that the taking of life for food is a part of the natural order of things, that one should not take more than one needs, and that (hopefully) the animals were killed as humanely as possible. Some give an acknowledgement of thanks to the spirit of the animal whose life has been taken. A local practitioner contrasted her experiences under a traditional Sangoma. She wrote in a private correspondence to me that, “Although it is stated that African traditions are also steeped in nature worship – I tend to question this. The cruel way the animals are slaughtered is beyond comprehension. Animals are treated badly all round” (3-2-2003).

The taking of life for *muthi* can, and does, extend to the taking of human life. Certain body parts, often from young victims, are valued for their medicinal properties.

Perpetrators who are found guilty of such murders, are unable to use this motive as extenuating circumstances, and are tried for murder in a court of law. The taking of human life for *muthi* purposes is a criminal phenomenon that never occurs in African religious rituals, as does the sacrifice of animals. Animal blood sacrifice in African Religion is propitiatory and an act embedded in the sacred and reciprocal relationship between humans and the living dead. The centrality of sacrifice in African Religion is highlighted by the comment made by Archbishop Buti Thagale, who, in an article in the Catholic weekly publication *The Southern Cross*²⁶, said,

So strong is this belief that most African families – even among sophisticated urban Christians – continue to slaughter animals during the rites of passage. At marriage feasts, at funerals, at major healing ceremonies, animals are slaughtered. This custom, so basic within the African culture, can be kept out of the church to thrive on its own, or be part of our own Christian beliefs and ritual practice (2002: 3).

His comment, arguing for the African acculturation of a mainstream church, is cogent in the light of the comparatively enormous following found in the AICs, where such practices are valued and given expression.

Animal and human sacrifice has a history in Western cultures²⁷ that mostly preceded the Christian era, but sacrifice,

...also got incorporated into Christian rites in certain remote areas: oxen were killed in honour of St Benyo at Clynnog Farr in Gwynedd until 1589 and to St Maelrubha in Wester Ross until 1678. Both traditions then encountered reforming churchmen and were suppressed having survived centuries of other Christian masters who apparently regarded the practice as acceptable. But the

concept of sacrifice was also embodied in popular ritual (Hutton 1993: 329-30).

The key component to sacrificial practices lies in the relationship between the individual and the spiritual world. Modern Pagans do not share in reciprocities with deity where sacrifice bestows favours and forgiveness on an individual or community. In a statement that contrasts my points on African Religion, Hutton notes,

The modern emphasis is upon a series of techniques which confer benefit upon the celebrants or their objectives, the ancient one upon a set of ceremonies intended to give pleasure to, and therefore to earn reward from, divine beings. That is why the rites of the present-day witches or pagans are apparently totally lacking in the universal ancient principle of sacrifice (1993: 335).

A modern Pagan identity does not rest on sacrifice for religious, medicinal or magic ends, a fundamental division between itself and African Religion, seen clearly in the Pagan valorization of Nature and the relationship they share with deity. The ingredients and preparations for medicines for protection, healing and/or for inflicting harm, are not, in African Religion, as within Paganism, spoken of as magic. The harnessing of natural energies and the magical components in products in combination with the will of the practitioner in order to facilitate change, is a Pagan conception. Not far removed in this regard from African conceptions, the semantic difference, where this technology is not called 'magic' but rather 'making medicine', points to the centrality of healing in the African worldview. In African Religions such medicines are also not designed to facilitate direct exchange between the individual and the sacred world itself, as are the magical practices of the Pagan. In Paganism,

authority over the practice of medicine and magic is situated within the individual who requires no mediator between themselves and the spirit world.

Conclusion

For Pagans, Nature is a multifarious term that is central to their sense of identity. Through an understanding of, and engagements with Nature, Pagans bridge and extend the meanings of ‘community’ from either a group of humans *or* plant life that share and interact in a common environment. A Pagan community is a horizontal field that includes the visible human, animal, plant and mineral world, and, equally, the invisible spirit world in which they all share and participate.

The notion that the material world, the self and the divine are interconnected is a unifying feature to all Pagans, despite there being an array of responses as to what obligations ensue from this understanding. In South Africa there is little of the direct action and the eco-feminist stances that have developed in other Pagan communities in the world, with more emphasis being placed on living harmoniously in one’s locality. The Pagan rootedness to the Earth, in South Africa, achieves a comfortable synchronicity with beliefs and practices that are essentially European. Geographically and temporally distanced from the practices and deities of their own ancestors, Pagans accommodate these sensibilities with the local energies and spirit world of their natural surroundings. The accent on healing in Pagan rituals has grown in many quarters, with the Earth healings remaining comparatively passive aside the focus on self-healing *through* Nature, and on personal transformation(s). The magical worldview, the centrality of the divine feminine, and the ability to “design my own religion” are the features that appear to draw individuals to Paganism, over and above

the fact that it is a Nature-based religion. Irrespective of individual emphases and engagements, all Pagan practices are aimed at purposive encounters with the myriad of communities that populate the natural world.

Locating the divine in Nature is a contested theological position in our religious environment and one which draws the ascription of 'pagan' from many outside sources. This raises questions regarding whether a new, essentially Eurocentric religion, is correct in re-ascribing the term to communities for whom this ascription has historically been associated with 'non-believers' and superstition, and where the recognition of African Religion in the new South Africa has involved the freeing of themselves from this category. It is primarily forms of trance and energy-raising and traditional means of healing that provides the cognitive association of modern Paganism with African Religion. The association, however, receives varied responses from within the Pagan community, with some being vehement advocates of the inclusion of African traditions as a part of the Pagan community, and those who are equally vehement in their exclusion. In the former group there is occasionally a degree of romanticizing of indigenous religion that is infrequently accompanied by understandings of the social, economic and religious realities of these communities and a danger of re-mythologizing notions of the "Noble Savage"²⁸. The most notable distinction lies in their conceptions of the sacrality of Nature and the personal and social responsibilities towards Nature that ensue from this worldview. This difference, I believe, excludes African Religion from being included in the category 'Paganism' and the frequent ascription of the term to African religionists by Pagans, is therefore questionable on more than one front.

In conclusion, Nature is, for Pagans, a dynamic system of complex relationships that includes the self, the divine, and the visible and invisible dimensions of the natural world. To understand, and engage in, these relationships, facilitates healing, transformation, experience of the divine, and the possibility to share in communities that extend beyond the individual self and the human world.

¹ For a fuller discussion see Berger (1998: 12-15).

² GreenPeace International was founded in the 1970's and is an environmental activist organisation that today is represented in more than forty countries around the world.

³ See the website <http://www.geocities.com/aradiancooperative/apc/status.htm>.

⁴ For critiques of this position, see Harvey (1997: 136) and Harris (1995, 151-2).

⁵ For a broader discussion of Sacred Ecology see Harris (1995: 149-156).

⁶ The Ordo Templi Orientus was founded in 1895 by German occultist Karl Kellner.

⁷ Betty Roszak says that, "Francis Bacon was formulating the new scientific method at the height of the witchcraze in Europe, and was almost certainly influenced by the prevailing notions about women. In his *New Atlantis*, Bacon advises that men need not have any scruples in "entering and penetrating into these holes and corners" because "the inquisition of truth" is the scientist's purpose. He must put nature on "the rack" in a "relentless interrogation" (1995: 293).

⁸ Neuschler, C. *On Women and Nature: How Western Theoretical Constructions Affect Environmental Degradation and the Shaping of Roles of Women in Structures of Environmental Governance and Development* on the website, http://www.macalaster.edu/~envirost/MacEnvReview/women_nature.htm, posted on December 20, 2001.

⁹ For more on religious change and healing movements see York (1995: 10-11).

¹⁰ This reference is taken from Adrian Harris's paper *Sacred Ecology* on the website <http://www.thegreenfuse.org/harris/sacredeco.htm>.

¹¹ Rabinovitch and Lewis say that, "the guiding principle of sympathetic magic is "like calls to like" – that is, objects that resemble each other can exert an effect on one another on a nonmaterial level. This is often referred to as the Law of Similarity. Thus, old herbals often advise one to treat respiratory complaints with lungwort, a plant whose leaves resemble to human lung, and many people like to have a photograph of the subject of a magical healing if the subject is unable to attend" (2002: 263).

¹² Reiki is "a treatment in alternative medicine in which healing energy is channeled from the practitioner to the patient to enhance energy and reduce stress, pain, and fatigue" (Encarta World English Dictionary 1999: 1583).

¹³ Shiatsu developed in Japan and is a technique that uses hand massage or acupuncture points on the body.

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion see Wallace (2000: 98-105).

¹⁵ The Otherworld is a loosely articulated term that Pagans use to refer to the spiritual and ancestral realm. With links to the spiritual journeys of shamans, this realm can be accessed through altered states of consciousness.

¹⁶ Lughnasadh, or Lammas, is one of the eight seasonal festivals celebrated by modern Pagans. For more on the history of this festival see Hutton (1991: 77-8).

¹⁷ See Hutton (1991: 220-5).

¹⁸ A more detailed account of this history is provided in Russell (1980: 159-160).

¹⁹ The elementals are the spirits associated with the elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water and are involved in many Pagan rituals. For more on the history and associations of elementals see Rabinovitch and Lewis (2002: 87-88).

²⁰ *Deus Otiosus* is taken from the Latin and means a God who has withdrawn from the world. In many interpretations such a God has delegated the affairs of the world to the ancestral spirits.

²¹ The website of the KwaZulu Natal Wildlife Society is http://www.kznwildlife.com/flora_medicinal.htm.

²² The Circle of the African Moon (CAM) have recently issued a public declaration on their website that the use of all, even recreational, drugs will not be accepted at any of their rituals and/or festival gatherings. The PFSA make a similar caution in all their invitations regarding the use of drugs prior to, and during, ritual with their group(s).

²³ Details of this symposium can be found on http://www.rhino.org.za/symposium_02.htm.

²⁴ Examples I am aware of is the case involving the maltreated Tuli elephants, the threat to animals on Table Mountain as a result of encroaching urbanization and the over-fishing off Cape waters.

²⁵ See Bowman (2000: 7) for a discussion of where food can be an important marker of belief amongst Pagans, and also the site of dissension.

²⁶ This article covering the views of Archbishop Thagale can be found on the website <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/115/46.0.html>.

²⁷ For a more extensive discussions of this history see Hutton (1993: 192-3, 232-3, 329-30, 193-6 and 274-9).

²⁸ The idea of the Noble Savage is taken from Rousseau's philosophy and refers to the state of humankind when they lived in the state of nature before being corrupted by civilization. His philosophy was heavily drawn on in Romantic literature.

SECTION FOUR

SOCIAL ASCRIBED IDENTITIES

The boundaries between a personal, a collective and a social identity are permeable as the individual moves from one context to another in their private and social world. It is, however, the construction of social identities that are most context dependent as they attempt to reconcile ideas of the self in relation to ways in which those identities are perceived and understood by others. In this regard South African Pagans face many of the same issues faced by their international counterparts over the previous three to four decades, but they have a far younger democracy in which to articulate their newly appropriated and developing religiosity. A social identity is markedly influenced by the degrees of power that diverse groups exert on personal and collective identities, and it is within this framework that they are shaped and articulated in society.

It is most often in the media that members of society first learn of the existence of a new religious movement, and also where such movements articulate their identities to the general public. An important site of social identity construction is the relationship between these articulations, and how any given media choose to portray and interpret them. The power of the media to influence the way in which Pagan individuals and/or groups are identified in society is evidenced in the many discourses that are reproduced in institutions and among the general public.

CHAPTER NINE

PAGAN IDENTITIES AND THE MEDIA

The articulation of Pagan traditions in the South African media

Religions have participated more widely in the media since the printing of Gutenberg's Bible (1457), and, since the late twentieth century, the relationship between religions and the media has entered academic discourse. The mass media has been a prime architect of popular culture and is engaged in by most of world's population. Contemporary Paganism, and more especially modern Wicca and Witchcraft, captured the imagination and the early attention of the media. Consistent with developments in Britain and North America, media interest in South Africa developed almost contiguously with the growth of popular forms of Wicca and Witchcraft in our society. After the publication of Gardner's work on Witchcraft in the early nineteen fifties after the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in Britain, Wicca developed as a relatively secret initiatory mystery tradition. When this tradition was exported to North America by Raymond Buckland in the nineteen sixties, its central concern with pre-Christian fertility religions and the divine feminine attracted the attention of environmental and feminist groups, stimulating the evolution of new, more popularized forms of Wicca and of what became known as modern Witchcraft. These developments took place in what Jean Baudrillard identified in 1970 as a consumer society in which consumption is the axis of culture, and, in which, he identified the mass media as a primary carrier of its central features. Mediated communications in the form of film, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and later, of the internet, have become cultural resources that reflect the dominant

discourses of any given society and are an arena where meanings are constructed and contested. It is this feature that is of central importance to how Pagan identities are interpolated and articulated in the social domain.

During the apartheid years Christianity was virtually the only religion that received full media coverage, especially in the television medium. During the years of transition to a democratic government daily broadcasting was introduced by a variety of religionists, all from mainstream faith groups. The public emergence of Paganism in 1996 did not go unnoticed by the different media, and, in less than a decade, has received countless representations in every media format. The presentation of this new religious identity in South Africa through the media raised a number of important questions and initiated debates both within and without the Pagan community. In the context of this study the most important questions raised were, a) what underlies the various depictions of Pagans in the media, b) what role do Pagans play in these depictions, c) What have been the resultant effect(s) on the Pagan community, and, d) what dominant discourses on Paganism and Wicca/Witchcraft have emerged through the media. I contend that it is the words 'witch' and 'witchcraft' that are the source of interest and, through examples from a variety of media, hope to illustrate how certain representations are framed by the media, how Pagans have responded to this framing, and the issues and problems that have arisen as a result. In communication theory, framing has been described as the way in which media content is packaged and presented in order to accommodate desirable interpretations, and, by consequence, to disallow others¹. Although described as a universal in human communication, framing functions in limiting the range of a discourse by pre-selection of the vocabulary and metaphors by which any topic can be discussed.

Pagans around the world that have courted the media have not always received approval from their communities. This arises not least from their own proclamation of diversity in beliefs and practices, meaning that no individual can speak on behalf of all practitioners. Criticism of various depictions has led to a growing avoidance of the media in some sectors, and a greater criticism of those who continue to engage in any form of mediated communication. At the root of this phenomenon is the concern over the perpetuation of stereotypes in the media and challenges to the content of portrayals given by certain practitioners to the public.

Wicca and Witchcraft have been depicted in film and on our television, prior to the appearance of local practitioners on our screens. Films such as *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Practical Magic*, *The Craft*, *The Blair Witch Project* and the Harry Potter series have presented a range of identities for Witches, Witchcraft and magical practice; from individuals who command special powers, cast (even evil) spells, to benign ‘good’ Witches whose practices are aimed at self-protection and self-enhancement. A further genre of film in which Witchcraft has been depicted is that of the horror movie² where associations between the occult and Satanism were sensationalized and powerfully reinforced in popular culture. In the latter, occult practices are presented as an existential evil, aside a redemptive Christianity. Such fictional representations in popular culture have been a potent and often single source of knowledge of both Satanism and the occult in mainstream society, and the television media, in particular, continues to screen mostly American, mostly B-Grade horror films on the themes of occultism, Witchcraft and the supernatural.

A number of related television series shown in South Africa have drawn extremely large audiences, especially among the youth. Foremost of these are *Charmed*, the story of a young girl who keeps her Witchcraft practices and unique powers apart from the view of mundane mortals, and, *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*³ in which Buffy's role in slaying demons metaphorically embraces an apocalyptic good versus evil theme. Besides portraying what Schofield Clark calls "postmodernism's depthlessness"⁴ (2003: 51) the shows also depict contemporary teenage concerns with meaning and ultimacy, and portray them in a blend of humour and postmodern, anti-authoritarian motifs of good and evil. The popularity (and the box-office success) of the aforementioned series and films have participated in a reciprocal relationship with popular culture; not only creating a tableau reflecting contemporary concerns and preoccupations, but also responding in an ongoing production of cultural commodities for mass consumption. Notwithstanding the fact that they present a popularized form of religion as entertainment, the power they have attained in (mis)informing mainstream understandings of magic and Witchcraft cannot be over-emphasized. With such fictional depictions being so pervasive in our society, media interest in individuals who actually embraced Wicca, Witchcraft and Paganism as their spiritual home, was a natural progression. From the onset of Pagan mediated communications to the public, the influence of fictional accounts of Witchcraft in television, film and books on presenters was patently obvious; a factor that has given rise to new Pagan discourses where identities are presented, re-presented, contested, and frequently misrepresented.

A task in the analysis of presentations of Paganism on television, in magazines and in newspapers, was to identify the nature of Pagan representations in the media, what

dominant discourses arise in these communications, and how Pagans responded to, and challenged, them. Through these discourses, Pagans presented their identities in a public forum, and, in the process, were challenged to refute certain identities, and, in some instances, new identities were constructed. These issues will be explored through the most prevalent themes that emerged in these areas, namely occultism, magic and spells, and Satanism. The issue of stereotyping is central to all. The media structure both the environment and the presentation of any given broadcast or press release for mass consumption, based, no doubt, on background information and/or preconceptions. Direction over, and control of, content is located with the media in line with their particular desired outcome and target audience. A selection from the earliest television and magazine Pagan expositions are selected to illustrate these features.

The first television appearance by local practitioners was on the actuality programme *Carte Blanche* (11-11-1996) and was introduced by Derek Watts and Ruda Landman, and presented by Michelle Alexander. The slot was introduced by Derek Watts with the following words.

Tonight we bring you the first ever TV footage in this country of the rituals of this obscure group. Followers of Paganism have often been perceived in this country as Satanists, so to date they have avoided publicity. But with the changing climate in South Africa Pagans and Wiccans believe the time is right to go public.

His words framed the movement as marginal, and established a connection between Paganism and Satanism that has since been a dominant theme in almost every Pagan representation across different media. What is important at this point is to note the

framework, provided by the programmes, in which Pagans could respond and the way in which Pagan identities were adjusted and extended from those held within the community, into new discourse arenas. Witchcraft through the ages can “be approached from three broad perspectives that have both independently, and together, informed the discourses around the word ‘witch’” (Wallace 2000: 72). Firstly is the anthropological approach in which the witch is deemed a sorcerer or practitioner of malevolent witchcraft. Secondly, the historical approach in which the witch is a Satanic diabolist or heretic, and, thirdly, the approach of modern Pagan Witches wherein a Witch worships the ancient gods and practices magic⁵. In popular culture, it is the second approach that dominates common understandings, and from which mythologies, symbols and motifs are mostly drawn. Much of this pertains to the nature and history of occulture in modern society.

Paganism and the occult: perpetuating stereotypes in the media

Building on Colin Campbell’s descriptions of a *cultic milieu* (1977)⁶, Christopher Partridge extends its sociological dimensions with the term “occulture” and provides the following definition.

Occulture includes those often *hidden, rejected* and *oppositional* beliefs and practices associated with esotericism, theosophy, and mysticism, The New Age, Paganism, and a range of other subcultural beliefs and practices, many of which are identified by Campbell as belonging to the cultic/mystical milieu and by Stark and Bainbridge as belonging to the occult subculture (2004: 68).

Standing squarely outside of traditional forms of religion, occulture is frequently positioned as oppositional to such traditions, and, by inference, as deviant or evil.

Reaction to contemporary occult practices has developed from these understandings

and the Witch, as practitioner within the occultic milieu is ascribed and described with attributes arising in this dialectic. In the aforementioned *Carte Blanche* programme, presenter Michelle Alexander reinforces this frame of reference in the following preamble to which Pagans were not invited to respond.

As their practices have been understood as invariably evil, modern Pagans face a tough job in trying to change centuries of prejudice against Witchcraft. These prejudices stem back to the clash between Paganism and Christianity in medieval times.

The fact that the medieval witchcraft era was not born of a concerted effort on the part of Christianity to eradicate any structured and self-identified forms of pagan religion, and that Paganism stands outside of, not in opposition to, Christianity, were rendered absent in this introduction. What was foregrounded was the perpetuation of a stereotype, made concrete by the repetition of these generalizations. The show continued with Pagans performing an Earth healing ritual that was introduced by Alexander as, “Rituals, they say, are not to conjure up the devil, but to celebrate life and create magic”. She continued, “Wiccans are not allowed to draw blood or perform sacrifice.” As with most religions of the world, there are, in fact, no written injunctions within Pagan traditions that disallow the drawing of blood or the practice of sacrifice. The practices, however, run counter to Pagan beliefs in the sacred interconnection of all forms of life, and the pervasive admonition in traditions to “do no harm.” Pagan identities in the media are thus brought into tension through the constructed contiguity of *who they are*, alongside *who they are not*.

Spells, divination, conjuration and various symbols are common motifs of the occult and, dislocated from their histories in Western esotericism, are often relocated into an

anti-Christian framework. Questioning in the media therefore ubiquitously includes these areas, with the visual media often requiring a description or performance of a spell. By defining what “occult” means, the media reflect the deep concerns in society with what is marginal and evil, in direct contrast to what is mainstream and, therefore, good. For a tradition that does not share in Christian theologies and understandings, Paganism is singular in new religious movements in South Africa in the onus for practitioners to articulate their identity in direct relation to a religion outside of their own. Categories such as Christian/non-Christian, believer/non-believer contain within themselves further dualisms such as good/evil, light/dark. Pertinent examples of this in the television media are embodied in the following questions that have been posed to Pagans. Noeleen, presenter of the SABC3 show 3-Talk (2005), asked, “Are you devil worshippers? Do you renounce Christ?” Pagan practitioner, Donna ‘Darkwolf’ Vos, in an interview with Tracy Going on a health and lifestyle slot on *Morning Live* (2000) was asked, *after* Donna had articulated the importance in Paganism of both the masculine and feminine faces of the divine, “Finally....and so...yes or no. Do you believe in God?” Such a conclusion coming after an introduction in which Going said,

This morning we turn our attention to a controversial and misunderstood lifestyle; that of Wicca or Paganism. Often called Satanists or Witches, people of the Pagan community are coming out in South Africa,

nullified Vos’s statements on divine polarity and “that the base of our understanding is divinity in Nature.” The power of one discourse to sublate another is enabled by certain processes. Stuart Hall makes the point that,

For one meaning to be regularly produced, it had to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy, or taken-for-grantedness for itself. That involved marginalizing, down-grading, or de-legitimizing alternative convictions (1982: 67).

The tendency to employ Christian categories for Pagan understanding was repeated in the Felicia Mabuza-Suttle show (7-7-97) when a Pagan panel and part-Pagan audience were asked, “Who do you pray to?” The Pagan who responded with the statement “I am not sure why society takes what Christians do and then tries to apply it to all” was also subjected to a difficulty in articulating that the absence of a feature in a religion does not necessarily constitute opposition. Prayer, as a category, is absent in Paganism where a working *with* deity and personal will and intent for a desired outcome, is deemed by many as constitutive of a similar practice. Going’s interview on *Morning Live*, was a clear reflection of the Christian/Pagan mythologies and presented a “belief in God” as a hegemonic definition of what constitutes a religion; placing those with alternative conceptions of ultimacy, as unbelievers. In this instance the language of religion was, as Birgit Meyer observed, “central in the ways in which cultural and political positionings are underscored” (2001: 2)⁷.

Such binary oppositions have been repeated in newspaper and magazine articles on Paganism, with many including references to the *Burning Times* in which the mythologised stereotypes of Witches as deviant, anti-Christian evil-mongers are portrayed. A fictional stereotype is conflated with factual information to the extent where one discourse is seldom independent of another, and so reinforces this conflation in the reader and/or viewer. As Partridge notes,

The selection of, for example, images, words, their ordering, and their narrative structure all suggest particular meanings and ways of interpretation.

Moreover, in order for the cultural text to make sense within a particular context (and within a particular mind) the message needs to be decoded.

Some people will receive what is communicated uncritically, others will reject the message, and yet others will enter into a relationship of negotiation. Some viewers of a news report, for example, or even a television series such as *The X-Files* may uncritically accept everything communicated. Others will accept part of what is presented as an accurate representation of reality and reject other elements as distortion or simple fiction. Yet others will reject everything presented. Such decoding, of course, is influenced to a larger extent by prior beliefs, commitments, and plausibility structures (2004: 124-5).

With a predominance of Christian viewership in South Africa, it becomes inevitable that Paganism is mostly depicted, not as a religion with an independent identity, but one constructed on counter-Christian tendencies. Witchcraft and the occult are once more located as an object of Christian discourse in much the same way that Foucault maintained poverty to be a object of sociological discourse, and the Witch is constructed within the discourses of deviance, dark and evil. Fourie (2001: 470) emphasizes that the media become a powerful ideological agent in forming and sustaining people's perceptions of, and attitudes towards, one another. The highly mythologised component within Paganism itself is repeated in new contexts in the media, itself, "one of the biggest narrators of myths" (ibid: 475). Stereotypes, themselves based on myths, both become and function as socially constructed truths.

Pagans can complexitize the relationship by themselves courting artefacts and ideas from this same mythologised history. Medieval witches who fly on brooms, own black cats, and create potions over cauldrons are portrayals often drawn on by Pagans

and re-imbued with new meanings consistent with their magico-mythical identities. References to these artefacts are commonplace in the media, although generally compounded with dark and sinister connotations. In both the written and visual media, references to the artefacts of Witchcraft are often treated with humour by Pagans and the media alike. Humour is a common linguistic device by which difference and opposition can be articulated and also, as Rosoldo (1990) notes, “Humour and satire are effective tools of minority discourse” (quoted in Riggins, 1997: 6). By design of the media, and often with the complicity of the Pagan subject in the stereotype, on television and in photographs, Witches frequently appear robed, with black cats, under a full moon, and holding a broomstick. On the television show *Front Row* (April 1997) Penny Smythe introduced the programme on Witchcraft by saying, “Witches, spells, covens. All are alive and well and living in Johannesburg. At the risk of being burned at the stake, we jumped on our broomstick and visited.” Many portrayals of modern Witches are subject to, on the one hand, as having to negate the anti-Christian evil connotations, and, on the other hand, as being on the fringe and somewhat of a joke. Not all journalists have been subtle with the latter as Sunday Tribune Lifestyle (6-5-2001) journalist Penny Sukhraj stated in an article covering a Pagan celebration,

It was difficult to attach any credibility to this strange band of airy-fairy folk—some lesbian Wiccan practitioners dressed in kaftans, feathers and crystals, frumpy housewives and aged hippiatrics—who wholeheartedly believe that they hold the recipe to world peace in their African clay prayer bowls. I mentally cast them into the stereotype of crazy white people, who clearly have too much time and not enough direction.

In the *Carte Blanche* programme, Michelle Alexander said, “Here we have an actual cauldron. (laughter) Blow me down I never thought I would see an actual cauldron with Witches sitting around.” The Pagan response was, “No, there are no frogs, lizards, baboons, dogs...” This easy repartee occurs on the boundaries between fictionalized identities and objective fact, and successfully reinforces stereotypical preoccupations.

Such Pagan participation in the media has not been without its criticism from within the community with many dissociating from whom they call “media Witches”. These criticisms mostly hinge on the idea that such exposures fail to articulate the reality of Pagan beliefs and practices whilst centering more on the frivolous and stereotypical. It also invites questions regarding the legitimacy of any given practitioner to present Paganism and Witchcraft in ways that include all practitioners as being in accordance with their chosen depiction. Pagan responses are often critiqued as containing misleading, or even fallacious, information; resulting in a demarcation between those who court the media and those who actively avoid it. Acknowledging that “we are at the mercy of the media”, one practitioner who has appeared many times said, “At the end of the day we are only as good as our journalist”. The opposition to media portrayals was indicated in my survey with the majority not in favour of what they have seen, and/or read, in the media; commonly ascribing adjectives such as ‘attention-seeking’ and ‘power-hungry’ to publicity Witches in the community.

Spells, magic and ritual in the media

Spells and magic are an intriguing topic for the media who nonetheless reiterate the dominant discourses wherein such practices are seen as superstition. Khadija Magardie (Daily Mail and Guardian 16-11-1999) wrote,

For the average person, the line between fact and fantasy becomes blurred when Wiccans start talking about spells and potions. Wiccans spend hours over their cauldrons, cooking up an assortment of things, from poultices to love potions. Yet “this seemingly mumbled hocus-pocus is no kids stuff, and certainly no fiction”, says Darkwolf.

Spells and magic have a long history in occultism, and are formulated on the premise that all things are interchangeable and interrelated. Magic is the execution of change in a system. Speaking of the magician’s conception of reality, Tanya Luhrman states that,

What they call their magical ‘technology’ – the mechanism by which their magic works – involves an account of the ‘correspondences’ between reality’s different bits. Different planets, gems, numbers, symbols, and so forth are grouped together as a set, and any given set is associated with particular ways of being, types of force or energy (1989: 119) .

The performance of rituals, magic and spells for, and in, the media, has outcomes for the Pagan community and for viewers through its enabling of a vicarious form of interaction. Catherine Bell cautions that, “Televising a ritual for mass viewing alters both how the ritual is done and how it is experienced” (1997: 242), and that “Television takes over some of the functions traditionally or typically provided by ritual” (ibid: 242). Visual attendance of Pagan ritual is, by virtue of the medium, only partial, and, dependent upon what aspects are televised, the type and degree of

information associated with the visual image, and what is unexplained or absent. Every television exposition has included visuals of Pagan rituals and/or spells; from seasonal celebrations, Earth healing rituals, to the enactment of spells to stop smoking or a love spell procured through a meal preparation. These events are (partially) covered by the media and mediated by it. The casting of a circle as sacred space has been one of the most televised parts of a ritual. This is usually done with a sword or athame that is seen brandished on television with no explanation that ritual tools are ascribed to an element, and, that as a tool of the element of fire⁸, the sword or athame marks “the ritual separation of sacred space” (Bado-Fralick 2005: 56). The unexplained depiction of symbols leaves open the possibility for viewers to imprint their own interpretations upon them, often ambiguously. That such rituals, often performed in the dark by robed individuals, brandishing a sword, accompanied by fire and chants, take on the context of the different and exotic can be understood. The input of mediation on rituals renders Pagan sacred space as “contested space – the site of negotiated contests over the legitimate ownership of sacred symbols” (Chidester 2001: 95)⁹. Viewers are removed from real connection with the event and observers, through a secular domain, from what is a religio-spiritual, participatory encounter with the sacred. The intention by Pagans to reflect spiritual experiences is often obscured by media quests for viewership. In a private email (2-10-2003) from Julia Phillips, previous head of the Pagan Federation of Australia, she wryly commented that,

I always think that Witches trying to explain sensibly what they do, and why they do it, come over as a cross between Miss Marple and Mary Poppins. I don't think it's just Wiccans though – even Christians have problems trying to

explain a spiritual experience without sounding either cracked or holier-than-thou.

The tendency to locate religious meanings in the individual and the aspirations to experience religious encounters and outcomes in the present are features of new religious movements and are prevalent in contemporary culture. Spells and sympathetic magic have a history in all cultures and have prevailed alongside traditional religious beliefs and practices. The attraction of spells has been revived in Western cultures through movements such as Paganism, the New Age Movement and certain esoteric societies and reaches audiences across age, gender, and racial boundaries. With an underlying eschewing of dominant and over-arching theories, the turn to personal technologies has grown exponentially in Western culture. It is primarily through the dimensions of spells and magic that the commodification of Witchcraft is encountered.

The Commodification of Witchcraft

That Paganism and Witchcraft have penetrated contemporary popular culture is incontestable, and this phenomenon has occurred through the popularization of occultism in film, television, books, magazines and websites. The potency of spells and magic to effect change in everyday, mundane life, has become a compelling motif in the midst of traditional conceptions that potency can be bifurcated into technologies of either good or evil. They have developed as alternatives to traditional responses to life circumstances and to traditional forms of dealing with them. The popularization and wide availability of spell books and the like in bookstores, at esoteric fairs and on websites, have provided a means to extend the practices portrayed in television shows

and in magazines. Along with the media, Pagans themselves have become prime producers of occultural commodities. Certain forms of Witchcraft have been constructed through media representations and commodification that have raised questions regarding the oppositional tendencies traditionally evidenced in Witchcraft. Ezzy¹⁰ maintains that,

The changed pattern of recruitment and the increasing role of the mass market in information dissemination about Witchcraft also have the potential to transform the beliefs and practices of Witchcraft. Witchcraft has colonized and utilized consumer capitalism for its own ends and consumerist capitalism has colonized contemporary Witchcraft for its ends (2006: 16).

South African Paganism drew initial inspiration from information brought into the country from abroad, and was modelled on the existent literature regarding pre-Christian religious traditions and the magico-fertility traditions developed by Gerald Gardner and others who were formative in the development of Wicca and Witchcraft. The growth of the movement and the interest shown by the mass media together created a need for locally produced Pagan paraphernalia and for the dissemination of local perspectives. Beginning with a locally produced magazine entitled *Penton Pagan Magazine*, Pagans now have access, via the internet, to numerous online magazines. Besides the coverage of items of general interest to Pagans, there is a fair degree of attention given to spellwork and magic. Practitioners who wish to advance their practices, themselves become consumers of imported books on the subject. These endeavours are extended through the production of southern hemisphere diaries and calendars that indicate the optimal times in the seasonal solar and lunar calendar for performing spells and magic, and, along with books and websites, “encourage individuals to take control of their lives through self-exploration and self-affirmation”

(Ezzy 2003: 52)¹¹. Spells are mostly performed with quite mundane ingredients and objects from the natural world, such as candles, feathers, oils and incense, spices and herbs, etcetera. Demand for appropriate ingredients and artefacts, and the ritual tools often required for the execution of spells and magic is evidenced in the marketplace and proliferate alongside magical divinatory artefacts such as tarot cards, runes and crystals. Many courses on Paganism and Wicca in South Africa pay attention to aspects of spell work and magical practice, provide lessons on the making of magical tools, and provide reading lists by which attendees can develop their craft. Although the consumption of spell books and other magical technologies has also been associated with the New Age Movement¹², it is from Paganism that these practices are advanced as religio-spiritual means of integrating the self with the spiritual forces manifest in the material world. Unlike the New Age Movement, where such practices are considered a means towards the elevation of human consciousness, for Pagans they are an end in themselves. As Pagans have presented their beliefs and practices in the mass media, in particular on television, in newspapers and magazines, certain changes have occurred and new forms have developed out of this articulation. There are consequently some discernable differences in the discourses Pagans share in and amongst themselves, and those that are socially constructed for a wider audience. The most conspicuous of these is that of white Witchcraft.

White Witchcraft

To self-identify as a 'white Witch' is a rare phenomenon in South Africa and intra-community usage of the term is almost non-existent. In the media, however, the term has been popularized with almost no contestation from local practitioners.

Historically, Hutton notes, in relation to practitioners of low magic at the end of the nineteenth century who were known as wise women or cunning men/folk, that,

Folklore collectors themselves often employed the term 'white witch' but this formulation was very rare in the vocabulary of ordinary people, to whom the word 'witch' almost always signified somebody who worked magic for personal ends of profit or malice (1999: 86).

Within Paganism and Witchcraft there are a variety of understandings of white and black magic, with the latter commonly used to refer to practices of Left Hand Path or Chaos magic, in which the ultimate goal is one of self-empowerment and is highly individualistic. Some Witches refer to black magic as the practices of those who engage with the darker polarities of life and can relate to death, loss, failure and pain. It can also be used to refer to malevolent and/or criminal activities. These understandings are, however, never extended to the identity of the practitioner and hence, as Ezzy notes, "I cannot find any references to black Witches" (2006: 23). I was able to locate only one magazine article in which the practitioner in the article self-identified as a white Witch (Marie-Claire, June 2002: 58-9) entitled *I am A White Witch*. This article exemplified the themes that are recurrent in depictions of white Witchcraft in the media, irrespective of how the practitioner identifies him/herself. Obscuring aspects of traditional Witchcraft that acknowledge the polarities of light/dark, good/evil and its radical potential to contest dominant discourses, white Witchcraft frames modern Witchcraft as benevolent, successful and exclusively positive. Magic is spoken of and portrayed as 'spells', focusing on the addressing of contemporary needs such as love, prosperity, health and good fortune. These features lead Ezzy to conclude that, "consumerist white Witchcraft tends to be obsessed with individual self-gratification" (2006: 23).

In the analysis of Paganism and Witchcraft in the media, the establishment of binary oppositions in almost all texts was highly evident. Terre Blanche explains that, “Oppositions within a text set up particular problematics by framing issues in particular ways” (1999: 160). Following this argument that binary oppositions are indicators of the discourses that function in any given text, it is interesting to note how Pagan identities are constructed in the media through the implied and explicit articulation of oppositions. In the aforementioned Marie-Claire article, practitioner Karin Meyer is quoted as saying that, “white Witchcraft is all about doing good, attuning yourself with Nature and not causing harm to others.” Implicit in this statement is the idea that other negative and destructive forms of Witchcraft can, and do, exist in society. White Witches are constructed as the antithesis of such models, and therefore bring depictions of the Witch closer to mainstream values and attitudes. Employment of the adjective ‘white’ becomes a linguistic device to introduce the question of ethics and morality in Witchcraft. Whether the ethics are implicitly or explicitly introduced, white Witchcraft is framed as popular and as consistent with the values of a consumer society. In the media, practitioners regularly cite the phrase from the Wiccan Rede¹³ that states ‘an harm ye none, do what ye will’ as the injunction to avoid all harmful practices, as well as the Law of Return (or Threefold Law)¹⁴, whereby all action will return three times in kind, to the agent of the action. Although they are an important part of Wiccan texts, the media is never the forum where the complexities of these Pagan conceptions are discussed. Paganism and Witchcraft are less interested in guiding moralities than in being active agents who, consistent with their beliefs and practices, exercise choice over their actions. Ezzy (2006) points at a direct link between consumer capitalism and white Witchcraft, both being “relentlessly optimistic” (ibid: 28) in the pursuance and achievement of success

over diversity. These factors play heavily into the commodification of forms of Witchcraft as a fashionable and accessible facet of popular culture. Although not a youth movement in South Africa, undeniable interest has been initiated by portrayals of Paganism and Witchcraft as “cool.” Silver RavenWolf’s *Teen Witch Kit: everything you need to make magick* (2000) has been a top seller in South Africa and in combination with the popular, aforementioned teen television series, have created a new market for popular occultism. As Christopher Partridge comments,

There is a notable shift away from the unsympathetic treatments of Paganism as sinister, satanic and dangerously deviant, to more positive portrayals of it as intriguing, sexually exciting, and darkly cool (2004: 126).

Not necessarily marketed as white Witchcraft, these commodified forms of Witchcraft, in and through books and the media, have brought into existence a popular form of occultism in which the teenage market, in particular, can safely engage while exercising common teenage modes of resistance to authority and dogma.

The celebration of Halloween has grown in South Africa over the past decade and is now a highly commodified event, particularly for the young. Occult symbolism becomes a “fun factor” to be embraced in innocent, light-hearted ways. With some historical associations to the Pagan festival of Samhain, in which ancestors are honoured, and the carved-faced pumpkin, known as the Jack-‘o-Lantern, is a ubiquitous symbol, the media show particular interest in Paganism over this period. Many Pagans avoid press interest out of concern that their practices, on this most sacred night on the Pagan calendar, are reduced to somewhat of a joke, whilst others embrace the conflation of the two events. South African Pagans invert the northern seasonal calendar, with Samhain being celebrated here on 30th April and not on the

night of October 31st, when Halloween is commercially celebrated. At southern Samhain celebrations in April Pagans do celebrate and symbolise many of the Halloween mythologies as they honour their ancestors and welcome in the Pagan New Year. Participation in the commodified event in late October is ‘unseasonal’ as South Africans celebrate the summer festival of Beltaine on this date. The following comment made by Pagan leader Donna ‘Darkwolf’ Vos in a magazine article indicates how this difference is subdued in favour of satisfying media interest. On referring to the commercial celebration of Halloween in November she said, “It’s our New Year and we make masks and go trick-or-treating. It’s the one night of the year we Witches are considered cool” (YOU August 2003: 140).

The manipulation of meaning in the media

The possibility of racist undertones to expressions of white Witches and white Witchcraft is seldom raised by the South African community as it has in some quarters abroad. One exception was Mynie Geldenhys of the PFSA who stated on the 3-Talk (2005) television interview that “Talking of white Witchcraft is sort of racist. There really is no such thing.” Notwithstanding that black/white symbolisms are found across many cultures, it is often deemed to reflect the historical language of dominance. Modern Paganism in South Africa is an almost exclusively white phenomenon with only very few representatives from other race groups. Media representation of their beliefs and practices as ‘white Witchcraft’ can be used to distinguish it from forms of malevolent sorcery still prevalent in many black African communities. Race remains a sensitive category in South Africa and the media have frequently addressed the white composition of Paganism, just as some sectors of the Pagan community have, on occasion, questioned their relationship to ‘black

Paganism'¹⁵. Media manipulation of racial composition of groups was highlighted for me by an itinerary sent to a practitioner who was invited to appear in a local television programme. Part of this was to be the performance of a ritual. The Pagan concerned, having selected eight participants, all white, was surprised by the following directive on the itinerary sent to her by the organizers of the show. They had added, "Find two black individuals to bring ritual complement to ten." It is difficult to ascertain the rationale behind this, other than to assume it pertains to achieving some form of 'political correctness'. I am unsure of the extent to which racial compositions in other religious groups are visually manipulated by the media, but suggest that a lack of clarity surrounding the definition of 'pagan' also allows for such manipulations. In yet another television show that involved dialogue with members from mainstream religions, a Pagan practitioner who was asked to participate was told she was selected as "we want someone blond and light-looking." This individual eventually declined to participate, partly on the grounds that she was also to be pre-directed as to almost all the answers she should give on the programme. Media manipulations are commonplace and designed to shape the reception of their message among different audiences. Such portrayals generally ill reflect the movement in South Africa, and growing awareness of these tendencies has greatly reduced the willingness of many Pagans to engage with the media.

Text and talk of white Witches has transformed aspects of Witchcraft into a popular form. The interest value in the term has facilitated its adoption as a way of talking about traditions and practices that are misrepresented and mostly misunderstood in mainstream society. In the process,

White Witches risk transforming their Witchcraft into a new fad within consumer capitalism rather than a transformative religious tradition that challenges the ethics of consumer capitalism (Ezzy 2006: 29).

It simultaneously leads to the development of forms of Witchcraft that bring it closer to the New Age preoccupations with light, personal success and self-transformation, and obscures traditional Pagan engagements with, and focus on, the equal representation of life and death, light and dark, in their practices.

Witches and Witchcraft are connoted as good or bad, white or black, in contexts aimed for a mass audience whose understandings are generally informed by stereotypic depictions and/or religious contestations. The latter are kept alive in a multitude of presentations wherein 'white' and 'good' Witches are explained and articulated, as almost an aberration, to popular understandings. This tendency gives rise to the rhetoric of 'normalcy' in many media texts. On television shows, Pagans are frequently asked, "Why do you look so normal?", and in print, the appearance of the Pagan Witch is usually described alongside the stereotypic expectation of old hags with warts, brandishing broomsticks. A feigned surprise that "they" could look just like "us" has the effect of reinforcing an anticipated alterity. A salient example can be found in an article in *YOU* magazine¹⁶ (28-8-2003: 138-140) featuring Donna 'Darkwolf' Vos wherein the dualisms inherent in media discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft were established both visually and linguistically. A photograph of Donna in a burgundy cloak dominates the front page of the article. Aside this, in small black print are the words, "Donna's no...", and below, in the same burgundy of her robe, and in very large print, is the word "Demon." Through colour, the immediate association of the word "demon" with the cloaked figure is manifested. Connections between the individual and the meanings that inhere in the word "demon" are made

subliminally, yet effectively. The only other burgundy print is the sub-title, again in a larger font, that says, “She grew up in Worcester – now she’s a (good) Witch”.

Inhering in this line is the improbability that Witches could grow up in an average South African city, and that (at least) she is now a ‘good Witch’. This effectively disallows for a separation between both good and bad Witches, as Wicca and Witchcraft are consistently presented within such binaries.

Social identities are established in a context never devoid of, nor independent of, dominant Christian discourses that inform our cultural milieu. In the media, they are therefore the primary arena where identities, of necessity, are negotiated. The power of the media to instruct and inform can often override any articulations of their traditions by the practitioner him/herself; and are mostly combined with oppositional and/or stereotypical assumptions. Pagan practitioner and teacher Fey Fand was the subject of a full page newspaper article in two leading newspapers.¹⁷ Entitled *The Good Witches*, the article was dominated by the following leading caption, in large print on a colour background, again to match the colour of Fey’s robe.

Meet Fey Fand: she’s typical of modern ‘wiccans’ who are more interested in saving the Earth than in casting nasty spells.

The use of quotes and lower case for Wiccans, distances it from approved, socially accepted religions. Pagan interest in Nature and the Earth is ambiguously positioned as merely a “greater interest” than the practice of negative magic; the latter, however, not being excluded from their practices. The dominance of this caption on the page outweighs information in the small print of the text itself which says that,

Wiccans perform benevolent magick using energy, crystals, divination, positive thinking and meditation to heal the Earth, people and themselves.

The media exerts a powerful influence on the reader and/or viewer through such devices, and hinders most Pagan attempts to articulate their identities outside of the good/evil binaries, or, as parodies of a rather comic stereotype.

Paganism and Satanism in the media

Bar the Pagan exposures on the television programme *Free Spirit*¹⁸, there has been almost no article, interview or report that has failed to raise the association between Paganism and Satanism. By virtue of the juxtaposing of these two traditions within a single discourse, Pagans are neutralized in the ability to clearly articulate their identities by being placed in a position of having to justify what they are *not*. It also serves to reinforce these associations in the reader or viewer through the connection being made repetitiously.

What most informs this association is the Christian worldview that historically developed a theology of evil around witchcraft and the occult. From the late fifteenth century to the seventeenth century, this history fostered depictions of, mostly women, who flew on broomsticks at night with their familiars, and who met at night in covens to commit deeds that were in pact with the devil. Whilst such understandings remain rife in certain communities these depictions have also been developed in folklore and fairytale into stereotypic and popular motifs. Modern Witches, who adorn pointy hats and dark cloaks in media portrayals, support the survival of these depictions—albeit mostly in a jocular fashion—to the chagrin of some sectors of the Pagan community. In the media, Satanism, demons, and witches, are conflated in discourses of evil that draw on myth, stereotypes, and superstition for their construction. These come not only from historical Christian discourses of evil, but also from popular culture, in

particular, the horror film genre and the commodification of evil and fear by the media itself. When Pagans and/or Witches appear in the media, it is normally within such discourses that attempts to articulate their beliefs and practices are made.

An article in *The Star* newspaper¹⁹ to cover the Pagan celebration of the summer solstice, stated, “Dogged by the stigma of being devil worshippers and heathens who perform macabre rituals, the group was eager to dispel the myth.” A major article (14-5-2001) in the same newspaper on the launch of the first Wiccan church in South Africa began its coverage by saying that “Many unenlightened people associate Paganism and Wicca with the dark, the perversion of Christianity and the occult.” “Branded as Satanists” claimed another (16-11-1999)²⁰. On the most recent programme featuring Paganism and Wicca on television—broadcast on the SABC1 programme *L’Attitude* in June 2005—the interviewer, laughingly, asked, “Let’s get all the demons out the way. Do you play with demons? Do you put *muti* in people’s food and drinks, and do you ride on a broom?” These questions have become standard fair and Pagan responses are thereby framed, by necessity, to negate one identity, ahead of affirming another.

A major contribution to this problem has been the attention given by the same media to Lien Els and Kobus Jonker’s book *Satanism in South Africa* (2000), and, in which, the exclusively evangelical bias has prevented the objective and historical definition of words such as ‘witchcraft’, ‘witch’ and ‘occult’, and therefore perpetuates inaccuracies. Now retired, Kobus Jonker practices as a pastoral psychologist who counsels victims of Satanic abuse according to Biblical teachings. The extent of this influence on law enforcement agencies, psychologists, schools and welfare agencies,

and the impact of this for the emergent Pagan movement, will be elaborated on in a later chapter. It is noteworthy here to express the degree to which his work in occultism and Satanism has reached many and diverse sectors of our population, to the point where media portrayals on the subject are already pre-informed by this worldview. Media expositions reach an audience which is likewise informed, having the effect of underscoring the values and attitudes of mainstream society, wherein both Satanism and the occult are understood as evil, dangerous and anti-Christian. The relationship forged by the PFSA in 1996 with Colonel Jonker was aimed at correcting misunderstandings of modern Paganism, and, thereby hopefully deflect potential discrimination and/or persecution of members. Working with Jonker and the ORCU has resulted in his reformed understanding to the point where, on the television programme 3-Talk (nd) on Satanism in South Africa he communicated that, “We are not discussing Pagans and Wiccans, those two are not involved.” The remainder of the show, on which he was joined by Satanic survivor therapist, F.H. Havenga, and James Lottering, an ex-security policeman who now runs Warfare Ministries in Port Elizabeth, and who specializes in Christian exorcisms, however failed to reveal how, and by whom, the words ‘witchcraft’ and ‘occult’ are defined; and failing to adequately distinguish traditions for which Witchcraft and occultism are central preoccupations and not evil nor anti-Christian. Links between the Pagan festival of Samhain and that of Halloween have been mentioned, and the latter was a subject raised in the Jonker interview. Here, making no disclaimers on behalf of Paganism, Jonker recounted what he called “a gruesome case” of a beheading that purportedly occurred as a need for a Halloween sacrifice. The word ‘Satan’ and an upside-down cross were carved on the head, giving the crime an anti-Christian foundation. This account is congruent with the international phenomenon known as

the Satanic Ritual Abuse²¹ (SRA) scare that proliferated in the late nineteen eighties and early nineteen nineties, where information was ubiquitously generated by ‘ex-Satanists’ through Christian counseling, and generally failing to distinguish between actual Satanic activity and purely criminal acts. As Ezzy claims,

Similar to claims about white Witchcraft accusations of Satanism and black magic may indicate as much about the teller of the story and his/her audience as about the empirically demonstrable practices of historical groups and people (2006: 23).

In a section in Jonker’s book (2000: 130-4), in what he calls the occult calendar, he presents a confusing, historically unsound and unsupported account of Halloween and Samhain as essentially Christian diabolism. The sacred meanings inhering in Pagan celebrations of Samhain, of their building of fires and the symbolism of the Jack-‘o-Lantern, are observed in a discourse of devil-worship and the proliferation of evil spirits. Jonker’s summation of this section, singularly states that, “31st October: Halloween. Also known as All Hallows Eve, when the devil comes to meet with the witches” (ibid: 134).

Disclaimers in Els and Jonker’s book and in the media, that Paganism and Wicca are not Satanism, are overridden in these texts and in the labeling of any and all forms of occultism as deviant, through the singular lens of evangelical Pentecostal Christianity. Pagan identities are unavoidably conflated with Satanism in this manner. This phenomenon has had the effect of Pagans being solicited for comments when any Satanic-linked event is related in the media. Such comments can also be asked for in response to what is, in itself, media inaccuracy/manipulation. Beeld newspaper reporter Lizel Steenkamp (11-3-2003)²² reported that a teenage Satanic cell that

practiced sacrifice had been located in Florida Hills, Gauteng. Quoting Kobus Jonker, who was investigating the case, Steenkamp ended her article, saying, “The number of Satanists in South Africa is estimated at about 62,000 and 80% are under 18. Up to fourteen people are killed in Satanist sacrifices every year.” When I queried the sources for her statistics, Steenkamp referred me to Kobus Jonker. He informed me that he had never given her the figure of sixty two thousand, and that he had told her that eighty percent of people brought to him for Christian counseling were, understandably, under the age of eighteen. In retort, Steenkamp claimed she was “too busy to check all my sources”. In a media response to this article PFSA president Norman Geldenhys, said, “The figure of 62,000 is ludicrous”²³. This episode raised two important issues. Firstly, by reporting solely Pagan responses to this piece of journalism, the two movements are related in a single discourse, and, secondly, the power of the media to disseminate inaccuracies must be noted. Steenkamp’s figure of sixty two thousand Satanists in South Africa has since been quoted in numerous publications in South Africa; now functioning as a fact given by Kobus Jonker.

The most common response by Pagans to questions of their links with Satanism is to vehemently negate the connection; mostly with statements that “They are all rebel Christians”, “We don’t worship the Christian God, so we therefore don’t believe in Satan”, and, “Satan belongs to Christianity and not to us”. It is my opinion that such responses do little to assuage perceptions in discourses already constructed on binary oppositions of good and evil, and which employ stereotypic, highly mythologised language and ideas. In such statements, Pagans therefore deflect associations with Satanism from themselves, rather than highlight congruencies and differences, or debunk the lack of historicity and hysterical overtones in Satanic discourses

themselves. The religion, Satanism, is remarkably distinct from societal depictions and from the scapegoating from a mainstream religious perspective, that all of society's ills are attributable to relationships with an evil agency²⁴. No statistics support that Satanists are any more involved in crime than any other members of society, nor are their members associated with deviancy and crimes in which Satanic symbols are used; often as acts of anti-establishment rebellion²⁵.

A failure to identify that Pagan Witchcraft and Satanism do indeed share parts of a ritual calendar, both practice magic, share some deities, and that both are streams in modern occulture, disenables Pagans from addressing distinctions where they do, fundamentally, exist. Media representations are pre-constructed on the sensationalist, and refutations in simplified and generalized terms serve to reinforce confusing analogies rather than clarify very real congruencies and differences between the movements. Neither, sadly, bear much connection to their portrayals in and through the media. My understandings are that local Pagans, not only are not connected to Satanism, but their knowledge of Satanism itself is low and undeveloped. They are therefore unable to articulate more of the movement than the images perpetuated in the media or of those held in mainstream society. Natrel scholar Stephanie Urquhart makes a valid point when she says, "Its ironic how a created and lesser being in an entirely different faith holds such important strings on this community" (Natrel discussion 12-5-2003).

Religion scholars J. Gordon Melton and Robert S. Ellwood have, in the face of the propensity in the media and elsewhere to conflate discourses on Paganism and

Satanism, issued statements²⁶ on the irresponsibility and falsity of these practices.

Part of Melton's statement warrants quoting in this context.

I have watched with grave concern the rise during the nineteen eighties of a new wave of anti-Satanist hysteria in the press, among professionals concerned with the welfare of children, law enforcement agencies, and religious zealots, many from my own Christian community. This wave of hysteria has been largely built upon the outrageous accusations of self-appointed experts with little to no background in occult religious research and little or no evidence to support their charges. Faced with a lack of evidence, in all too many cases, fingers have been pointed to the relatively visible neo-Pagan Wicca community as the source for Satanic activity from the child abuse to the sacrifice of babies. These accusations have, to say the least, been a pain and confusion among Pagans and Wiccans who do not even acknowledge the existence of Satan, the Christian anti-deity (nd).

In Ellwood's statement he more strongly cautions that,

Any refusal to distinguish between Satanists and neo-Pagans is irresponsible and essentially dishonest thinking, based on prejudice against certain types of religious activity rather than sincere investigation and commitment to truth. It could give rise to the horrors of the witch-hunts of old once again. It must be shunned – like the devil (nd).

More current Pagan scholarship (Harvey 1997; York 1995; Pike 2001) has also focused attention on this problem faced by modern Paganism as it has emerged in Western societies. In South Africa, where there have been little to no academic studies on either Paganism or Satanism, there is little support for the Pagan

community to legitimate its attempts to divorce Paganism from Satanism; a marriage that appears entrenched in the media and in parts of our society.

Tajfel's thesis that identities are constructed in relation to what is 'other' and different from the self, is highly evidenced in media portrayals of modern Paganism, wherein Pagans commonly construct new narratives of the self that are built on justifications and negation. These negotiated new identities can be seen as attempts to present Paganism as an acceptable religious tradition in a pluralistic society. Not only are "we Pagans", but we are also "not Satanists", and, by extension, we are "good non-Christians." Whilst mythologies, false histories and Christian interpretations of Pagans, Witches, Satanism and the devil inform the customary field of discourse of Pagans in the media, it is interesting to note that any links to the very real phenomenon of African witchcraft is absented. The witchcraft practices, persecutions and murders that are still prevalent in parts of the community, are not issues to which modern Pagans are generally asked to respond to in the media. Being directed to respond to only sensationalist and stereotypical understandings of Satanism in popular culture, Pagans have seldom been asked to comment on the position they hold on witches and the (very real) phenomenon of witchcraft in indigenous communities, again reinforcing the cognitive divide that exists in our society between black witchcraft and white Witchcraft, and which, in this instance, is a racial distinction. An interesting exception in the media was on the television show *L'Attitude* screened on SABC1 (June, 2005), where the presenter, with humour, raised the issue obliquely. In her introduction she noted that, "Witches in my culture have a negative connotation." Later, she asked Donna Vos, "Do you put *muthi* in people's food and drinks?" In the Felicia Mabuza-Suttle (7-7-1997) show the Pagan panel was asked

their opinion on the links between Paganism and Sangomas. In both instances presenters were black, whereas white presenters and journalists have notably avoided the topic.

The problems inhering in the definition of a ‘witch’ in various communities in South Africa, was raised within the Pagan community after the broadcast of the ETV programme 3rdDegree (28-3-2006), entitled *Cry Witch* that focused on the plight of inhabitants of Helena Village. This community has been established to protect victims of witchcraft accusations and is an ostracized community which lives in poverty with little to no essential services. Initial outrage at the plight of people whom most Pagans deemed to be victims of scapegoating, prejudice and social injustices, raised discussions of writing to ETV to, a) distinguish modern Witchcraft from this phenomenon, and, b) to show solidarity for victims of religious and social discrimination. Conducted on the SAPRA website, discussions were broadened into issues of whether such individuals themselves identified as either Pagans or Witches, and whether associating themselves with individuals who did so self-identify—namely modern Witches—would have a further deleterious effect on this community. Themselves aware that negative associations with the words ‘witch’ and ‘witchcraft’ are injurious to their own community, African witchcraft remains a problematic issue for South African Pagans. It highlights the difficulties inherent in many of the words and practices with which they self-identify. Why the media has refrained from seriously engaging local Pagans in these debates—unlike it does with Satanism—is questionable, but possibly grounded in social and political reasons and difficulties in our new society.

Conclusion

The media interest in Paganism, Wicca and Witchcraft since its public emergence in South Africa has been stimulated by the phenomenon that many, mostly white, members of our society choose to self-identify with words that still hold negative connotations. The equality provided to all religions in South Africa by our new Constitution has enabled many religious groups to give expression to their beliefs and practices through different media. Paganism, on the grounds mentioned above, has actively been pursued by such media. Despite the fact that most Pagan engagements with the media have been inspired by a genuine desire to provide sound information and to correct misunderstandings, media concern, for the most part, has aimed at attracting viewers/readers through sensationalism. Whilst some Pagan depictions have been complicit with these intents, even the most arduous attempts to present Paganism as a new and growing religion in South Africa, have been thwarted by media inclusions—and intrusions—of negative stereotypes and false mythologies. Responses by Pagans in this climate, has given rise to new articulations of Wicca and Witchcraft identities; identities that bring them closer to mainstream values and attitudes, and which largely skirt the oppositional tendencies that are formative to the movement.

In contrast to Britain, the United States and Australia, South Africa is unique in the forms of witchcraft that exist, factually and/or fictitiously, in our country where Russell's categories (1980: 8) all find expression. The witch as the harbinger of evil is found in many indigenous communities, raising social, religious and political dilemmas in the new South Africa. The witch as Satanic diabolist continues to thrive in many Christian discourses across racial and cultural divisions. The modern Pagan

Witch, as practitioner of a Western, Nature-venerating and magical tradition, is, in South Africa, a nascent expression of the term. Media interest is undoubtedly elicited by the self-identification of the latter with the words ‘Pagan’, ‘Witch’ and ‘Witchcraft’. Fuelled by stereotypical depictions in popular culture, the media simultaneously reflects the prevalent dominance of Christian discourses on evil and witchcraft in our society and hence, the ubiquitous conflation of Paganism with Satanism. As saliently noted by Abebe Zegeye²⁷, “identity exists and takes place within representation” (nd: 1) and it is in the media that Pagan identities are constructed that comprise of discourses that seldom, if ever, find place in their self-constructed personal and collective identity narratives and discourses.

In this process, the media fails to adequately articulate a modern Pagan identity, and, instead, appear to construct a fourth category of ‘witch’. This figure emerges as a composite of the three types of witch; an individual who is a modern Pagan Witch, who is questionably diabolist, and, for whom, the possibility that their practices can be applied with harmful intent, is never really excluded. Such an individual bares little resemblance to personal and collective Pagan identities and resolution of this problem remains a challenge for the local community who choose either to engage in, or respond to, Pagan portrayals in the media. In one form or another, mediated communications reach the public across all age, race, gender, religious and economic boundaries. As Pagans endeavour to construct meaningful, accurate and relevant social identities, it is the power inherent in media discourses to construct the subject that creates and perpetuates mostly negative, ambiguous and stereotypical notions of Witchcraft and Paganism in society. In the relationship between Paganism and the media, it is the latter that retain the power to reinforce dominant discourses.

¹ This concept was first suggested by Erving Goffman in *Frame Analysis: an essay on the organization of experience*. Harper, London: 1974.

² One of the first of this genre was the 1960s film *Rosemary's Baby* that explored the dangers of occultism. Other films include *The Omen*, *Friday the 13th* and *Long the Dead*. For more on this topic see Schofield Clark (2003: 67-68).

³ See Schofield Clark (2003: 46-58, 69-74) for an in-depth analysis of the *Buffy* phenomenon in teenage lives.

⁴ Lynn Schofield Clark says that, "Buffy is postmodern in the sense that the programme "delights in depthless-ness." Religion—the ultimate serious and "deep" concern of US culture—is here turned on its head to the delight of a generation accustomed to questioning everything and turning all into irony" (2003: 50). In an accompanying footnote (ibid: 262) she cites this as Frederick Jameson's term taken from Patricia Pender's work entitled *I Am Buffy*.

⁵ These approaches are taken from Russell (1980: 8).

⁶ Campbell, Colin *The Cultic Milieu* California: Altamira Press, 2002.

⁷ Birgit Meyer's paper *Religion, media and the public sphere* was presented at International Conference, University of Amsterdam, 6-8 Dec, 2001. It can be found on the website <http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/gm/conferences/2001a.htm>.

⁸ For some practitioners, the athame corresponds to the element of air.

⁹ Chidester's identification of sacred space as, 1) ritual space, 2) significant space, and, 3) contested space can be found in Hoover, S and Schofield Clark L. (eds) *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: explorations in the media, religion and culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

¹⁰ Douglas Ezzy's paper entitled *White Witches and Black Magic: Ethics and Consumerism in Contemporary Witchcraft* published in *The Journal of Contemporary Religion* Vol 21, No 1, 2006, pp15-31.

¹¹ Ezzy, D *New Age Witchcraft? Popular spell books and the re-enchantment of everyday life in Culture and Religion* Vol 4, No 1, 2003, pp 47-65.

¹² See Ezzy's paper on the relationship between popularized forms of Witchcraft and the New Age Movement, cited in footnote 11.

¹³ The Wiccan Rede is a rhyming verse that was written by Gardner and put into popular form by Doreen Valiente. "This is the ethical principle that guides both the magical and mundane lives of those who practice any form of neo-Pagan Witchcraft" Rabinovitch and Lewis (2002: 289).

¹⁴ The Law of Return reflects the Pagan belief in karma.

¹⁵ 'Black Paganism' is not a term I employ as this was historically a pejorative label given to blacks who followed indigenous traditions. It effectively designated them as non-religious and non-believers. I used the upper case Paganism exclusively as a term used by those who employ it as one of self-identification.

¹⁶ This article was by Sheena Adams and photographs by Corrie Hansen.

¹⁷ This article appeared in *The Sunday Tribune* 9-5-2004, and *The Saturday Star* 15-4-2004.

¹⁸ *Free Spirit* is a television programme that identifies its aim as to "investigate meaning through spirituality".

¹⁹ This article was published on the Independent Online website on 28-12-1999 (http://www.iol.co.za/general/newsprint.php3?art_id=ct1999122822070867W320303).

²⁰ Daily Mail and Guardian on the website <http://www.mg.co.za/mg/news/99nov2/16nov-pagan.htm>.

²¹ It is not within the scope of this project to detail this phenomenon. Suffice it to say that the attention given to it by academics, psychologists and law enforcement officials of the past few years has shown it to prevail as an outcome of the 'Satanic Panic' of the nineteen eighties, during which, stories of kidnapping, murder, sacrifice and blood rituals circulated in western societies, creating fear and panic. The accounts of 'survivors' that were generated in Christian counseling, appeared to lack substantive links to actual Satanic groups; but rather reflect a range of psycho-social pathologies. It appears that accounts, drawn out by Christian counselors, attributed their stories to the result of Satanic devil-worship, and those under secular counselors, found little to support affiliation to Satanism.

²² Her report can be found on the News24.com website http://www.news24.com/News/south_africa/News/0,61192-7-1442_1331728,00.html.

²³ The article in response can be found on the News24.com website, posted on 15-3-2003.

²⁴ For more on this topic see Partridge (2004: 81-84).

²⁵ See James R. Lewis's paper entitled *Who Serves Satan? A demographic and ideological profile* published in *Marburg Journal of Religion* Vol 6, No 2, June 2001 in which he provides statistical findings from an empirical study on Satanism. This study he based on challenging conventional lay understandings of Satanism. Also see Ezzy (2006: 23-4).

²⁶ J. Gordon Melton's statement (nd) was published by the *Institute* for the Study of American Religion, Santa Barbara, of which he was director. Robert Ellwood's statement (nd) was issued by the School of Religion, University of Southern California. No dates were provided on either statement. These statements were later published in the booklet Zell, Oberon (ed.) *Witchcraft, Satanism and Occult Crime: Who's Who and What's What, A Manual of Reference Materials for the Professional Investigator (4th Edition)* Phoenix: Phoenix Publishers, 1991

²⁷ This quotation is taken from Zegeye's paper entitled *Narrative Discourse, Social Crisis and the Construction of the Beta Israel Identity*. The html version of the file can be accessed on <http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20zegeye1.pdf>.

CHAPTER TEN

PAGAN IDENTITIES IN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

Development and change in Paganism are coterminous processes with the transformation of a post-apartheid democratic society. The changes brought about by the new Constitution have had implications across racial, class, political, economic, social, and religious boundaries, and the Constitutional Court remains in the process of bringing legislation in line with the individual and group rights inhering in the Constitution. Not least, this process often requires a radical adjustment to previously held labels and definitions.

Religion, and in particular, a Calvinistic form of Christianity, was used during the apartheid years to reinforce the political dominance of a white minority. Its influence permeated all South African institutions with resultant changes being effected across the full spectrum of South African society. Religious identities are not acquired, nor articulated, in a vacuum, but from and through the social processes of which they are part. Whilst mainstream religions, and Christianity in particular, continue to undergo change and revision in what is now proclaimed as a multi-faith democracy, new religious movements bear the unique onus to instantiate their identities in this religious landscape. As a part of this process it is necessitated that they articulate themselves in, and through, many of the same avenues and domains found in broader society.

The public emergence of Paganism in South Africa was contiguous with the sweeping changes in the country; and the construction and articulation of a Pagan identity cannot be understood independently from this fact. The new Constitution afforded Pagans the right to claim a religious identity and to have this identity recognized across diverse institutions. Legislative change is not necessarily concurrent with the values, attitudes and worldviews of the members of society who make up societal institutions, making effective change a negotiated and openly contested process. For Paganism, this is both an internal and an external process, as it is not only a new religion in South Africa, but is also a new community in the process of negotiating and contesting its own identity and its role and position in society. This chapter will look at Pagan modes of interaction in South African society; both in the workplace and with state institutions. These relationships involve all Pagans in the community in some way and have profound implications for the religious identity they present and claim in the light of constitutional freedom. Accordingly, the focus in this chapter will be on the issues involved in the construction and articulation of a Pagan social identity in South Africa, and on the direct engagements of Pagans with various institutions and organizations in South Africa. The experiences and assumptions of the prevalence of religious discrimination in South African society were highlighted in the following response to my survey question on perceptions of discrimination where sixty two percent of survey respondents claimed to have been discriminated against because of their affiliation to Paganism. These respondents cited the following as the sources of this discrimination.

| | |
|-----|---|
| 45% | Sectors of the Christian community |
| 23% | Family; in particular fathers, husbands and in-laws |
| 23% | Work colleagues |
| 19% | The Satanic Panic |
| 16% | Media misinformation that gives no opportunity for rebuttal |

Most of these experiences are therefore encountered within society where a Pagan identity is often in tension with discourses that interpret Paganism and Witchcraft as anti-Christian, and, by extension, as Satanic. The chapter will be fairly anecdotal to allow Pagan experiences of these encounters to speak for themselves.

Pagans in the workplace

Margot Adler's finding in her 1985 survey of American Paganism that Pagans were highly represented in the computer and technical fields¹, was not born out by my own survey of South African Pagans where no specific occupational trends emerged.

South African Pagans were found to be mostly white-collared individuals who made their living across a diversity of professions that included medicine, education, law, technical fields and commerce. Only a few made a living in esoteric and environmental fields, and a mere handful were 'full-time' Pagan practitioners involved in Pagan teaching and/or services. A minority were self-employed.

This spread of representation meant that Pagans, despite their being practitioners of a marginal religious orientation, engaged in their daily lives with the full spectrum of South African society. When asked how open they were regarding their beliefs with their family, friends, colleagues, employers and employees, the highest negative response was with employers where forty nine percent indicated that they did not disclose their Pagan affiliation. Thirty five percent were not open with other

employees. The workplace therefore emerged as the environment where Pagans were most reticent to disclose a Pagan identity. When asked to provide reasons for such lack of disclosure, all shared the opinion that, “The Christian image of Pagan traditions is too negative”, “that Christians see us as Satanic”, and that “Witchcraft and Paganism have been given a bad name by Christians and other religions-of-the-book”. The citing of these reasons has been grounded in the real experiences of some Pagans who have experienced overt discrimination in the workplace that they attest to occurring after divulging their Pagan orientation. Such incidences appear to be case specific and contingent on the worldview held by particular individuals within a given organisation and the status held by the Pagan in relation to the individual perceived as being discriminatory. Other Pagans report work environments where they have openly disclosed their religious identity as Pagan, with no negative consequence whatsoever.

Accommodating the diversity of religions in South Africa has increased the tendency towards secularization in the workplace; be it in state institutions or private organizations. The overt articulation of a Pagan identity in such environments has been challenged; owing less to a discrimination against Paganism *per se*, but to the general inappropriateness of the location for religious articulation. The tendency of some Pagans to perceive victimization has also arisen in the workplace, where reasons for poor work relationships are deflected onto religious affiliation; a tendency that is located in specific Pagan individuals and not within the movement as a whole. Such individuals can be inclined to carry this attribute into a number of different areas of their lives.

Many Pagans report a gradually growing acceptance of Paganism in South Africa, and, in some instances, a genuine interest by individuals to become more informed in order to adjust previously held assumptions. Despite this, forty eight percent of respondents felt that incidents of discrimination against them because of their religious persuasion, have remained unresolved, and ninety four percent still feel that there is no clear understanding in society of what Paganism is all about. It is, within state institutions that the articulation of a Pagan identity remains the most problematic.

Paganism and other Religious Institutions

South African Pagans are highly conscious of the predominance of the Christian worldview in the country, and it is within the context of this relationship that the perceptions of their role and status in society are constructed. Eighty five percent of survey respondents stated that they were raised in a Christian tradition, with sixty six percent disclosing that they were practicing Christians prior to becoming self-identified Pagans. The enforced segregation in South Africa's history cut across many boundaries, and, for most Pagans, knowledge and understanding of other religions in South Africa is consequently limited as these religions have mostly operated outside of an individual's lived experience. Christianity, therefore, provides the dominant model for Pagans of what a religion *is*, how it functions and its role in society. What is evidenced by this phenomenon is the tendency to search for congruencies in their newly adopted religious orientation, and, in some instances, to replicate its forms and structures. This tendency is a site of tension within Paganism as a result of its inherent antinomianism and emphasis on personal autonomy that work against attempts at institutionalization and dogmatic religious assertions. It is these very features that

Pagans most cite as cause for their personal rejection of Christianity, a position that also divides some members of the community from others who engage in processes criticized as being developed on Christian models. Foremost of these processes is the development of a Pagan clergy and a public ministry programme.

Former head of the Pagan Federation of Australia, Julia Phillips, made the point in her paper *Pagan Churches*² that,

The Pagan movement has always been self regulatory in practical terms. This may not be obvious to those who are calling for “accredited priesthood”, but I can assure them that the Pagan grapevine is active and effective throughout the world. We do not need framed certificates over the fireplace.

Notwithstanding that her view is supported by many groups and individuals in the South African Pagan community, others have pursued accreditation that has accorded them the status of Reverend. With the exception of one practitioner who attained this status through a locally founded Pagan tradition, the others have received their credentials through established organizations abroad. The trainings offered by these organizations vary in terms of both content and requirement, with some insisting on a minimum time period for completion, and others allowing students to progress as rapidly as they are able to work through the courses, often offered online. As in the international community, there exists within South African Paganism, a similar resistance from a majority of the community towards the trend to structure Paganism in terms of congregationalism, prison and hospital chaplaincy programmes, and other models of Protestant civic religion. The foundations of Paganism that lie in a counter-cultural religion that advocated change at a grassroots level strongly informs local sensibilities and fuels such resistance. The counter argument is that a division of

labour is common to all groups and organizations and that such credentials legitimate the role of those who have a need to perform a unique service in the community. However, in telephonic conversations with Wiccan Reverends in South Africa, all disclosed that the title had little relevance in the community, but was an asset in contacts with governmental and religious institutions and initiatives. There was concurrence that the term carried certain assumptions regarding training and expertise that afforded such persons the rights and opportunities equal to their counterparts in other religions. Examples given to me of such were liaisons with a parliamentary Religion Desk, the undertaking of prison and hospital visitations as religious functionaries, as giving credible support to Pagans seeking legal assistance, and in interfaith capacities. Practitioners of Wicca and Witchcraft identify themselves as priests and priestesses of the Craft, with a title of High Priest or High Priestess being assumed by the ritual leaders of a coven, or by a person who has attained a third degree training in a tradition, and who leads a group. One South African Wiccan Reverend again shared with me the difficulty of introducing the term High Priest/ess outside of the Pagan community, and that the term Reverend was merely utilitarian through being universally understood. Although forty eight percent of survey respondents were familiar with Pagan clergy in South Africa, a quarter of this group held a negative opinion and considered such developments as “political maneuvering”, with one insisting that it is “A use of Christian terminology and therefore has not advanced the cause of Witchcraft in South Africa.” More strongly validated than these credentials, were individuals who were accepted within their communities as leaders and accorded the right to claim certain roles through their proven ability to be of service. Diversity of opinion in the community on this issue results in there being no external qualifications that are recognized by all Pagans, and,

in many instances, a blanket rejection of trends towards hierarchy and what is perceived of as replications of Christian normativity.

Interfaith initiatives.

Whilst interfaith initiatives are not widespread in the South African Pagan community, sixty six percent of respondents believed that it was important for Pagans to participate in this capacity. When a local Wiccan Reverend joined the Johannesburg chapter of South Africa's leading interfaith organisation, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, she recounted the welcome she was given as a result of the Quaker affiliation of their president, but was hesitant as to whether this would have been consistent in other chapters. As one time member of the Durban chapter myself, I recall the then president wondering "What on earth would we do if a white Witch asked to join us?" Acceptance at an interfaith level is consistent with the tendencies towards exclusion and inclusions held by the other participating religion(s) and/or individuals, and, in this regard, replicate those same positions held by those institutions in society. The central problems once more are the prevalent negative stereotyping of Witches and Witchcraft, the inability of Pagans to clearly articulate their own definition of terms, and the paucity of information available on the reclamation of these terms by Pagans.

These difficulties were highlighted during the largest international interfaith gathering ever held in South Africa, namely the 1999 World Parliament of Religions held in Cape Town. Attended by local Pagan practitioners—one of whom held the title of Reverend—and a large spectrum from the international Pagan academic and established lay community, this event afforded leaders and practitioners of other

religions in South Africa, the opportunity to engage and dialogue with the Pagan and Witch community. Pagan acceptance, however, was contingent on the prevailing opinions held by other religions towards this emergent movement, a fact underscored by coverage in local media. An article in the *Sunday Times* newspaper (12-12-99)³, began with the sentence, “Witches should not be invited to future international religious gatherings, according to two of South Africa’s religious leaders.” These leaders were quoted further in the article with Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane and Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris expressing disappointment at the number of “unorthodox” religious groups allowed to attend; particularly Witches and members of so-called “Pagan” religions. Archbishop Ndungane was further quoted as saying,

I don’t think that’s a religion. As we understand it here and if we put it in the South African context, people will say it’s not on. I think we need to sit down and work out criteria for what needs to be included and excluded. It should not be open to everybody who says they are a religion (ibid: 1).

According to Rabbi Harris, the presence of Sangomas and “Pagans” detracted from what the Parliament set out to achieve. He felt that,

Religions should be democratic, but the wider the definition the more one loses depth – the whole thing becomes an exercise in artificiality. The fear is that one gets a bunch of weirdos using the Parliament of Religions to get publicity. I would much prefer it to be more mainstream (ibid: 1-2).

The fact that Rabbi Harris included Sangomas along with the Pagans in whom he felt should be excluded from the Parliament, initiated Pagan support from Philip Kubukeli, president of the Western Cape Traditional Healers and Herbalists Association, who in retort said of Harris, “He has still got apartheid. All the religions were invited to take part in the Parliament – they wanted an indication of the religions

which we have in the new South Africa” (Op. Cit: 2). This dialogue engendered a mutual support between two religious groupings through the common denial of their authenticity as religions and the privileging of mainstream religions.

As representatives of religious groupings in South Africa, these leaders are spokespersons for their faith congregations in society and their remarks are indicators of the difficulties Pagans and Witches face in gaining acceptance by members of most mainstream religions. This factor inhibits most Pagans, including some leaders in the community, from engaging in interfaith initiatives. As current president of the PFSA, Norman Geldenhys said, “Personally, I am not keen to get into ugly debates with other religious leaders. I just want people to accept Wicca as a religion that adds value to the people who follow it” (quoted in The Star 14-5-01).

Greater acceptance of Paganism has been found in relationships with Eastern religions, in particular Hinduism and Buddhism, and has resulted in relationships being formed with members of these traditions, often at the grassroots level⁴. One of the most active engagements with a Hindu group in South Africa has been undertaken by the Pagan group, Lunaguardia, who host a Hindu Sanatana Dharma group in their area and who, on occasion, celebrate certain Hindu festivals. Regarding the Pagan presence at the 1999 Parliament of World Religions, Dr Thillayvel Naidoo of the Hindu Maha Sabha was quoted as saying, in respect to the Pagans he had met at a previous Parliament of World Religions, that, “They have valid and useful expression of religious ideas. If it promotes the spiritual welfare of people, it should be welcomed” (quoted in The Star 14-5-01). In KwaZulu Natal, some Hindus who have completed local Wicca courses, have since started independent initiatives that interestingly syncretise Wiccan, Hindu and New Age interests.

The late Hindu philosopher Ram Swarup (1920-1998) is noted for his recognition of the congruencies between Hinduism and Paganism, and for his re-embracing of the term 'Pagan' for cultures and traditions that preceded Christian and Islamic colonization. Arguing for the revival of ethnic, polytheistic religions Ram Swarup developed a correspondence with Prudence Jones, president of the Pagan Federation at their headquarters in the United Kingdom, as well as having his articles on polytheism published in certain Pagan media⁵. His views were articulated in a paper read to the delegates at the Dharma Sansad (February, 1999)⁶ wherein it stated that, "Clearly, there is a measure of common ground between Hinduism and Pagan revivalism, both typologically (as non-Abrahamic religions) and strategically" (ibid: 2). Despite noting important divergences between the traditions, the paper concluded by saying that,

Hindus should welcome the revival of the pre-Christian religions of the West, often cognate religions through the common Indo-European origins, otherwise at least typologically related religions which are not based on a monopolistic prophet or scripture (1999: 9).

South African Pagans have made little to no contact with Hindu leadership in the country, and it is in the 'divergences' between the traditions that are raised in the paper, that debates lie on the propensity some Pagans have to include Hinduism under the Pagan umbrella without mutual dialogue. It also points to grounds on which Hindus could resist their inclusion in the category. A proviso on indiscriminate inclusion was made in the conclusion to the aforementioned paper. It stated,

At the same time, they (Hindus) should be watchful for impure motives and degenerate trends, or for phenomena which may be acceptable in a

multicultural framework but with which they need not involve themselves.

...Still immature, these religions often look to Hinduism for guidance (ibid: 9).

The New Age Movement, like Paganism, is a diverse movement, devoid of central leadership and formal organisation. South African Pagans replicate the international Pagan tendency to dissociate from the New Age Movement, with sixty percent of the survey population emphatically denying any connection between the movements. Notwithstanding this opinion, it is with the New Age Movement that the most comfortable interfaith relationship is afforded. Through informal structures such as esoteric festivals and through joint interest in healing technologies in particular, Pagans and New Agers participate in a dialogue not afforded with institutionalized religious structures. With a greater valuing of 'spirituality' over formal religious institutions and structures, these groupings develop and sustain alternative forms of religio-spiritual practice and meaning in society. The two movements are nonetheless separated by sectors in the Pagan community who are undertaking initiatives to have Paganism recognized as a religion with all attendant rights and privileges. This quest will bring them into a closer relationship with mainstream religious institutions, invigorate intra-Pagan debate on their own identity and, in the process, will contribute to the changing face of Paganism in our society.

Practitioners of African Religion are a minority in South Africa in relation to the followers of Christianity or Afro-Christian traditions. It is within the African Initiated Churches that African Religion is mostly kept alive within a Christian context.

Although contact between Pagans and practitioners of African Religion is generally low in society, some Pagans do claim an affinity with indigenous traditions, with a

few including African religionists under the Pagan umbrella. Even among the latter, an in-depth knowledge of, or engagement with, the indigenous religions of southern Africa is nominal, as is an awareness of the cultural context in which these religions are grounded. The revival of the beliefs and practices of the indigenous religions of Europe is central to modern Paganism and this affords a proclivity to identify with other indigenous traditions in the world. White South African Pagans, who are distanced from the indigenous religion(s) of their ancestors, therefore search for commonalities with local traditions believed to live in closer harmony with the natural world. It is this feature, alongside the de-institutionalised nature of African Religion, its recognition of magic, and its recourse to the natural world for healing, that reinforce Pagan identification with African Religion, but only rarely, any direct association. Unlike Pagan traditions, African Religions in South Africa are patrilineal, and exhibit a strong emphasis on male authority. Paganism, conversely, is intensely post-patriarchal and devoid of the many types of taboos on the female, and on the female body, that are evidenced in African Religion. Although the Pagan eschewing of hierarchy further divides Pagans from traditional African ontologies, it is in their responses to Nature-as-sacred that the traditions are both separated and challenged. The cross-over to African Religion by both Pagans and non-Pagans—as is the case of the “White Sangoma”—is isolated and individual. Black participation in modern Paganism is extremely low.

In South African society, Pagans are more likely to encounter African Christians who are more vociferous in their rejection of the terms ‘pagan’ and ‘witch’, and who tend to bring a conservative Christian moral agenda into their discourses. This body is the majority in South Africa and its members are represented across all institutions and

organizations in society. It is their voice that will be an ongoing challenge to Pagan initiatives to achieve recognition for what is essentially a polytheistic, liberal religious orientation that recognizes the divine as immanent in the natural world.

Paganism and Educational Institutions

Notwithstanding the radical changes in education in the post-apartheid era and legislative changes to the policy of Religion Education, South African schools and educational institutions remain in the process of transforming the decades of single-tradition religious education into a system that recognizes the plurality of religions in the country. This statement is made in spite of Chidester's opinion that, "South Africa is not in fact a Christian country. South Africa is religiously diverse for at least three reasons" (1994: 16). These reasons he posits as being the diversity within Christianity itself, the vitality of other faith traditions in the country, and the fact that any state claims to support a single-faith tradition would violate the freedom of religion entrenched in the South African Bill of Rights. Chidester's statement was made in 1994 in light of the statistic that, "...during the 1980s, about 70% of the population claimed allegiance to some variety of Christianity" (ibid: 16). The Freedom of Religion Report of 2002, indicated that, according to the 1996 census, this figure had risen to approximately eighty four percent of the population. By 2001, this figure had risen even further. The largest grouping, consistently, is the African Initiated Churches. Irrespective of legislative changes made post-1994 to bring religious policy in line with provisions of equality in the new Constitution, South Africa remains an essentially Christian country.

The process to transform Religion Education in South Africa, started on 17th February, 1994⁷ when “the National Education and Training Forum of the African National Congress covered a multifaith consultation on religion in public education” (Chidester 1994: 155), and which has been conducted in consultation with all stakeholders, has not been without contestation from various interest groups. In 2003, Minister of Education Kader Asmal, issued a national policy on religion and education, that committed itself “to give full expression to the invocation of religion in our Constitution and the principles governing religious freedom” (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: 1)⁸. To achieve this goal it was stated in the document that religion and education would be guided by the principle that,

In all aspects of the relationship between religion and education, the practice must flow directly from the constitutional values of citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination, and freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion (ibid: 4).

Sixty five percent of my survey respondents were parents, and forty eight percent of this group attested to raising their children in a Pagan tradition. Although this represents only one third of the children of Pagans, it is mostly within this group that problems can, and do, arise in the educational environment. In most schools a Christian ethos remains normative, with most teachers and/or lecturers only beginning to extend their understandings of the faith traditions in which some of their pupils are born and raised. Whilst not all Pagan parents are fully aware of their rights in terms of the Constitution, there is a tacit awareness that Christianity should no longer be privileged in religion education. Experiences of Pagan parents have varied in the school system, and, over the years, personal objections have ranged from the predominance of Christian teachings in their child’s education, through to cases of

discrimination in the classroom. Addressing these issues is made more complex by parents who do not publicly disclose their own Pagan identity, or, when there is a conflict of religious affiliation within a family. Openly Pagan parents have, on occasion, brought the issue of overt and singularly Christian education to the attention of school principals, teachers, and/or governing bodies, with frequently favourable outcomes. When cases of discrimination are highlighted, teachers themselves are aware of the unconstitutional nature of religious discrimination, but are unprepared as to how to address statements made by pupils that express marginal and alternative worldviews. In the case of Pagan teachers, the school environment remains the least likely occupational site where a Pagan identity is disclosed, out of fear of discrimination. This is exacerbated by ongoing problems associated with the implementation of Religion Education in the classroom, and an awareness of the wide spectrum of negative understanding regarding Paganism and Witchcraft in the community. The latter appeared to be elevated where the youth are concerned. Many new religious movements in society have been tainted with popular, negative understandings of beings sects and cults, and Paganism and Witchcraft, even further, by confluences of these traditions with Satanism. The pervasiveness of the tendency to link the term Paganism with non-Christian and, therefore, non-believer, has other outcomes for movements that play out in the relationship between religion and education.

Religion as 'moral education'

Although it is stated in the *Journal of Moral Education* that “religious education and moral education are two distinct and separate areas of study” (Chidester1994: 99), religion education is frequently perceived as formative in the process of providing the

values and attitudes that produces responsible citizens in a given society. Religions can, and do, perform such a function, but it is fallacious to assume that such results are not achieved through many areas outside of a religious framework. Affiliation to a religious tradition does not confer specific moralities to an individual or group, although this assumption is widely carried in society. Many Pagans attest to experiences such as being perceived as non-believers, as heretical, or as lacking in moral and ethical foundation on the grounds of being 'non-Christian'. These assumptions have been carried into the classroom situation, a fact compounded by popular understandings of the terms 'Pagan', 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' that associate such practices with deviancy and licentiousness, and are frequently constructed as being of particular moral danger to the youth. Pagans in the media are too frequently depicted as embodying anti-Christian tendencies or as a lunatic fringe, and there remains a critical void in society of accurate articulations of their traditions. The disbanding of the segregated school system in South Africa means that in any one classroom, the three most prevailing understandings of the word 'witch' in the country, could be present. The fact that two, namely the witch as anti-Christian diabolist, and the witch as the paramount harbinger of evil and misfortune in African Religion, are highly pejorative and imply moral ambiguity, raises serious difficulties for any pupil who so self-identifies or discloses it as the religious persuasion of his/her parents. Neither teachers nor Pagan parents are equipped with either the appropriate knowledge or the resources to always counter these difficulties. Ariel Damon of SAPRA, informed me of their intention to establish an information website that will "provide accurate information and a support system" for Pagan parents in their dealings with teachers and school governing bodies should the need arise. When difficulties have arisen within the parent group, some Pagan parents have met

informally with the concerned parent(s) to address misunderstandings and to share, where they can, a clearer overview of their beliefs and practices. In such instances the approach is frequently to subdue a Pagan magical identity in favour of one that locates belief in the immanence of the divine in Nature, and in the practice of celebrating this belief through a celebration of the changing seasons.

Leaders of some local groups have been called to intervene with schools on behalf of parents whose children are perceived to be discriminated against on religious grounds, or where a school requires some clarification on Pagan traditions. Whereas such interventions have been undertaken, they have also been declined when a closer analysis has shown that the concerns of educators are legitimated on grounds that are not centered on religious affiliation. These cases highlight the perceptions of victimization that remain prevalent in sectors of the Pagan community and which have their roots in the mythologized histories on which many Pagan identities are constructed, and which can also be projected from self-perceptions of marginality.

On a tertiary level there has only rarely been an inclusion of contemporary Paganism in Religion Studies syllabi, leaving only the negative ascriptions of the words 'pagan', 'witch' and 'witchcraft' active in the academic arena. My own opportunity to redress this imbalance was not without resistance from some sectors within both the staff and the student group where it was clearly conveyed to me that opposition lay in the presumption that such teachings were non-Christian. The existence of such attitudes in departments at the forefront of developing curricula that reflect the religious diversity in South Africa, and for providing the guidelines for teachers to teach such curricula, underscores how widespread these attitudes are in education facilities that

have little to no resources by which to understand the range of religious diversity in South African classrooms. Legislative transformations in Religion Education are a process that remains contested by various interest groups. Pagans, who wholly support these transformations, are hampered by the presentation of what remains a highly contested religious identity in our society.

Paganism and Legal Institutions

The Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) of 1957, amended by the Witchcraft Suppression Act (50) of 1970 that remains in place in South Africa under the African National Congress dispensation, is a remainder of colonial legislation that, despite its ambiguities, has been retained to address the ongoing phenomenon of witchcraft accusations and violence in indigenous communities. The emergence, from 1996, of individuals who publicly self-identify themselves as Witches, was a new phenomenon in South Africa, and occurred in spite of the retention of this legislation, as a result of the freedom of religion guaranteed in the Constitution. The Act has been criticized⁹ for, in fact, fuelling witchcraft violence through the tone of denial that deems an offender,

Any person who – (a) imputes to any other person the causing, by supernatural means of any disease in or injury or damage to any person or thing, or who names or indicates any other person as a wizard.

In terms of application of the law, the word ‘wizard’ has been extended to refer also to a female ‘witch’¹⁰. A unique feature of Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) of 1957, is the absence of definition of terms provided, resulting in courts making recourse to the Oxford Dictionary and Encyclopedia Britannica for clarification. The definitions that

have been applied in court cases in terms of this Act, have therefore ranged from a witch “as a woman supposed to have dealings with the devil or evil spirits, and who is able by their cooperation to perform supernatural acts”, to a person “who hath conference with the devil, to consult with him, or to do some act”¹¹. Inhering in legal discourse, therefore, is the Christian discourse that associates witches with anti-Christian diabolism. The Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) has been applied in cases of witchcraft accusation and violence in sectors of the African community for whom this conception is absent from their worldview. The distance between most of the Pagan community and the witchcraft phenomena related to indigenous practices, has translated into most Pagans being unaware of the existence of this Act, with only a minority raising it as a potential site of debate. More generous of the awareness within the community, Donna Darkwolf Vos states that,

Naturally, Pagans have looked at this Act and opinions are divided as to whether to lobby against it, or simply to accept the inherent protection in terms of the Constitution. Perhaps it is because we have not been able to act as a unit, and any efforts to lobby thus far have been scattered (2002: 43).

Two offences in terms of the Act that have bearing on the practice of modern Witchcraft are, Clauses 1 (d) and (f). They read as follows;

Any person who -

- 1(d) Professes a knowledge of witchcraft, or the use of charms, and advices any person how to bewitch, injure or damage any person or thing, or supplies any person with any pretended means of witchcraft;
- 1(f) For gain pretends to exercise or use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration, or undertakes to tell fortunes, or pretends

from his skill in or knowledge of any occult science to discover where and in what manner anything supposed to have been stolen or lost may be found.

Technically, although Pagan Witches could be charged with some of these offences, this would ostensibly contradict religious freedoms in the Bill of Rights¹². To date, no such charges have been leveled, nor have any Pagans lobbied against the Act.

What has greater implications for the Pagan community are the pejorative denotations of witch, witchcraft and occult within the legal system and which are thus inevitably brought to mind when Pagans face any other charges in South African courts. This fact was evidenced in the case involving a child-rape charge against Jacques Pieters who was described as being High Priest of a 'Pagan cult' in Pietermaritzburg. Reporting on this case on May 17th, 2000, reporter Ingrid Oellerman quoted¹³ the following excerpts from court transcripts.

Magistrate Kevin Leat asked Pieters: "Do you perhaps slaughter goats...sacrifice virgins...anything of that sort?" Pieters replied, "No, nothing like that."

Further on in the case, Magistrate Kevin Leat said that, although much had been made during the trial of Pieters' Pagan religion, it was found to have no bearing on the case. Important to the case was not that a clearly criminal offence had been charged, but that prior to further investigation, a Pagan identity was assumed to include deviant and criminal beliefs and activities. Pagans who were aware of this case immediately disassociated themselves from Pieters. The assumptions made by Magistrate Leat have perpetuated themselves across the criminal justice system and institutions such as social welfare. In a forthcoming child custody case where the children of a practicing Witch have been removed by social welfare agents, she has been advised by this body that in her court hearing she will have "To prove and explain her

religion”. That the latter has no bearing on the facts of this case—and it is unlikely that such an onus would befall a practitioner of a mainstream religion—points at pervasive assumptions in South African institutions that Pagans and Witches are deviant and lacking in moral foundation. That they are deemed “un-Christian” largely informs this view. In the absence of other authoritative material, it is the Els and Jonker book, *Satanism in South Africa* that provides the primary resource for social welfare agencies in the country when dealing with such cases¹⁴. The evangelical Christian tone of the work, stereotypical assumptions, and a pervasive misrepresentation of many Pagan beliefs, practices and symbols, become the lens through which many Pagan terms and practices are understood, and a site where Pagan identities are challenged and contested.

Some Pagan individuals in South Africa have sought legal counsel in their attempts to redress religious imbalances in the Marriage Act (25) of 1961, wherein currently, Pagans are not recognized as Marriage Officers within the law. These initiatives require compliance with state definitions of what constitutes a ‘religion’, and an onus on applicants for Marriage Officer status to prove that they represent a *bona fide* religious organisation or denomination and who can validate the said organization’s support and continuity. The clause in contention in the Marriage Act is the one that requires religious marriages to be conducted, “according to Christian, Jewish, or Mohammedan rites or the rites of any Indian religion”. In 1999 the Department of Home Affairs prepared Discussion Paper 88, aimed at amending inherent clauses in the Act that failed to embrace the principles of religious freedom and equality contained in the South African Constitution. Such amendments had been

recommended by the South African Law Commission which proposed the following substitution be legislated.

The Minister may designate any minister of religion of, or any person holding a responsible position in any religious denomination or organisation recognized by the Minister, by notice in the Gazette to be, so long as he or she is such a minister or occupies such position, a marriage officer for the purposes of joining parties in marriage according to the tenets of the religious domination or organisation concerned. (Proposed Amendment of section 3 of Act 25 of 1961, as amended by section 3 of Act 51 of 1970.)

The formal legislation of amendments to the Marriage Act has been referred to the Department of Home Affairs, and to date, no Pagan applications for the status of Marriage Officer have been processed. How a religion is defined by the Department of Home Affairs and the criteria the Minister will use to judge the standing and credentials of the Pagan applicant within their group and/or organisation, will present challenges Pagan applicants will be called on to address.

Pagan marriages, called handfastings, have become more frequent in South Africa, and can be officiated over by practitioner(s) selected by the individuals concerned. Many happily have this religio-spiritual service legally recognized in a court ceremony. The process undertaken by Pagans who seek legal recognition as Marriage Officers, bring sectors of Paganism closer to conforming with mainstream models of religious organizations and require Pagans to legitimate their tradition as having a valid and socially defined religious identity. This process is made inherently more difficult by the absence of full community support for these initiatives.

Paganism and Law Enforcement Agencies

When the PFSA was formed the leadership made early contacts with the Occult Related Crimes Unit and its founder and head, Superintendent Kobus Jonker. This relationship was forged in order to provide an educative function that would enable members of ORCU to distinguish the beliefs and practices of the emergent movement from the meanings inhering in their definitions of witchcraft and the occult. ORCU was formed on February 1992 and provided the following definition of occult related crime on its link on the South African Police Services (SAPS) website¹⁵.

Occult-related crime means any human contact that constitutes any legally recognized crime, the modus operandi of which relates to or emanates primarily from any belief or seeming belief in the occult, witchcraft, Satanism, mysticism, magic, esotericism and the like. Included in the scope of occult-related crime are ritual muti-medicine murders, witch purging, witchcraft related violence and sect-related practices that pose a threat to the safety and security of the Republic of South Africa and/or its inhabitants.

Superintendent Jonker, who had risen through the ranks of the SAPS, and who had been converted to an evangelical form of Christianity in the early 1980s, had received media attention through his publications on Satanism, earning him the media title of “God’s Detective”. Besides their website, the SAPS magazine *Servamus Safety and Security Magazine* became a mouthpiece for ORCU, disseminating its views, aims and objectives among all police units in the country. Els and Jonker’s book *Satanism in South Africa* (2000) became compulsory reading for all detectives training in South Africa¹⁶. It was also circulated through schools, social welfare agencies and to psychologists and therapists. Although his personal association with certain Pagans in South Africa led to then ‘Colonel’ Jonker later making public statements that modern

Paganism and Wicca are not connected to Satanism, this fact has failed to reach the vast number of individuals in various institutions in South Africa for whom Els and Jonker's book has been, and remains, an authoritative text. With a total lack of empirical evidence cited to support its claims, the book reflects a charismatic Christian preoccupation with Satan and suggests that interests such as metal music, candles, esoterica and certain film genres are precursors of a diabolism that could lead to social deviancy, cruelty to animals and possibly human sacrifice. The presence of this hysterical rhetoric in a modern police service in South Africa, even post-1994, mirrors similar occurrences in Britain and the USA and in various European countries in the 1980s. A religious construction of crime pervaded law enforcement agencies, giving rise to the title of Cult Cops to those who cloaked criminal activity with fundamentalist Christian interpretation. From the late 1990s, what had become known of as the Satanic Panic, attracted the attention of scholars (Victor 1993; Hjelm 2000; Pike 2001), and a more critical appraisal from within police departments themselves¹⁷, leading to a universal debunking of the phenomenon. The complicity of the media in the growth and perpetuation of the Satanic Panic phenomenon was also criticized. Former American Air Force Officer, police detective and practicing Wiccan, Kerr Cuhulain, who is noted for his involvement in the re-education of police professionals, gave his support to some South African Pagans in their endeavour to address the misinformation disseminated through the South African Police Services. His article¹⁸, *South African Police Services Occult Related Crimes Unit* that was published on the Witchvox website in 2005, highlighted the problem of the different interpretations of the word "witch" in society, and also underscored the fact that, "These understandings and definitions of terms that we as neo-Pagans use openly with pride and love are drawn into serious dispute by ignorance" (2005: 2). In his analysis

of the articles on the SAPS website and in the *Servamus* magazine, Cuhulain maintains that,

This ignorance – which is clearly very prevalent within the South African Police Force – is in turn serving to mis-inform the general (non-Pagan) population, placing neo-Pagans in a very precarious position indeed (ibid: 2).

Kobus Jonker, aware of this turn in interpretation, has continued to insist that the phenomenon in South Africa is uniquely different as a result of our history, and is inclined to extend ascriptions of Satanism to witchcraft violence and *muti* murders in indigenous communities. After lengthy correspondence with the ORCU, on March 8th, 2005, Kobus Jonker and then head of the OCRU, Superintendent Lamprecht, met with SAPRA founder Ariel Damon. A brief summation of the concerns of SAPRA and the responses of Lamprecht and Jonker, as representatives of the SAPS, is an illustration of how Pagan identities are contested and negotiated. Pagan concerns revolved around three main issues; namely,

1. That a police unit dedicated to “occult crimes” was prejudicial in that crimes with a religious motivation occurred in all religious traditions. The fact that only four ‘occult’ crimes per year were committed in South Africa, by individuals claiming to be Satanists, was among the lowest crime statistics in the country in any category. The hundred or more crimes related to *muti* practices could not, as suggested on the SAPS website, be related to Satanism, and only under certain definitions, to belief and practices in the occult.
2. That the articles of concern on the SAPS website stood in judgment of certain religions as certain categories of crime were interpreted as being motivated by involvement in the occult, witchcraft and Satanism.

3. That the description of Witches and Witchcraft in the articles on the website were not based on fact, but arose from a specific Christian interpretation that, by implication, associated Witches and Witchcraft with Satanism, evil and, therefore, as a crime risk in South Africa.

In an email correspondence with Superintendent Lamprecht (19-7-2004), Ariel Damon of SAPRA concluded that,

It is not acceptable that an official government agency website be seen to be discriminating against constitutionally protected religious expressions. The SAPS should report the facts, not support and encourage slanderous accusations against any belief system, specifically, not against general practitioners of the Occult, or against any neo-Pagan at all for that matter. I must request that this matter be investigated in order to give the fullest effect to the spirit of our Constitution and our Bill of Rights.

The issues raised by SAPRA indicate an assertion of a Pagan identity in state institutions still theologically governed by the religious orientations of the past and which vary in the process of adjusting to equalities entrenched in the new Constitution. Superintendent Lamprecht himself, drew support from such institutions in support of his definition of 'occult' in a letter he wrote to Ariel Damon saying,

Kindly provide to me your definition of occult-related crimes, as the legal definition formulated by the SAPS legal department is currently the one definition accepted by all courts in South Africa (including High Courts) (25-1-05).

As per my previous discussion on the judicial system, the Suppression of Witchcraft Act lacked definition for its terms, such as occult and witch, and employed dictionary definitions in related cases in its courts. These inevitably reflected and supported the

definition used by the SAPS, who, together with the South African judiciary, lacked the resources to correct previously held assumptions regarding Paganism and Witchcraft.

Superintendent Lamprecht raised the SAPRA issues with the SAPS legal services and discussed them with other Pagans in South Africa, in the light of which certain changes were instituted and verbal assurances were given to eliminate discriminatory rhetoric on its website. After the meeting with SAPRA, Ariel Damon reports that Superintendent Lamprecht gave his verbal assurances that,

- *The SAPS does not equate Paganism or Witchcraft with 'Satanism' at all.*
- *The SAPS does recognize Paganism and Witchcraft as valid religions, and therefore belief systems protected by the South African constitution.*
- *The SAPS acknowledges that ritual crimes may be committed by members of any faith or religion.*
- *The SAPS acknowledges that the current unit name and definition: 'Occult-related ritual crimes unit' does indeed discriminate against Witches and associated occult / esoteric belief systems, and have given their assurance that this definition will be changed to: 'religiously motivated ritual crimes'...*
SAPS advocates are currently working on this and assurances have been given that the definition and name of the unit will be changed within the next six months.
- *The SAPS welcomes any and all opportunity to work closely with Pagans and Witches in South Africa who are willing to adhere to ethical standards of conduct.*
- *The SAPS does not support the discrimination of Witches or Pagans by any non-religious or religious organization, group or person in South Africa.*
- *The SAPS acknowledges that the only way to prevent ongoing social discrimination against Witches and Pagans is through education, and undertakes on their part to provide factual information on Paganism and Witchcraft to new police recruits in order to prevent such discrimination in the future.*

All articles in question on the SAPS site have been removed and the Occult Related Crime Unit was dissolved in 2001 and reorganized into Organised Crime and Serious Violent Crime Units. Despite this, on the contact list on the SAPS website,

Lamprecht remains listed as Commander of ORCU¹⁹. His self-identification as a ‘Christian detective’ is made clear in a thumbnail sketch of himself on the Christian website ActUp²⁰ where Superintendent Lamprecht says,

When you cannot serve with a spirit of modesty and a deep dependence in Christ, get out and reset your focus as the world has probably won a battle. ...No permanent and sustainable healing can take place without Christ’s involvement.

In this same sketch he again remains listed as Commander of the Occult Related Crime Unit.

Pagan dialogue with the editorial board of *Servamus* has been less successful.

Through a direct link from the SAPS website to this magazine, most of the information from the articles removed from the main SAPS website can be accessed through the Servamus Special Community Edition link²¹. It also provides the following detail of this edition.

This document, entitled Servamus Special Community Edition which appeared in *Servamus* from November 1998 to March 2000, was according to the Servamus website, sponsored by the private sector. “Due to the overwhelming response from the community, we present to you a special community edition comprising these articles and more at the nominal price of only R7. This project is mainly sponsored by the private sector. More sponsors will be needed to reach our aim of 1 million copies.” This special edition forms part of a proactive action and supports priority three of the SAPS policing priorities focusing on the combating of crime against women and children and is fully supported by our National Commissioner J. S. Selebi.

Using Kobus Jonker and Christian counselor F H Havenga as sources, and, giving thanks to Dr Dawie Muller of the SAPS legal services for advice, the articles perpetuate stereotypical notions such as that computer games “can give children a doorway to lead children into the occult”²² which are then subsequently associated with magic, witchcraft, meditation, etcetera. Coming to the inevitable conclusion, it states, “These games promote a lust for bloodletting, murder and suicide” (ibid: 1). In 2004 SAPRA founder Ariel Damon wrote to *Servamus* editor Annalise Kempen, the Advertising Agent Bonnie Harding, and *Servamus* Legal Columnist Brig. Dirk Lambrecht, requesting

An immediate withdrawal of the Special Community Edition on ‘Drugs and Occult-related Crime’ on the grounds that it may be construed to constitute the promotion of hates speech against Witches and other occultists²³.

The only response SAPRA have had from *Servamus* editors, after raising their concerns and the discrimination of religious minorities in a police services magazine, was from Bonny Harding, with the single line, “Moet ek maar net (ontvang en lees en ignoreer)???” (Must I just (receive and read and ignore)???). The contested articles remain accessible online and in circulation.

The initiative undertaken with the SAPS was used as an example due to the far-reaching influence its public statements have had across many sectors of society. Discrimination has, however, been experienced in dealings with other institutions. Another South African practitioner and leader has encountered overt discrimination in her dealings with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) who had initially accorded her status as a inter-denominational chaplain in the reserve force, a position that was later retracted on religious discriminatory grounds. Although her goal was to work beyond just the Pagan movement she has been disqualified by senior

members of the SANDF who are fundamentalist Christians. This was clearly communicated to her via emails in which they vehemently attacked her religious values, citing Biblical verses as their justification. The issue is in the process of being resolved through the Equality Court where the Pagan candidate looks forward to a just and fair hearing. This institutional body remains far from the goals of the new Constitution.

The history of Western esotericism has influenced the occultic milieu and has reinvigorated interest in alternative religious systems, ancient knowledge and occult practices, all of which feed into modern Pagan beliefs and practices. Christian anti-occult propaganda such as evidenced in the SAPS, impacts negatively on Pagan attempts to articulate their religio-magical identities in society. This propaganda has influenced, and is supported by, other religious, political, educational and social agencies and institutions; a factor that substantially changes many Pagan social identities, with words such as ‘Witch’ and ‘occult’ being consciously avoided in Pagan discourses outside of their own community. Acknowledging discrimination, Lamprecht on behalf of the SAPS made the following statement in an email correspondence to SAPRA’s Ariel Damon,

The SAPS acknowledges that the only way to prevent ongoing social discrimination against Witches and Pagans is through education, and undertakes on their part to provide factual information on Paganism and Witchcraft to new police recruits in order to prevent such discrimination in the future (8-3-05).

Notwithstanding this assurance, discriminatory information continues to circulate through *Servamus* to law enforcement agencies and via their website, to the general public. Els and Jonker’s book remains a valuable, and often single, resource in many

South African institutions, and perpetuates understandings of Witchcraft and the occult in the dualistic terms of Christianity versus Satanism. Former Security Police detective and head of the ORCU Eastern Cape branch, James Lottering, continues to run Warfare Ministries in Port Elizabeth. Now dedicated to Christian exorcisms and a crusade against Satanism, Lottering has appeared on television interviews with Kobus Jonker, and together they continue to conflate the responsibility of a police force as the addressing of crime with a moral crusade against all that is deemed anti-Christian according to their worldview.

Paganism, Witchcraft and the occult remain subject to deviance labeling in sectors of South African society. Wanamaker acknowledges Becker (1973)²⁴ for the term “moral entrepreneurs” to refer to “those persons or groups who are able to label and have their labels taken seriously” (1995: 306). Labels, Wanamaker continues,

...possess considerable power to shape people’s perceptions. ...If the negative label sticks, the individual to which it is applied begins to be perceived almost exclusively in terms of the label. The label comes to define the person and his or her actions (ibid: 306-7).

Even Pagans who report not having experienced religious discrimination are well aware of the existence, perpetuation and effects of the negative labeling associated with Pagans in many sectors of society. Such incidences appear more concentrated in certain religious traditions, in education and in law enforcement agencies, where most regularly, a moral agenda is infused into negative discourses regarding Pagan practices. The agents of such discourses, also referred to as “agents of censure” (Malina and Neyrey, cited in Wanamaker 1995: 307), reflect values and attitudes in any given society that establish and reinforce the boundaries of normative behaviour

and deviance (ibid: 307), and usually draw on religious ideologies in support of their rhetoric. Gerrie Snyman²⁵ raises the renewed identity debate in post-apartheid South Africa and notes that,

Afrikaner identity cannot be separated from (Calvinist) Christianity” (nd: 2) and continues that, in apartheid South Africa, this identity “was enforced and defended with laws very similar to those found in the Book of Deuteronomy (ibid: 2).

The discourses associated with this identity continue to play a role in social, racial, and religious categories in post-apartheid South Africa. They appear to remain prevalent in many South African institutions, and, where Pagans are concerned, most particularly in the SAPS and the SANDF, where Biblical references are often introduced as support in what are ostensibly secular domains.

Conclusion

The strategies by which an individual affirms and legitimizes a new identity, firstly to the self, and then to other like-minded individuals, are somewhat different from strategies employed to legitimate that identity in wider society. In the latter instance, individual disclosure of a Pagan identity is inclined to move progressively from the center outwards; from the self, to other Pagans, then to family and friends, and lastly to other circles in society. Whether this last step is made or not, is always context dependent. The strategies to be employed when, “an emergent movement is often compelled to address the issues of how it is regarded by the larger society” (Lewis (ed), 2003: 12) are complex and generally case-specific.

Pagan identities in the social sphere are thus often constructed as, a) a justificatory response to negative discourses, and, b) as seeking explanatory models for their beliefs and practices that can be made congruent with those set by mainstream society. This feature corresponds to Castells's category of resistance identity where members of groups build "trenches of resistance and survival" (1997: 8) in attempts to counter their marginalization by dominant discourses and inequitable power relationships. For many Pagans this is achieved by solidifying the boundaries around their own small community and not by direct response or confrontation. In accordance with Tajfel's description of out-groups, Pagan social identities—which are often conferred under circumstances not of their own choosing—are constructed to show their positively valued dimensions while reputing or contesting those negatively presented in the discourses of dominant groups. Inherently tolerant of difference and diversity in all spheres of life, Pagan responses to agents who imply their moral ambiguity and/or inhibit their broader social acceptance through negative discourses, are varied. Some Pagans provide defensive arguments, whilst others choose to refrain from responding. Sarah Pike's salient observation that,

The dynamics of power in the politics of persecution are much more complex than they at first appear. Neopagans often find themselves cast in a role prepared for them by conservative Christians in a cosmic drama of the battle between the armies of God and those of Satan (2001: 121),

is equally applicable in the South African environment and is an issue many Pagans confront as they assert their religious identity in the cultural and religious landscape of the new South Africa.

¹ The implications of this finding are broadly discussed in Adler (1986: 446-449).

² This paper was written by Julia Phillips on 13th December, 1992 and appeared in Issue #67 of *The Cauldron*. It can be accessed on <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bos/bos492.htm> and was available on the local website <http://paganportal.org.za> that has since been discontinued.

³ This article was entitled *We're Disenchanted with Witches* and can be found on the website http://www.tibet.ca/wtnarchive/1999/12/12_2.html

⁴ When asked in my survey if any other South African religions should be called 'Pagan', the largest response was twenty two percent of all respondents who identified Hinduism as a Pagan religion.

⁵ The article states that such publications included an article in the Pagan magazine *Green Egg*.

⁶ This paper was first read at the World Conference on Ethnic Religions held in Lithuania in 1998. The Dharma Sansad, at which it was read in February 1999, is referred to as the "religious parliament." The paper can be accessed on <http://koenraadst.bharatvani.org>.

⁷ A background to this history and process is provided in Kader Asmal's National Paper on Religion and Education (2003).

⁸ The policy is published on the website

http://www.wced.wcape.gov.za/documents/religion/religion_in_education1.html.

⁹ This criticism was primarily raised in The Thoyandou Declaration on Ending Witchcraft Violence (10-9-98) delivered at the National Conference on Witchcraft Violence. It was convened by the Commission on Gender Equality in Venda from 6-10 September, 1998.

¹⁰ In the case of *The State versus Mafunisa* (1986) (3) SA495 (V) "the Attorney General submitted in an opinion requested by the court that from the majority of dictionaries consulted by him, it appeared that a witch was the female equivalent of a wizard".

¹¹ These definitions were also cited in the above-mentioned case of *State versus Mafunisa* (1986) (3) SA495 (V).

¹² The Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) enshrines equality, human dignity, freedom of religion, belief and opinion, freedom of expression and association, and the protection and promotion of cultural, religious and linguistic communities. See <http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/constitution/saconst02.html?rebookmark=1>.

¹³ Her article was published on <http://www.iol.co.za>.

¹⁴ This fact was given to me by Carol du Toit, social worker and present director of the South African Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA). Whilst she was aware of cases in which social welfare agents did attempt to broaden their knowledge—usually on the internet—in cases in which Pagan Witchcraft and the occult were featured, but that this depended on the welfare worker involved. *Satanism in South Africa* was the only local information on the subject that was available in their library, and du Toit's informed opinion was that it was used as the sole resource in most departments in South Africa.

¹⁵ The website address is <http://www.saps.gov.za>.

¹⁶ This information was given to me telephonically by Superintendent A. J. Lamprecht, who succeeded Kobus Jonker in becoming head of the Occult Related Crimes Unit. In 2003 Superintendent Lamprecht said that whilst Els and Jonker's book was no longer a compulsory text, it remained on the recommended reading list for all detectives training in South Africa.

¹⁷ See the paper *Satanic, Occult, Ritualistic Crime: a law enforcement perspective* by FBI supervisory special agent Kenneth V. Lanning on the website <http://www.lockslev.com/6696/ritukill.htm>.

¹⁸ Cuhulain's full article can be accessed on Witch Hunt Series on http://www.witchvox.com/whs/dt_whs.html?aid=cabc&id=8980.

¹⁹ This contact for Superintendent Lamprecht can be found on the website <http://www.saps.gov.za/O%5Fdynamicmodules/internetsite/buildingblocks/units/22.htm>.

²⁰ <http://www.actup.co.za>.

²¹ This link can be made from <http://www.servamus.co.za>.

²² This quotation appears in the article *Who Is Recruiting Your Children?* on the Servamus Special Community Edition.

²³ This quotation is taken from Part II of a series of articles Ariel Damon of SAPRA is writing entitled *The Right to Religious Freedom*. They are, as yet, unpublished.

²⁴ Becker, H.S. *Outsiders: studies in the sociology of deviance* New York: Free Press, 1973.

²⁵ The quotations are taken from Gerrie Snyman's paper entitled *Constructing and Deconstructing Identities in Post-apartheid South Africa: a case of hybridity versus untainted Africanicity?* It is published on the website <http://www.ars-rhetorica.net/Queen/VolumeSpecialIssue5/Articles/Snyman.html>.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The majority of South African Pagans self-identify as Wiccans or Witches. Whilst modern Paganism is a new religious movement in South African society, the terms “pagan”, “witch” and “witchcraft” have historical precedence and each has acquired definition and attendant interpretation in different cultural, religious and social contexts in the country. At the outset of this study I maintained that there was a causal relationship between these discourses and the construction of a Pagan identity. It is not merely their precedence, but the fact that they themselves are ongoing, vital and developing narratives in South Africa that necessitates Pagan identities being understood within this radically contextual framework.

The primary questions asked in this study were, a) what features are involved in the construction of a Pagan identity, b) how Pagans perceive they are identified, and, c) how they are actually defined from outside the movement. There is a variety of interplay between these various perspectives, and within each, a considerable range of responses. The entrance of a new religious movement into any society is a negotiated process with integration always contingent on the social context. As Barker notes, “But clearly the different social contexts do, to a greater or lesser degree, affect the movements’ *modus operandi* and the reception that they are given” (1999: 25). In this study I have made reference to Paganism as a new, global religious phenomenon that continues to gain new adherents, particularly in the West, and which has attracted a wealth of both academic and lay interest. My specific goal, however, was to

investigate the construction of a Pagan identity in South Africa, and, in particular, the relationship between the construction and articulation of this identity, and the dominant discourses on these terms in the social and religious landscape of a pluralistic, post-apartheid South African society. It is on the boundaries of this relationship that South African Pagan identities are constructed, negotiated and adjusted, and where primary contestations occur.

The features involved in the construction of a Pagan identity

Identity construction has been described in three categories; namely the personal, the collective and the social. These are not totally distinct categories, but operate in relation to each other and to the social context in which they are constructed.

Personal, self-defined Pagan identities

One of the most discernible features involved in self-identifying as a Pagan is the high degree of essentialism and innateness that is apportioned to the term. When individuals self-identify as Pagans, it is inevitably as a description of a religio-spiritual proclivity that has been present, if not understood, from childhood. In relation to this feature Pagan identities can be described as “journeys of discovery” more than as conversionary episodes or as a realization at a specific point in time. This process is facilitated by a profound reflectiveness on the part of the individual who looks back to the events, emotions and interests in their personal history in order to understand and reaffirm their new identity. It is further developed through the investigation of religious worldviews and practices that are deemed to precede, or stand outside of, dogmatic and exclusive religious traditions and which are centered on magical and spiritual connections to the natural world. This is primarily a personal

journey facilitated by books, courses, and the internet, and not through sacred texts or the teachings of spiritual leaders. Personal Pagan narratives of the self are therefore creative, descriptive and explanatory.

Pagan traditions revive and reinvigorate pagan religions that precede the Christian era in a creative and eclectic fashion. Notwithstanding the frequent absence of factual history regarding these religions, Pagans source their reconstructed, often mythologized histories in a body of literature that has been developing since the late nineteenth century. This includes academic studies, Pagan literature, popular fiction, science fiction and, more recently, the internet. Pagans understand themselves as the inheritors of the religious traditions of communities who lived in a reciprocal relationship with the natural world, who were generally polytheistic and whom they understand to have honoured the divine feminine. Christianity is held accountable for the obscuring and/or suppression of these religious features that Pagans seek to restore through ritual and lived expression. It is thus fairly common for Pagans to self-identify as practitioners of The Old Religion who worship the Old Gods, and subsequently draw heavily on all related mythologies for corroboration. Pagans who have adjusted their histories to reflect the findings of Pagan scholarship—such as that of Pagan historian Ronald Hutton—nonetheless retain the value of Pagan founding mythologies and histories in their modern identities.

Pagan identification with the past creates not only narratives of nostalgia, but is an important vehicle for the critique of contemporary Pagan concerns. In personal identity constructions, myth and legend provide an important language with which to articulate their contemporary concerns. Through a revival of the religio-spiritual

traditions of the pre-Christian world in myth, legend, fiction and factual history, Pagans draw attention to contemporary gender issues, religious diversity and tolerance, and the imperative to restore the connection between humans and the natural world.

Ontologically, Pagans identify the human as sharing in a reciprocal, horizontal relationship with the divine and with all life forms in both the visible and the invisible world. To participate in these relationships, most Pagans perform magic. Although a minority of Pagans does not practice magic, I have not encountered any in the South African context who would deny the reality and efficacy of the magical worldview. The construction of a magical identity is a process that is ratified in daily practice and through ritual performance, and seeks to overturn the divide between religion and magic that developed through the modern era. Consistent with religions that revive ancient and alternative religions and philosophies, a great deal of emphasis in these practices is directed at self-enhancement and self-transformation.

Pagans mark their identities in adaptive and purposive ways. The performance of magical identities in ritual is where Pagan belief in the interconnectedness of the individual self with the elements and with deity is articulated and becomes lived experience. Pagan rituals can be formal and stylized, and equally eclectic and loosely structured. Through symbols, clothing, ritual wording, song and dance, Pagans celebrate, perform and reproduce their personal identities. The aforementioned are important expressions of Pagan beliefs and are again pivotal indicators of their contemporary concerns and preoccupations. Pagans mark their identities in personal space and/or on the body, thereby transcribing inner meanings in material, symbolic

forms. This identity is frequently concretized and validated by the adoption of a Pagan, or magical name. Individually unique and self-chosen, behind each name lies a personal micro-narrative linking the individual to a magical as opposed to a mundane world.

Paganism is what York (2003: 14) refers to as a corpospirituality wherein the sacred is made manifest and experienced in the physical and in the material. Pagans consequently identify the self as a manifest expression of the divine, a notion that Wiccans refer to as “the god/goddess within.” Knowledge and experience are located in the body and transcendence of the mundane world is achieved through various technologies of the body, with no need of reference to a supra-material realm. As a site of the sacred, Pagans honour and respect the body and its natural functions outside of religious prescription. Highly individual, decisions regarding the body are a matter of personal responsibility that ensues from recognizing the sacrality of all life forms. The guiding principle for such responsibility is commonly articulated as “an’ do not harm, do what ye will”¹.

Epistemologically Pagans situate change, growth and potential within the self. The ability to “create one’s own religion” is highly valued in Paganism and requires no external validation. Pagans self-define and interpret the meanings behind the central terms they employ, leading to an extreme diversity within the movement. This carries the potential for confusion, challenges to legitimacy, and a difficulty in articulating Paganism in a singularly coherent form in the presence of other, individually constructed, competing narratives. Pagans recognize no intercessors between themselves and deity and religious experience is therefore self-validating. This

proclivity is extended to the personal rejection of hierarchy and external authority, and is the most visible site of Pagan individualism and reliance on the personal construction of meaning.

Pagans self-identify as practitioners of a Nature-based religion although expression and understanding of this are varied and open to contestation². The personal connection to 'inner Nature' is commonly more emphasized in praxis than is the external natural world, as is the development of methodologies aimed at self-transformation rather than at the transformation of societal and global concerns. In the South African context this can be summarized as an emphasis on the local and the particular over the global and the universal.

Collective, shared Pagan identities

Collective identities are constructed from the notion that an individual shares in a given set of features, ideas or practices with others. Such an identity need not be bound temporally or spatially, but can be established across various domains of meaning and experience. The highly individualistic tendencies in Pagans and their own celebration of diversity problematizes initiatives aimed at the consolidation of a unified community. Not only are Pagans frequently described as Other in inter-religious and social discourses, but are equally able to apply categories of sameness and difference within their own community. South African Paganism is consequently politicized with considerably more emphasis given to small, fluid, autonomous communities than to broader initiatives.

The internet has been explored as an opportunity to coalesce disparate groups and/or to unite the community to address common interests and concerns. Off-line schisms and differences have been repeated online, resulting in a further strengthening of somewhat insular physical communities and/or solitary practice. The current lack of cohesion in the South African Pagan community, despite disabling coherent articulation and religious leverage in society, does not appear to hamper or thwart the growth of the community. Breakaways from one group often results in the formation of new groups that in turn attract new adherents, and thereby instigating new directions in the Pagan movement. Community initiatives and concerns are therefore peripheral to the broader movement.

Notwithstanding the fragmentation within the community, there exists a cognitive, although differentiated, understanding of certain features that unite South African Pagan individuals and groups. The most applicable of these features are,

- That Pagans recognize that the sacred is manifest in Nature and in the material world.
- That divinity is expressed in both masculine and feminine forms.
- A belief in the efficacy of magic as a means of connecting with the sacred for change and transformation.
- The celebration of the eight seasonal festivals and an emphasis on the lunar calendar.

Pagans situate the human in a web of relationships with divine forms, other humans and the other-than-human world. These relationships are described as participatory and reciprocal, leading to a radical, extended notion of community. The diversity that inheres in the spiritual and other-than-human world is more valued and experienced

than it is in the human community where a resolution of difference is more often than not, not easily accommodated. The nature and life of deity and of other entities that populate the spiritual realm are used as cogent models for Pagans of how society could be constituted. Pagan ritual, even in the solitary experience, is always a celebration of community, albeit of a different kind. Collective identities have a higher degree of fluidity and instability than do personal Pagan identities.

Social, ascribed Pagan identities

Social identities are not only those externally ascribed to other groups in society, but are the product of the exchange between these ascriptions and the responses and resistance of those whose identities are being defined and contested by an outside source. The relative power that either group holds in society usually determines the extent as to which interpretation is accepted as legitimate in public opinion. The personal identity narratives of Pagans and the discourses that are created and articulated within Pagan communities are extended to include other concerns in the social context; and new discourses emerge as identities are open to reinterpretation and where definition is rendered infinitely more complex. It is in this category that one finds answers as to how Pagans are actually identified, and from which they draw their perceptions of their social identities.

In contemporary society the media is the primary channel through which people hear of a movement. As such, some Pagans have engaged the media to share information on modern Pagan beliefs and practices. The fact that media interest is mostly driven by competing avenues for listenership and/or viewership translates into Pagan identities seldom being articulated outside of the stereotypical or sensationalist. Some

Pagans in the media are complicit in these constructions. Innuendo, humour and binary language are common devices employed by the media, further perpetuating misrepresentation. As the power to frame the text resides with the media, Pagans are rendered disadvantaged in this relationship. Due to media highlighting of the novel and atypical, it is understandable that magical identities and spells receive the attention they do in this domain.

Pagans, aware of the nascence of modern Paganism in South Africa, and of the fact that it stands outside of mainstream (particularly Christian) religions, can create difficulties in the establishment of a social identity. The religious persuasion of other family members, colleagues and employers, can determine the degree to which these identities are understood and accepted. Difficulties tend to be based on religious reasons rather than located in any behaviours and/or practices on the part of the Pagan practitioner.

It is notably at the institutional level where Pagans are most required to explain their identities in order to be accepted and to receive the benefits of religious freedom guaranteed in the Constitution. Their explanations occur in the context of an already constructed world of meanings and pre-existent discourses on what constitutes Paganism and Witchcraft. This disadvantages Pagan articulation of their identities as such efforts are primarily directed at countering aspects of these discourses. Some Pagan's efforts in this regard have had fruitful outcomes in the altering of pre-held conceptions, but they again have been pursued at the individual or small group level with little to no cohesive approach from the wider community. At the institutional level the pervasive tendency for advocates of a "single truth" appears to be resistant to

advocates of alternative perspectives; necessitating that they provide a greater degree of explanation and justification of their identities.

These relationships are therefore historically situated within religious and social power relations in society. The Pagan potential to resist their domination by dominant groups and discourses is thwarted by the competing discourses on meaning and legitimation within their own community. Endeavours to develop the religious models that already exist in South African society—such as clergy and church status—are not widely supported in the Pagan community where many practitioners see Paganism as founded on essential differences to dominant, hierarchical structures and eschew any emulation of these whatsoever.

In articulating their identities in a social context, Pagans tend to move closer to mainstream through seeking a congruency in their beliefs and practices with those of more dominant traditions. This arises from the natural motivation of out-groups to achieve a positive social identity. Social identities are systems that produce and define the place an individual holds in society. Positive self-identities therefore seek congruence in the social sphere and inspires resistance and response when there is a disjunction between the two. This gives rise to new discourses within Paganism that are absent in the private and collective spheres. The most prevalent example in this regard are discourses that link Satanism and Paganism, and those constructed around ideas of white Witchcraft and “good” Witches. Pagans do not speak or debate among themselves about Satanism—which stands outside of their practices and concerns—outside of the juxtaposition of Paganism and Satanism in the social sphere. This is a discourse constructed solely as a response in this context. Pagans and Witches

likewise are unlikely to use binary language when talking among themselves about their particular practices, making white Witchcraft a phenomenon constructed and sustained in the social realm. The latter has had more effect on the Pagan community than has Satanism, with the development of new forms of Wicca and Witchcraft that have absorbed the language and practices more consistent with mainstream values and attitudes. This has brought parts of Paganism closer to the New Age Movement that enjoys wider acceptance and infiltration in our society.

The embracing of African Religion as a Pagan religion in some social contexts, can, in the new South Africa, be seen as attempts to enhance the validity of Paganism in South Africa through association with a previously marginalized, now recognized religious tradition, and one in which certain convergences do exist. This identification is often based on essentialist notions of African Religion as having been timeless and unchanging in the face of Christian and colonial domination. I make these assessments in light of the fact that such identification is largely absent in personal Pagan narratives and practices, and equally so in community gatherings, dialogues and celebrations. In both, European Pagan traditions and history are dominant.

There is a range of differences between the meaning, interpretation and articulation of a personal Pagan identity and its presentation in the social sphere. Identity construction is contingent on whether it is self-designated, shared or ascribed. It is across this spectrum that degrees of contestation, difference and adjustment are found, with these facets most exemplified in the social, ascribed category.

Dominant Discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft in South African Society

The secondary questions asked in this study supported the idea that identities are constructed, negotiated and contested in relation to the historico-social context in which they emerge. Understanding the processes and features involved in the construction of a Pagan identity in South Africa is bound to an understanding of their connection to other dominant discourses in the country. Any new religion in a society has to position itself in the context of prevailing religious discourses and structures. These in turn can enable or constrain the ability for the new religion to clearly articulate itself in society and/or to achieve social sanction. Equally, they can retard the negotiation required for a religion to benefit from constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms. The two most dominant and relevant discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft in South Africa are those generated and sustained in sectors of the Christian community, and those within African communities. They are, however, not mutually exclusive discourses as meanings converge on the boundaries of these two worldviews in a common culture.

Christian discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft

Christian discourses, on Witchcraft particularly, have roots in events that preceded the medieval witch-craze. In 743 CE the Synod of Rome condemned any survivals of pagan beliefs and practices as *maleficum*, or malevolent sorcery. This concept of sorcery was linked to demonic spirits who were then,

...transformed into *bonae mulieres*, the ghostly 'good woman' who wandered out at night going into houses and stealing food. Finally, the *bonae mulieres* were transformed into witches. Likewise, the term *striga* or *stria*, originally a

blood-drinking night spirit, became a common word for a witch (Russell 1980: 53).

Around 906 CE the Canon Episcopi³—an ecclesiastical document that was entered into religious law—ratified the link between pagan religions and witchcraft as a heretical practice with associations with the devil. This canon developed the mythology of the pagan Goddess Diana as “chief of a demon horde” (ibid: 54) and her followers as women who were co-conspirators in a pact with Satan. “Implying that meetings of such women were held on specific nights entrenched the concept of the witch’s sabbat. Such individuals were not witches in reality, but those whose “lack of faith in the truth” rendered them helpless victims of Satan” (Wallace 2000: 74). Entrenched in the Canon was also the view that witchcraft was a “...delusion and that it was *belief* in the reality of witchcraft, not witchcraft itself, that constituted heresy” (Clifton and Harvey 2004: 346).

These religious discourses had a profound influence on the public conception of witches and on the developing divide between ‘religion’ and ‘magic.’ Their influence was reinvigorated during the witch-craze era of the Middle Ages⁴ and entrenched in religious and legal discourse in the 1486 publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*⁵ or *Hammer Against The Witches*. This publication enforced the diabolical anti-Christian identity of witches, advocating no recourse other than that they be tried, convicted and put to death. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, when witchcraft persecution was in decline, New Enlightenment thought and the scientific revolution supported the worldview wherein witchcraft was a superstition and not an empirical reality. This view was sustained into the modern era, providing the legal standpoint for the Witchcraft Acts that were introduced in the legal systems of many countries, and later

in similar Acts in colonial states. The incumbent tone of denial of witchcraft is currently upheld in the South African Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) of 1957, amended by Act 50 of 1970. There has been much lobbying for the repeal of this Act by groups investigating, and/or affected by, witchcraft violence, but none, that I am aware of, by any Pagan groups or individuals.

Many of the mythologies that were developed in the aforementioned church history have retained their potency to the present day and can be witnessed in contemporary Christian discourse. The demographic bias towards Christianity in South Africa, the privileging of Christianity in the apartheid years, and the rapid politico-social changes in South Africa since the late 1980s, have each in their own way enabled the survival and perpetuation of these mythologies. Dominant groups and ideologies in a society are in the position to publicly articulate their own identities, and the identities they ascribe to others, in way not afforded to marginalized groups. Their power to reproduce identities is not only contained within their own community but, in achieving social sanction, influences public discourse and opinions in a variety of ways. Mainstream Christian discourse continues to define 'Pagans' as those who stand outside of belief in a single, transcendent male God, and, implicitly, as unbelievers. Witchcraft continues to carry the historical connection with Satanism; operating as an anti-social and deviant practice. In more fundamentalist and charismatic sectors these ascriptions are often expressed in openly verbal statements through to direct instances of discrimination, and, on occasion, persecution.

One of the primary threads in both the explicit and implicit Christian discourses on Paganism and Witchcraft is the question of moral evil. The idea that a transcendent

evil can incarnate in human agency is a recurring religio-historical phenomenon. David Frankfurter (2006) highlights the importance of folklore, the literature of demonology, cultural ideas and oral traditions in creating discourses of evil that gain public efficacy through the totalizing of their vision. Witchcraft and occultism are Biblically supported and positioned within the dualistic binary of good versus evil; a position ratified in the rhetoric of religious leaders, and those who have established themselves as “experts on evil.” Underpinned by theologies of Satanism and evil such individuals have propagated discourses of evil that have functioned to marginalize certain groups and individuals as constituting a threat to a moral society. In South Africa, religious, political, social and legal support for this phenomenon has enabled it to function at the highest levels in our institutions, thereby exerting a powerful influence on the public’s ability to stereotype and discriminate. A theology of evil is unarticulated in Pagan narratives and it is in the social realm that their identities are contested on the grounds of moral ambiguity. The reticence of many Pagans to disclose their religious identity and their inability to clearly articulate their beliefs and practices are fundamentally driven by having, at the outset, to initiate all discussion from a moral perspective. Media portrayals have sustained this dialectic through the ubiquitous presentation of Paganism in terms of binary opposites. Forms of Paganism are themselves changed in the process through the development of responsive new narratives that emphasize the benevolence of modern Witchcraft, their representation as “good” Witches, and through the presentation of Paganism as antecedent to Christianity, and as totally ‘other’, as opposed to being oppositional.

Paganism and witchcraft discourses in the African context

Paganism is a term that was ascribed to African beliefs and practices by colonial authorities and Christian missionaries. Never a term of self-identification, practitioners of indigenous religions were designated this label in a singularly pejorative context. Portrayals of such individuals as ‘heathens’ or ‘savages’ were constructed from a religious discourse that distinguished between followers of the Christian God and all those who were not. The recognizing of African Religion in the new South Africa has led to a cessation of this designation from all but the most fundamentalist quarters. The advent and growth of modern Paganism in South Africa has reintroduced the term ‘Pagan’ into religious discourses in South Africa, albeit now as one of self-identification. Africans do not, as a rule, identify themselves or their indigenous practices as ‘pagan’ and there is consequently almost no African reclamation of the term.

Witchcraft is altogether different from Paganism in that it is a dominant discourse within both African Religion and within Christian African traditions. Studies on African witchcraft (Niehaus 2001, Geschiere 1997, Comaroff 1993) have addressed a number of issues related to the phenomenon of witchcraft in African communities, as well as its relationship to modernity and social change and uncertainty. Irrespective of causative and explanatory theories, witchcraft is the practice of malevolent sorcery, a common cause of illness, misfortune and even death. The growth in the African Initiated Churches has been facilitated by the recognition of the reality of witchcraft in African lives, albeit offering protection and healing through the power of the Holy Spirit rather than through medicine or direct confrontation. Belief in witchcraft is not restricted to African religious discourses, but finds expression in the home, the

workplace, and through to the highest tiers of government institutions. The Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957 has been cited as fuelling the violence and persecution related to witchcraft through its tone of denial and the subsequent lack of recourse for victims of witchcraft practices. Modern Pagans and Witches, who can be prone to extending the umbrella of Paganism to aspects of African Religion, are far less inclined to do so with the terms 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' where meanings are far more radically contested. For the Pagan, healing and connections with divine reality are achieved *through* Witchcraft; for African, physical and spiritual healing and social harmony can only be facilitated when witchcraft is, a) discounted as a cause of their disruption, or, b) when witchcraft is identified as the cause of negative experiences and steps are taken to counter and/or eradicate its harmful effects and outcomes.

This discourse is equally bound to understandings of moral agency. In the African worldview the witch works against the moral stability of society, and, from the Christian African perspective has been reinterpreted in light of the Christian history that labels such practices as being in a pact with the devil. The influence and extent of Christian belief in African communities has led to the extension of this association within African indigenous communities themselves. Although Ellis and ter Haar (1998) note the propensity in scholarship on African Religion to fail to distinguish between the diversity of sacred specialists in African Religion and to label a variety of practices as 'witchcraft,' the term has salience across the community, is dynamic and responsive to social changes, and continues to be associated with harm, malevolence and social disruption. Unlike the self-designation of the modern Pagan Witch, in African communities this is a term ascribed to individuals who are subsequently marginalised or persecuted. The South African Pagan Witch, informed by totally

different religious and cultural histories and influences, has refrained from direct association with such individuals due to awareness of the contestation of meaning that inheres in the category of the witch in the African context.

Alongside Christian and African discourses on witches and witchcraft, a further discourse has been developed in, and through, the media. The emergence of this discourse cannot be separated from the public presentation of modern Paganism in 1996, despite its introduction—primarily American in origin—in film and on local television over the preceding decade and a half. The desire of some Pagans to present Paganism through the media and the latter's focus on articulating developments in society to meet public interest united in what was the largest exposure given to a new religious movement by mainstream media. However, as John Downing (1980: 179) said of the media that, "Their power lies ...in their capacity to shape public feeling while appearing only to express it" (quoted in Mesthrie, R et al. 2000: 327). Notably absent in the development of media discourses on Witchcraft was reference or association with African witchcraft, but rather the punctuation of Pagan text with the stereotypes and mythologies developed and carried in Christian discourses and containing subtle inferences regarding moral ambiguity. It is in media discourse that Russell's (1980) categories of the witch as sorcerer, the witch as the diabolist and the modern Pagan Witch are conflated in varying degrees, creating an independent discourse of the witch in popular culture, and, in which, none of the above are clearly articulated.

The media is a commercial enterprise with various interest groups competing for readership and/or listenership. Embodying a range of political interest and

philosophical positions, all representations in the media are accordingly subject to reinterpretation, subjective framing and subtle (sometimes negative) inference. It is through the various media that South African Paganism has most infiltrated public awareness and where Pagan identities have been most contested, manipulated and ultimately misrepresented, through the perpetuation of stereotypes and their ubiquitous presentation within a Christian-based dualism of good and evil. It is also the forum where Pagans are made most aware of their social identities, prompting debate, and initiating dialogue. In only a minority of cases are Pagan media depictions directly challenged or contested. Until Pagans directly challenge the juxtaposition of their identities with Christian mythologies in the media, or decline participation under these conditions, Pagan identities will continue to be misunderstood and marginal in public opinion.

The boundaries of the Pagan movement are nebulous with Pagans themselves unsure of the limits of the term in the South African context. Unless the Pagan community themselves debate, rationalize and define the terms they employ, they will be subject to their definition by those who hold the social and religious power to dominate associated discourses. There have been radical changes in South African society with the new Constitution reinforcing and supporting our plural and diverse society. This has undoubtedly supported the public articulation of Pagan identities and a greater acceptance of difference within communities. As a result, many Pagans find interest and acceptance in their religion from diverse quarters. This is not only highly context-dependent but bound to the form of portrayal given by a specific Pagan individual. In the wider context, Pagan identities remain highly contested in relation to dominant discourses on the words 'Pagan', 'Wicca' and 'Witchcraft.'

Common features in dominant discourses

This study also asked what underlies the contested nature of a Pagan identity in South Africa and the implications this has for the local Pagan movement. Although the first part of this question has already been addressed in the discussion of dominant discourses, there are some general points in this regard that require discussion. I have found Russell's categories of the witch to be more pertinent in South Africa than in other western countries in which modern Paganism has surfaced, owing to the degree of expression each has in our society today. The witch as a Christian heretic or Satanist, and the figure as a malevolent sorcerer are the dominant discourses on the term and continue to have, not only a discursive dominance, but also real and empirical outcomes in people's lives. Although different phenomena, informed by different histories and cultural contexts, the Christian demographics in African communities in South Africa has led to a growing infiltration of Satanic discourses into the African worldview. Both are complex phenomena and understandings of this conflation are outside the scope of this study.

These discourses are disseminated and sustained in many different social and cultural contexts. The phenomena of witchcraft as it occurs in African Religion remains racially bound with very little transfer of meaning across this boundary. The extent of its salience in the African community extends beyond practitioners of African Religion into the African Initiated Churches and finds expression in all strata of African society. Christian discourses on witchcraft have an historical and Biblical foundation and have changed, developed and been drawn on in diverse ways in different societies throughout Christian history. In some periods, it has had the power to provoke extreme acts of violence on the grounds of heresy. In the colonial period

in South Africa, Christian discourses on witchcraft were applied to traditional, indigenous practices, and, in the apartheid years, was legislated against in the Witchcraft Suppression Act (3) of 1957; an Act that exacerbated local tensions with often dire consequences. This Act was directly worded on historical Christian witchcraft discourse and supported at all levels of government. In South African society today some individuals and groups use Christian discourses on witchcraft to perpetuate what could be termed as “hate-speech” against Pagan practitioners, and, in extreme cases, initiate direct persecution and/or discriminatory practices on religious grounds.

African and Christian discourses on witches and witchcraft have important features in common. In both, they are negative discourses of evil, and, within both discourses, the witch stands outside the boundaries of civil societies. Both have been responsive to social and political change through time. Usually described as female, the witch is an accomplice of agents of evil, capable of inflicting social, physical and moral harm through occult practices. During the time of transition to a democratic government in South Africa, witchcraft violence escalated in African communities and witchcraft was given renewed attention by academics, in fundamentalist Christian churches and in the African Initiated Churches. The international development in the 1980s of a “Satanic Scare” intensified the local formation of specialized Christian-driven units to address the growth of this phenomenon in South Africa. Through written publications and public speaking, these individuals were called on for expert advice and opinion by numerous institutions, having a profound effect on public opinion in law enforcement, education, social welfare, legal institutions, religious groups, and through the media.

The essential feature of both discourses is the way in which they are framed, and function, as moral discourses. Whether presented in the language of Biblical evil or of malevolent human agency, witches and witchcraft are seen to transgress a moral boundary through deviant and occult practices. Notwithstanding any empirical evidence of such practices, both are couched in mythologies and abound in stereotypes, both of which function as true.

Dominant discourses: their implications on Pagan identity constructions

In the second part to the question on the contested nature of a Pagan identity in South Africa I also sought to address the implications these dominant discourses have on the ways in which Pagans construct their identities. These I have identified as follows.

1. There is a radical distinction between the identity narratives of most Pagans in the personal and community spheres, and those articulated and constructed in the social context. The latter are constructed in direct relation to other “identity-conferring” discourses, with certain features of personal and community identities being highlighted, and with others being suppressed. In this context, new identity narratives emerge that absorb, and respond to, the issues raised in dominant discourses.

2. There is no universal ease at the social articulation of a Pagan identity. This is not a purely South African phenomenon as Pagans worldwide still face innumerable difficulties in having their traditions understood and in gaining full, participatory, legislative, social and religious recognition. This appears rooted in the dominance of the trend to articulate Western history and culture as built on Christian foundations.

3. As Wicca and Witchcraft are the predominant traditions practiced in South Africa it is essentially these terms that require explication when talking of a Pagan identity in any social context. Many Pagans, aware of the preconceptions surrounding the word 'witch', use 'Wicca' as a more socially acceptable term whereas in a personal and community context, there appears a greater identification with the term 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft.' Wicca can therefore function as an avoidance of entering into compromising and competing discourses.

4. The social context and the degree to which Pagans display their identities in public can, in some instances, reflect an overt statement of oppositionality to mainstream society. This is a problematic identity boundary where it can be difficult to ascertain whether social perceptions are purely discriminatory, or whether the said practitioner is being deliberately provocative or resistant in the light of dominant discourses.

5. In South African society, where the Witch and Witchcraft have been negatively constructed as deviant, marginal and anti-social, Pagan social identities involve a higher degree of contestation of meaning through their reclamation of these terms. The onus on Pagans to counter the negative discourses in order for their own definition of terms to function as a positive, valid and legitimate religious option in our society is a task some Pagans undertake at the national level, with most dealing with the problem on an *ad hoc* basis.

6. Pagans are inclined to blanket the differences and schisms within the movement with unifying narratives when talking in a social context. These narratives

are mostly centered on a) being a Nature Religion and b) as having the continuity with spiritual knowledges and practices obscured during the Christian era and c) a refutation of having links to Satanism or to any Christian models of evil.

7. To find a voice within the Christian discourses on Wicca and Witchcraft, Pagans are brought into a moral discourse that finds little place at the personal or community level. It is in this context that new discourses develop. Some of these bring Paganism closer to the New Age Movement through the focus on personal transformation and the use of language that emphasizes light and beneficent magic.

8. These moral discourses are directly situated within the mythologies of the Christian witchcraft constructions of the medieval period. The Pagan appropriation of some of the language and motifs of this period maintains this conflation, particularly in the media.

9. The features inhering in Christian discourses on witchcraft dominate Pagan articulations of identity in South Africa in manifest and latent ways that de-emphasize the role that the feminine divine and divine immanence could play in the critical gender and environmental issues faced in the new South Africa. This is exacerbated by the majority Pagan distancing from the political and social arena.

10. Pagans seldom volunteer opinion, nor are often required to articulate their identities in the context of African witchcraft. The boundaries between these two phenomena are more clearly demarcated in both private and public arenas and there is

likewise little conflation of the moral discourses that exist within African Religion, with the Pagan position on ethics and morality.

11. Lacking in consensus on their own definition of Paganism and its boundaries, and having appropriated a previously negatively construed term, has raised problems for the movement. Firstly, it has reintroduced a term that allows for marginalization by some sectors in society, requiring an interpretation that explicates its relationship to previously held connotations. Secondly, it has given rise to the debate on the ethics of re-ascribing the term 'Pagan' to previously marginalized groups in the country. Although this issue has only been addressed by a minority within the modern Pagan community, I do believe that the tendency to talk of Black Pagans and African Paganism will only further the difficulties Pagans have in the clear articulation of who they are and what they represent. Such practices enhance ideas of legitimacy and continuity, but remain a discourse that is seldom, if ever, given expression in modern South African Pagan practices and teachings. It is in the parallels that do forge some alliances where the confusion in the boundaries between two essentially different religious impulses is intensified.

12. South African Paganism tends to be more conservative, both in practice and in social articulation, than many of its overseas counterparts. Local Pagans are themselves members of a society that has an intensely conservative history, and, notwithstanding the change to a liberal Constitution in 1994 and the growing acceptance of alternative worldviews in society, South African society retains a largely conservative agenda in many religious and social discourses. Although many Pagans reflect these discourses in their personal and collective identity constructions,

the tendency is widely evidenced when Pagan identities are articulated in the social context.

Paganism as a minority religion in a pluralistic society

The recognition of the diversity of religions in pluralistic societies is seldom achieved through academic *fiat* and legislative reform alone, but requires negotiation and clear articulation across all levels of society. These endeavours are always pursued in the context of prevailing and dominant discourses to which they both respond and adjust. South Africa has undergone a radical political transformation and remains in the process of, and challenged by, the according of the equalities entrenched in the new Constitution. Race was previously the primary category by which difference was determined and Christianity was the religion of the state. In the new South Africa, Christianity is the primary religious affiliation of the majority Black population with conservative, Pentecostal forms dominating. New religions are inclined to form and find expression during periods of social change in any society. Paganism not only faces the process all new religions undergo in attempts to find expression, but its integral identification with Witchcraft is contested in a social milieu in which these terms remain negative constructs with inherent moral ambiguity.

A greater Pagan emphasis on its own history, definition of terms and on the boundaries of the movement would facilitate clearer inter-faith dialogue, ease some of the confusions when seeking religious recognition and rights, and allow its world-affirming, embracing vision of spiritual and social reform to find a voice that would be heard, if not always accepted and understood. Divisions and the lack of coherent definitions within the movement, particularly in the light of the current dominance of

competing discourses on witches and witchcraft in the country, are inclined to perpetuate a Pagan identity as a category of difference and marginal to all prevalent interpretations. Modern Paganism is directly situated in the context of post-modern, plural societies, through a fundamental opposition to hierarchical and hegemonic religious and political structures and the valuing of multiple, interconnected perspectives in addressing global concerns, mainly through localized and particular practices. As such, its voice is multi-vocal, alternative, and founded on the notion that humankind has a unique and responsible role to play in reviving and restoring beliefs and practices that affirmed their intrinsic connection to the immanent divine and to the cycles of Nature.

Anti-Christian perceptions of witchcraft and paganism are deeply embedded in society and there is little evidence to support any real change in this regard. Through coherent expression and a greater degree of self-understanding and of our society Pagans will be more able to articulate their world-affirming, tolerant identities and their belief that humankind is sustained by, and through, its interconnection with the web of life. Diversity is championed within Paganism, but less likely to be upheld within the community itself, than it is within the broader issues of race, gender and the environment. Optimally functioning in small, fluid groups with little to no effective inter-group interaction, Pagans are unlikely to exert a unified influence in society and bring into effect the social, religious and political possibilities inherent in the Pagan worldview. The lack of coherence within the movement and an uncertainty of its own boundaries, will continue to locate influence and the achievement of Constitutional freedoms in the individual and/or small organizations and groups.

There is an unequal distribution of power relations that come into play when Pagans articulate their identities in society. These are driven by historical precedence and assurance of exclusive interpretation of religious truth, and given support and credence through their social and religious standing in the community. Access to resources and social legitimation resides with the dominant group leaving minorities to occupy marginal social spaces, or, as Pagans do, create personal communities of meaning that co-exist separately, yet parallel, to their fully integrated lives as South African citizens.

Areas for Future Research

Paganism is totally under-researched in South Africa and has yet to attract the multi-disciplinary attention of scholars as it has in the global arena. In Religion Studies it remains, at best peripheral, despite the growth of the movement in South Africa and the levels of religious recognition that have been achieved through initiatives from within the community. This study has been broad in its scope, leaving many areas that require a far deeper investigation and analysis for their understanding. The issues that most warrant future research are itemized below:

1. Although Paganism is one of many new religions in South Africa, it is severely compromised by its identification with the Witch and with the practice of Witchcraft. Many groups previously discriminated against on racial, gender or religious grounds, have appropriated negatively ascribed language as a politics of resistance; for example, the reclamation of the term “Queer” by the gay community. An extensive study is required on the socio-linguistic and political value of the Pagan

reclaiming of the contested, previously pejorative terms, and on the function this serves in opposing hegemonic ideologies and power structures.

2. Many studies have been undertaken on the phenomenon of witchcraft in African communities. South African Pagans exhibit a dialectical relationship with this phenomenon. A comparative study of witchcraft and magic in traditional societies in South Africa, and that of the modern Pagan Witch, would add to understandings of the historical relationship between religion and magic, and the ways in which witchcraft and magical practices function, and serve, in meeting the needs of diverse communities. It would also provide greater clarity on the similarities and differences between the two sets of practices, thereby affording Pagans a clearer picture of the ways in which they can relate to the ongoing phenomenon of witchcraft violence in South Africa. Such a study would also shed light on the possibility of the development of new, uniquely South African Pagan traditions, and on the revival of interest in magic in contemporary religiosity.

3. The term 'Pagan' is expansive; not only due to the diversity of traditions within the modern movement, but also to its historical usage in different cultures and different time periods. This has made it difficult for Pagans to delimit the boundaries of the movement. An in-depth study of the beliefs and practices of modern self-identifying Pagans would give a greater coherence to the usage of the term within the community and greatly assist in its articulation in society.

4. The awakening of interest in the Goddess and the divine feminine has long been absent in Western religious systems, and is central to Pagan belief and

expression. More research is required on how this model of divine reality reflects human societies and of its potential to critique patriarchal, monotheistic worldviews. Allied to this is a need to understand why dedicated Goddess Spirituality and feminist Witchcraft groups have not developed in South Africa as they have abroad.

5. There is a growing convergence between Paganism and the New Age Movement in South African society. Further research to investigate the processes and reasons behind this would enhance understandings of the growth and support for alternative worldviews in South Africa, and of the creative processes involved in religious change, religious accommodation and of the development of new, syncretic religious options.

6. There has been a resurgence of interest in healing technologies within religious contexts. This is particularly evidenced in Paganism, the New Age Movement, Christian charismatic churches and the African Initiated Churches. A comparative study of this development within these groups would contribute to understandings of the accommodation of religion to change in modern societies.

7. There is a great need for more linguistic, sociological and psychological investigation into how discourses of difference are constructed and function in a post-apartheid South Africa. Despite legislative change, many such discourses are sustained in more latent forms, indicating the operation of new forms of denial of identities in South African society.

Concluding Remarks

One of the central difficulties in this study has been to talk of Paganism outside the context of Witchcraft. There are those who self-identify as Pagans but not as practitioners of Wicca or Witchcraft, but they remain a minority and essentially peripheral to the local Pagan movement. The numerous traditions that are included in the category 'Paganism' in other countries, have not yet emerged in any quantifiable form in South Africa, making forms of Wicca and Witchcraft the only traditions synonymous with the term. Throughout the project, it was therefore as applicable to use the term Pagan, as it was to use Witch, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Wicca. Any identity study seeks to isolate features by which an object can be defined and described in relation to others. My own need to set boundaries around these terms for the purpose of the study was not necessarily supported by all in the Pagan community, and opens the door for a great deal more dialogue and debate on these issues. Even with Wicca and Witchcraft there are multiple and eclectic forms of expression and a blanket use of these terms is inclined to obscure the extreme diversity and discrepancies that inhere in each. In South Africa Wicca and Witchcraft are, for the most part, and despite some contestation, interchangeable terms.

Because "identity requires difference in order to be" (Connolly, 1991: 64) there are always degrees of contestation as such differences articulate and position themselves in relation to others. The recognition of religious pluralism in South Africa also requires an accommodation of these differences. The history of the term 'Pagan' as an identity ascribed to religions that stand outside of Semitic, monotheistic traditions, made these processes infinitely more complex for traditions that have reclaimed the term as one of self-identification. Pagans address these complexities by presenting Paganism as a Nature-based religion that not only revives and reaffirms past and present religious practices that connect humankind to the cycles of the natural world,

but as an important and viable religion in a world threatened by the consequences of human abuses towards the environment. The Pagan association with Witchcraft is immeasurably more problematic for the movement and is compounded in a society where such practices carry negative definition in the majority of religious discourses, and where, in some societies, they are intricately bound to human misery and community violence. Some Pagans chose not to disclose this identity outside of chosen, closed circles, whilst others involve themselves in redefining the terms 'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' alongside prevailing discourses. Besides Wicca being a clearly defined New Religious Movement that does not share in all the features associated with Witchcraft, it is also a term by which Pagans can, particularly publicly, avoid many negative associations and connotations.

The question posed by Chas Clifton in his study of Wicca and Paganism in America, is of equal validity in the South African context as Pagans chart new avenues for religious recognition and acceptance. He asked,

Will *witch*, with its connotations of darkness, sexuality, and social rebellion, remain a self-description, or will it be replaced by the blander term Wicca, the name of a nature religion practiced by persons who see their religion as not only closer to the earth than its monotheistic rivals but (despite the objections of historians) as carrying on a tradition rooted in the Stone Age? (2006: 92).

The growing trend by South African Pagans to openly assert their religious identities as 'Pagan' is, under present conditions, more likely to achieve religious and social recognition than are self-descriptions as Witches and as practitioners of Witchcraft. This remains a challenge South African Pagans will address in diverse and creative ways in the years ahead.

¹ South African Witches and Wiccans commonly describe their ethics as encapsulated in this phrase taken from The Wiccan Rede written by Gardnerian priestess Doreen Valiente. Some Pagans, who argue that this applies only to Wiccans, nonetheless appear to absorb its fundamental message into their relationship with the natural world.

² Personal belief in the divine as manifest as Nature, and as experienced through Nature, is most clearly articulated symbolically in Pagan rituals and personal practices. For only a minority does this belief translate into forms of direct environmental activism or engagement.

³ This document was first made public in approximately 906 CE by Regino of Prum who was the abbot of Treves. For more on this document see Clifton and Harvey (2004: 346-7) and Russell (1980: 53-4).

⁴ For a more detailed history see Wallace (2000: 75-9).

⁵ The *Malleus Maleficarum* was written by the German Inquisitor Heinrich Institoris and his Dominican colleague Jakob Strenger.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Part One

1. Do you identify yourself as a Pagan?
2. When did you first use this term to describe your belief system?
3. Do you regard Paganism to be a religion?
4. Were you raised within a religious tradition? Please specify.
5. Did you belong to a religious tradition prior to your Pagan affiliation? Please specify.
6. What about Paganism drew you most?
7. What is your definition of Paganism?
8. Please specify if you follow a specific tradition or path.
9. How would you define this tradition?
10. How long have you followed this tradition?
11. Do you consider this tradition to be a religion in itself?
12. Through which of the following sources (below) were you introduced to Paganism? Please give a clear description of these sources and initial introductions. (e.g. I read the book *Spiral Dance* by Starhawk, and then I...)
Internet
Public Event
Friend
Books/Magazines
Family
Television Programme
Other
13. Please define a 'witch'?
14. Please define a 'Wiccan'?
15. Please describe the difference (if any) between a Witch and a Wiccan?
16. What paths and/or traditions would you include in the category 'Paganism'?
17. What do you believe are the roots of modern Paganism?
18. Are all Witches Pagans?
19. Are all Wiccans Pagans?
20. What do you perceive to be the most unifying feature of all Pagan traditions? In other words, what makes them all 'Pagan'?
21. Every religion has various dimensions. Please number the following words in order of **most importance** (1) through to **least importance** (6) to **you** in your tradition.
The system of beliefs
Deities
Nature
Rituals
Religious Community
Prayer or meditation
22. What is your definition of 'Nature' within Paganism?
23. What (if any) Pagan literature do you read?
24. Do you find Pagan literature to be easily accessible?
25. What have you read on South African Paganism?

Part Two

Section A

1. Are you open about your beliefs with,
Your family yes/no
Your friends yes/no
Your colleagues yes/no
Your employers yes/no
Your employees yes/no
2. If **no** to any of the above, please provide a short detail of the reasons.
3. Have you made Pagan contacts easily?
4. How are these contacts mostly made?
5. Do you celebrate the 8 Pagan seasonal festivals, or Wheel of the Year?
6. Do you attend public rituals?
7. If **yes**, how often?
8. Do you perform any rituals alone?
9. Do you perform any rituals with a closed group?
10. Are any of the rituals mentioned in 9 and 10 (above), held at specific times?
11. Which rituals (if any) are of specific importance to you? Please provide reasons.
12. Please give a short description of the influences on your rituals? For example, do you draw on already established rituals or, do you and/or your group create new rituals?
13. If you do create new rituals, on what sources do you draw? Please list as many as you are aware of.
14. Do you take a leading role in rituals?
15. Is role-play important in your rituals?
16. What do you believe to be the function of role-play in ritual?
17. How do you understand the links between your 'ritual life' and your 'everyday life'?
18. Do you have an altar in your home?
19. What are your feelings about ritual nudity?
20. Should the use of drugs in circle be condoned?
21. From what sources does most of your 'learning' about Paganism and/or your tradition come from?

Section B

1. Do you presently belong to a coven or working circle?
2. How many groups/ covens have you belonged to since you identified yourself as Pagan?
3. Are you a solitary practitioner?
4. If **yes**, why have you chosen solitary practice?
5. Do you network with the Pagan community?
6. If **yes**, through what means?
7. Do you belong to a Pagan online community?
8. If **yes**, please list your important links.
9. What influence do you believe the internet has had on the development of your knowledge and practice of Paganism and/or Pagan traditions?

10. Do you have any links with international Pagan communities and/or individuals?
11. Please specify the links, and indicate the role they play in your spiritual development.
12. Are you familiar with Pagan clergy in South Africa?
13. Have you sought out Pagan clergy to officiate at rituals marking rites of passage?
14. Do you see this as being important to the Pagan movement as a whole?
15. Is it important to be initiated into your tradition?
16. If **yes**, was it important to find someone duly qualified to initiate you?
17. What do you consider 'duly qualified' to mean in terms of Pagan clergy?
18. Have you completed courses within your tradition? Please specify.

Part Three

1. Have you ever been discriminated against because of your beliefs/religious associations?
2. If **yes**, please indicate the source of this discrimination.
3. Has the issue been resolved?
4. Do you feel that there is a clear understanding in society of what Paganism is all about? Yes/no
 - a) If **no**, what do you think society's general understanding of Paganism is?
 - b) If **no**, what do you perceive to be responsible for the lack of understanding?
5. Do you have children?
6. Are they being raised in a Pagan tradition?
7. If **yes**, has this given rise to any problems? Your answer could include friends, family, the education system etc.
8. Do you believe that Paganism and/or Witchcraft/Wicca have been accurately portrayed in the South African media? (television programmes, magazine articles, books, newspapers etc)
Yes / no / don't know. Please give comments or examples.
9. Do you have any external symbols of your beliefs? (Examples could be dress, body markings, tattoos, piercings, jewellery etc)
10. What are these, and what do they symbolise?
11. Are they important to your Pagan 'sense of self'?
12. Are the meanings of the symbols, as you see them, ever misinterpreted?
13. Is this important to you?
14. Have you ever encountered any legal problems as a result of being Pagan, or of following a Pagan tradition such as Wicca or Witchcraft?
15. If **yes**, please specify.

Part Four

1. Do you see any similarities between Paganism and any other religions in South Africa? Please specify.
2. Can any other South African religions be called 'Pagan'?
3. What do you perceive the differences to be between a Pagan Witch, and the witch as understood in African Traditional Religion?
4. Are there any similarities?

5. Are there any similarities between Paganism and African Traditional Religion? Please specify.
6. Do you feel there is a connection between Paganism and what is known as the New Age Movement? Please provide a short justification for your answer.
7. Is Paganism a New Religious Movement?
Yes / no / don't know
8. Is Wicca a New Religious Movement?
Yes / no / don't know
9. Is Witchcraft a New Religious Movement?
Yes/ no / don't know
10. Is South African Paganism different from what you know of Paganism in the UK and USA?
11. If yes, in what ways is it different?
12. Who have been Pagan role models for you in your tradition? (This could be local and/or international figures and you may mention more than one)
13. Are you involved in environmental activism? If yes, please give details.
14. Do you believe Paganism is growing in South Africa?
15. What evidence do you have for your answer?
16. If you believe it is a growing movement, what factors do you believe are responsible?
17. Has the change in dispensation in South Africa been favourable to the development of Paganism in South Africa?
18. Do you believe you have the freedom of religious beliefs and practices that are entrenched in our constitution? Yes/No
19. If **no**, what is hampering this process or blocking these freedoms?
20. Do you see a role for Paganism in the transformation of South African society? Please support your answer.
21. Do you believe it is important for Pagans to participate in an interfaith capacity in South Africa?
22. When I identify myself as a...I mean that....
23. Any additional comments, thoughts or insights?

APPENDIX 2

WITCHCRAFT SUPPRESSION ACT **WITCHCRAFT SUPPRESSION ACT 3 OF 1957**

[ASSENTED TO 19 FEBRUARY 1957] [DATE OF COMMENCEMENT: 22 FEBRUARY 1957]
(English text signed by the Governor-General)

as amended by

Witchcraft Suppression Amendment Act 50 of 1970
Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act 33 of 1997

ACT

To provide for the suppression of the practice of witchcraft and similar practices.
witchcraft

1 Offences relating to the practice of witchcraft and similar practices

Any person who-

- (a) imputes to any other person the causing, by supernatural means, of any disease in or injury or damage to any person or thing, or who names or indicates any other person as a wizard;
- (b) in circumstances indicating that he professes or pretends to use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration, imputes the cause of death of, injury or grief to, disease in, damage to or disappearance of any person or thing to any other person;
- (c) employs or solicits any witchdoctor, witch-finder or any other person to name or indicate any person as a wizard;
- (d) professes a knowledge of witchcraft, or the use of charms, and advises any person how to bewitch, injure or damage any person or thing, or supplies any person with any pretended means of witchcraft;
- (e) on the advice of any witchdoctor, witch-finder or other person or on the ground of any pretended knowledge of witchcraft, uses or causes to be put into operation any means or process which, in accordance with such advice or his own belief, is calculated to injure or damage any person or thing;
- (f) for gain pretends to exercise or use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration, or undertakes to tell fortunes, or pretends from his skill in or knowledge of any occult science to discover where and in what manner anything supposed to have been stolen or lost may be found, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction-
 - (i) in the case of an offence referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) in consequence of which the person in respect of whom such offence was committed, has been killed, or where the accused has been proved to be by habit or repute a witchdoctor or witch-finder, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 20 years;
[Para. (i) substituted by s. 2 of Act 33 of 1997.]
 - (ii) in the case of any other offence referred to in the said paragraphs, to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding ten years;
[Para. (ii) substituted by s. 2 of Act 33 of 1997.]
 - (iii) in the case of an offence referred to in paragraph (c), (d) or (e), to a fine not exceeding five hundred rand or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years, or to both such fine and such imprisonment;

- (iv) in the case of an offence referred to in paragraph (f) , to a fine not exceeding two hundred rand or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years.

[S. 1 substituted by s. 1 of Act 50 of 1970.]

2 Presumption

Where any person in respect of whom an offence referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) of section 1 was committed, is killed, it shall be presumed, until the contrary is proved, that such person was killed in consequence of the commission of such offence.

[S. 2 substituted by s. 2 of Act 50 of 1970.]

3 Repeal of laws

The laws mentioned in the Schedule to this Act are hereby repealed to the extent set out in the fourth column of that Schedule.

4 Short title

This Act shall be called the Witchcraft Suppression Act , 1957.

Schedule LAWS REPEALED

| PROVINCE OR TERRITORY | NO AND YEAR OF LAW | TITLE OR | EXTENT OF REPEAL |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| Cape of Good Hope | Act 24 of 1886 | The Black Territories' Penal code | Chapter XI |
| * | Act 2 of 1895 | The Witchcraft Suppression Act , 1895 | The whole |
| Natal | Law 19 of 1891 | Natal Code of Black Law | Section <i>one hundred and twenty-nine</i> of the Schedule as substituted by Union Proclamation 168 of 1932 |
| Transvaal | Ordinance 26 of 1904 | The Crimes Ordinance, 1904 | Sections <i>twenty-nine to thirty-four</i> inclusive |
| Zululand | Proclamation 11 of 1887 | Laws and Regulations for the Government of Zululand | Regulations <i>nine and ten</i> |

WITCHCRAFT SUPPRESSION ACT
WITCHCRAFT SUPPRESSION AMENDMENT ACT 50 OF 1970

[ASSENTED TO 11 SEPTEMBER 1970]
[DATE OF COMMENCEMENT: 18 SEPTEMBER 1970]
(English text signed by the State President)

ACT

To amend the Witchcraft Suppression Act , 1957, so as to make it an offence for a person who pretends to exercise supernatural powers, to impute the cause of certain occurrences to another person; and to provide for incidental matters.

1 and 2 Substitute respectively sections 1 and 2 of the Witchcraft Suppression Act 3 of 1957.

3 Short title

This Act shall be called the Witchcraft Suppression Amendment Act , 1970.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Abrams, D. and Hogg, M.A. (eds) *Social Identity Theory* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1990
- Ackerman, Robert John *Religion as Critique* Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1985
- Adler, Margot *Drawing Down The Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and other Pagans in America Today* Boston: Beacon Press, 1986
- Albanese, Catherine L. *Nature Religion in America: From the American Indians to the New Age* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990
- Alexander, Dominic *Spellbound: From Ancient Gods to Modern Merlins – A Time Tour of Myth and Magic* Kent: Grange Books, 2002
- Anderson, Allan H. and Pillay, Gerald J *The Segregated Spirit: the Pentecostals in Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney Christianity in South Africa: a political, social and cultural history* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997, pp 227-241
- Bado-Fralick, Nikki *Coming to the edge of the circle: a Wiccan initiation ritual* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005
- Bammer, Angelika (ed.) *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994
- Barker, Eileen *New Religious Movements: Their incidence and significance in* Wilson, Bryan and Cresswell, Jamie *New Religious Movements: challenge and response* Oxon: Routledge, 1999, pp 15-32
- Baudrillard, Jean *The Consumer Society: myths and structures* London: SAGE Publication Limited, 1998 (originally published in French in 1970)
- Bauman, Zigmunt. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge, 1992
- Baumann Gerd *Contesting Culture: Discourses of identity in multi-ethnic London* Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 1996
- Becker, H. S. *Outsiders: studies in the sociology of deviance* New York: Free Press, 1973
- Beckford, James A *The mass media and New Religious Movements* in Wilson, Bryan and Cresswell, Jamie *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response* New York: Routledge, 1999, pp 103-120
- Bell, Catherine *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997
- Bennett, Clinton *In Search of the Sacred: anthropology and the study of religions* London: Cassell, 1996

- Bennett, Tony *Theories of the media, theories of society* in Gurevitch, Michael et al. (eds) *Culture, Society and the Media* London: Methuen, 1982, pp 30-55
- Berger, Helen A. *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999
- Berger, Helen A., Leach, Evan A. and Shaffer, Leigh S. *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003
- Berger, Helen and Ezzy, Doug *The Internet as Virtual Spiritual Community: Teen Witches in the United States and Australia* in Dawson, L and Cowan, D *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004, pp 175-188
- Berger, Peter L, Berger, Brigitte and Kellner, Hansfried *The Homeless Mind: modernisation and consciousness* Middlesex: Penguin, 1974
- Berger, Peter L. and Luckman, Thomas *The Social Construction of Reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* .Middlesex: Allen Lane for Penguin Press, 1976
- Berger, Peter and Kellner, Hansfried *Sociology Reinterpreted* Reading: Pelican Books, 1981
- Beyer, Peter *Globalisation and the Religion of Nature* in Pearson, Joanne et al. (eds) *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp11-21
- Bilmes, Jack *Discourse and Behaviour*. New York: Plenum Press, 1986
- Blain, Jenny *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism* London: Routledge, 2002
- Blain, Jenny, Ezzy, Douglas and Harvey, Graham (eds) *Researching Paganisms* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004
- Blakely, Thomas D., van Beek, Walter E.A. and Thomson, Dennis L. (eds) *Religion in Africa* London: Heineman, James Currey Ltd, 1994
- Bloch, Jon P. *New Spirituality, Self, and Belonging: how New Agers and Neo-Pagans talk about themselves* Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998
- Booth, Martin *A Magick Life: a biography of Aleister Crowley* Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000
- Bowman, Marion *Cardiac Celts: Images of the Celts in Paganism* in Harvey, G. and Hardman, Charlotte (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Traditions* London: Thorsons, 1995, pp 242-251
- Breakwell, Glynis *Coping with Threatened Identities*. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1986
- Briggs, Robin *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* New York: Penguin, 1996

- Broomfield, John *Other Ways of Knowing* Rochester, Vermont: Inner Tradition Press, 1997
- Bruce, Steve *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* New York: Oxford University Press, 1996
- Bryant, Christopher G.A. and Jary, David (eds) *Giddens' Theory of Structuration: a critical appreciation* London: Routledge, 1991
- Butler, Christopher *Postmodernism: a very short introduction* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002
- Campbell, Colin C. *The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization in A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 London: SCM Press, 1972, pp 119-136
- Campbell, Colin *The Cultic Milieu* California: AltaMira Press, 2002
- Castells, Manuel *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol 11* Oxford: Blackwell, 1997
- Castells, Manuel *End of Millennium: second edition* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Limited, 2000
- Chidester, David; Mitchell, Gordon; Omar, A. Rashid & Phiri Isabel A. *Religion in Public Education: Options for a New South Africa* Cape Town: UCT Press, 1994
- Chidester, David *Gestures of dismissal, policies of containment: From denial to discovery in Southern African comparative religion* in de Gruchy & Martin, S *Religion and the reconstruction of civil society* Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1995, pp 90-108
- Chidester, David. *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1996
- Chidester, David, Tayob, Abdul Kader and Weisse, Wolfram (eds) *Religion, Politics, and Identity in a Changing South Africa* Berlin: Waxmann, 2004
- Chryssides, George D. *Exploring New Religions*. London: Cassell, 1999
- Clifton, Chas S. *Her Hidden Children: the rise of Wicca and Paganism in America* Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006
- Clifton, Chas S. and Harvey, Graham (eds) *The Paganism Reader* New York: Routledge, 2004
- Comaroff, Jean and Comaroff, John *Modernity and Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993
- Connolly, Peter *Approaches to the Study of Religion* London: Cassell, 1999
- Connolly, W. *Identity/Difference: Democratic Associations of Political Paradox* Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1991

- Cowan, Douglas E. *Contested Spaces: Movement, Countermovement, and E-Space Propaganda* in Dawson, Lorne L. and Cowan, Douglas E. *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004, pp 255-272
- Cowan, Douglas E. *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2005
- Crowley, Vivianne *Phoenix from the Flame: Pagan Spirituality in the Western World* San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994
- Crowley, Vivianne *Way of Wicca* London: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001
- Crowley, Vivianne *Everyday Magic: Discover your Natural Powers of Intuition* London: Penguin Books, 2003a
- Crowley, Vivianne *Wicca: A Comprehensive Guide to the Old Religion in the Modern World* London: Element, 2003b
- Crowley, Vivianne *The Natural Magician: Practical Techniques for Empowerment* London: Penguin Books Limited, 2003c
- Cuhulain, Kerr *Wiccan Warrior: Walking a Spiritual Path in a Sometimes Hostile World* St. Paul MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2001
- Cunningham, Scott *The Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* Woodbury MN: Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd., 1984 (reprint 2000)
- Currott, Phyllis *Witch Crafting: a spiritual guide to making magic* New York: Broadway Books, 2001
- Dawson, Lorne L. *Religion and the Quest for Virtual Community* in Dawson, Lorne L. and Cowan, Douglas E. (eds) *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004, pp 75-89
- Dawson, Lorne L. and Cowan, Douglas E. (eds) *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004
- De Gruchy, J.W. and Martin, S. *Religion and the reconstruction of civil society.* Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1995
- Denzin, Norman K. *The Research Act: a theoretical introduction to sociological methods* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1989
- Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* In *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1994
- Di Zerega, Gus *Pagans & Christians: the personal spiritual experience* St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2001
- Douglas, Mary (ed.) *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1970
- Drury, Nevill *The Dictionary of the Esoteric* London: Watkins Publishing, 2002

- Eilers, Dana D. *Pagans and the Law: understand your rights* Franklin Lakes, NJ: The Career Press Inc., 2003
- Ellis, Stephen and ter Haar, Gerrie *Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
- Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997
- Elphick, Richard *Introduction: Christianity in South African History* in Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997, pp1-15
- Elphick, Richard *The Benevolent Empire and the Social Gospel: Missionaries and South African Christians in the Age of Segregation* in Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997, pp 347-369
- Els, Lien and Jonker, Kobus *Satanism in South Africa* Lynnwood Ridge: Amabhuku Publications (Pty) Ltd, 2000
- Ethnologies *Wicca* Quebec: The Folklore Studies Association of Canada, 1998
- Ezzy, Douglas *Religious Ethnography: Practicing the Witch's Craft* in Blain, Jenny, Ezzy, Douglas and Harvey, Graham (eds) *Researching Paganisms* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004, pp 113-128
- Fairclough, Norman (ed) *Critical Language Awareness*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992
- Fairclough, Norman *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995
- Farrar, Janet and Farrar, Stewart *The Witches' Goddess* Washington: Phoenix Publishing Inc., 1987
- Farrar, Janet and Farrar, Stewart *The Witches' God* Washington: Phoenix Publishing Inc., 1989
- Farrar, Janet and Bone, Gavin *Progressive Witchcraft: Spirituality, Mysteries and Training in Modern Wicca* Franklin Lakes, NJ: The Career Press Inc., 2004
- Foddy, William *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: theory and practice in social research* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993
- Fourie, Pieter J. (ed) *Media Studies Volume 1: institutions, theories and issues* Lansdowne: Juta Education, 2001
- Fourie, Pieter J. and Karam, Beschara *Representation: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation* in Fourie, Pieter J (ed.) *Media Studies Volume 1: institutions, theories and issues* Lansdowne: Juta Education, 2001, pp 469-508

- Frankfurter, David *Evil Incarnate: Rumours of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006
- Frazer, Sir James *The Golden Bough: A History of Myth and Religion* London: Macmillan and Co Limited, 1922
- Garbers, Johan G. (ed.) *Effective Research in the Human Sciences* Pretoria: van Schaik, J.C., 1996
- Gardner, Gerald *Witchcraft Today* New York: CITADEL Press, 2004 (first published 1954)
- Gardner, Gerald *The Meaning of Witchcraft* Boston: Red Wheel/Weiser LLC, 2004 (first published 1959)
- Garner, Roberta *Contemporary Movements and Ideologies* New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996
- Geertz, C. *The Interpretation of Cultures* New York: Basic Books, 1973
- Gerlach, Luther P. and Hine, Virginia H. *People, Power, Change: movements of social transformation.* New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1970
- Gerstner, Jonathan *A Christian Monopoly: The Reformed Church and Colonial Society under Dutch Rule* in Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997, pp16-30
- Geschiere, P. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997
- Giddens, Anthony *Studies in Social and Political Theory.* London: Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, 1977
- Giddens, Anthony *Central Problems in Social Theory: action, structure and contradiction in social analysis.* London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979
- Giddens, Anthony *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991
- Giddens, Anthony *SOCIOLOGY.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997
- Goffman, E. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* Garden City NY: Doubleday (Anchor Books), 1959
- Graves, Robert *The White Goddess* London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948
- Greenwood, Susan *The British Occult Subculture: beyond good and evil?* in Lewis, James R. (ed.) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* New York: State University of New York Press, 1996, pp 277-298
- Greenwood, Susan *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: an anthropology* Oxford: Berg, 2000
- Griffin, Wendy *The Goddess Net* in Dawson, Lorne and Douglas Cowan *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004, pp189-204

- Gurevitch, Michael, Bennett, Tony, Curran, James and Willacott, Janet (eds) *Culture, Society and the Media* London: Methuen, 1982
- Gutting, Gary (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994
- Hall, Stuart *The rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the repressed in media studies in Culture, society and the media* London: Methuen, 1982
- Hall, Stuart and Gieben, Bram (eds) *Formations of Modernity* Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Open University, 1992
- Hammond-Tooke, W.D. *The Bantu Speaking People of Southern Africa* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974
- Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1996
- Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature* in Pearson, Joanne et al. *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp 22-32
- Harris, Adrian *Sacred Ecology* in Harvey, G and Hardman, Charlotte (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Tradition* London: Thorsons, 1995 pp 149-156
- Harrow, Judy *The Contemporary Neo-Pagan Revival* in Lewis, James R. (ed.) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* New York: State University of New York Press, 1996, pp 9-24
- Harrow, Judy *Wicca Covens* New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1999
- Harvey, G. and Hardman, Charlotte (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Tradition* London: Thorsons, 1995
- Harvey, G. *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* London: C. Hurst and Co Ltd, 1997
- Harvey, Graham (ed.) *Indigenous Religions: a companion.* London: Cassell, 2000
- Harvey, Graham *Pagan Studies or the Study of Paganism? A Case Study in the Study of Religions* in Blain, Jenny, Ezzy, Douglas and Harvey, Graham (eds) *Researching Paganisms* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004, pp 241-256
- Heelas, Paul *The New Age Movement* Oxford: Blackwell, 1996
- Heselton, Philip *Wiccan Roots* Berks: Capall Bann Publishing, 2000
- Hexham, Irving and Poewe, Karla *The Spread of Christianity among Whites and Blacks in Transorangia* in Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997, pp121-134
- Hjelm, T. *The Making of a Media Panic: Satanism in the Finnish Press* in Kaplan, J (ed.) *Beyond the Mainstream: The Emergence of Religious Pluralism in*

- Finland, Estonia and Russia* Studia Historica 63. Helsinki: SKS, 2000, pp 289-297
- Honneth, Axel *The Critique of Power: reflective stages in a critical social theory*. London: The MIT Press, 1993
- Hoover, Stewart and Schofield Clark, Lynn *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: explorations in the media, religion and culture* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001
- Hopman, Ellen Evert and Bond, Lawrence *Being a Pagan: Druids, Wiccans and Witches Today* Vermont: Destiny Books, 1996
- Hoppers, Catherine A. Odora (ed.) *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems: Towards a Philosophy of Articulation* Claremont: New Africa Books (Pty) Ltd, 2002
- Hume, Lynne *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia* Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1997
- Huson, Paul *Mastering Witchcraft: a practical guide for Witches, Warlocks and Covens* Toronto: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970
- Hutton, Ronald *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993
- Hutton, Ronald *The Discovery of the Modern Goddess* in Pearson, Joanne, Roberts, Richard H. and Samuel, Geoffrey *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp 89-100
- Hutton, Ronald *The Triumph of the Moon: a history of modern Pagan Witchcraft* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999
- Hutton, Ronald *The Roots of Modern Paganism* in Pearson, Joanne (ed) *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002, pp 225-238
- Hutton, Ronald *Witches, Druids and King Arthur* London: Hambledon and London, 2003
- Hutton, Ronald *Living With Witchcraft* in Blain, Jenny, Ezzy, Douglas and Harvey, Graham (eds) *Researching Paganisms* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004, pp 171-188
- Ivakhiv, Ivan *The Resurgence of Magical Religion as a Response to the Crisis of Modernity: A Postmodern Depth Psychological Perspective* in Lewis, James R. (ed.) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* New York: State University of New York Press, 1996, pp 237-268
- Jencks, Charles *The Post-Modern Reader* London: Academy Editions, 1992
- Johnson, Toby *The Myth of the Great Secret: A Search for Spiritual Meaning* Berkeley: First Celestial Arts Printing, 1992

- Johnstone, R.L. *Religion and Sociology in Interaction* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975
- Jones, Prudence *Pagan Theologies* in Harvey, G and Hardman, Charlotte (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Tradition* London: Thorsons, 1995, pp 32-46
- Kaplan, Jeffrey and Loow, Helena *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalisation* Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 2002
- Kinghorn, Johann *Modernisation and Apartheid: the Afrikaner Churches* in Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997, pp 135-154
- Kramer, Heinrich and Sprenger, James *The Malleus Maleficarum* New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971
- Kumar, Pratap *Contextualising the category formation in Religious Studies* in de Gruchy & Martin, S *Religion and the reconstruction of civil society* Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1995, pp 43-56
- Lempke, J.L. *Textual Politics: discourse and social dynamics* London: Taylor and Francis, 1995
- Levack, Brian P. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1987
- Levett, Anne, Kottler, Amanda, Burman, Erica and Parker, Ian *Culture, Power and Difference: Discourse Analysis in South Africa*. Rondebosch: University of Cape Town Press, 1997
- Lewis, James R. (ed.) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* New York: State University of New York Press, 1996
- Lewis, James R. *Legitimizing New Religions* New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003
- Lovheim, Mia *Young People, Religious Identity, and the Internet* in Dawson, L and Cowan, D *Religion Online: finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004, pp 59-74
- Luhrmann, T.M. *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* Harvard: First Harvard University Press, 1989
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois *The Postmodern Condition* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984
- Macquarrie, John *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* Philadelphia: Trinity Press International Inc., 2002
- Magliocco, Sabina *Neo-Pagan Sacred Art and Altars: Making Things Whole* Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2001

- Magliocco, Sabina *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004
- Martin, David *A General Theory of Secularization* Oxford: Blackwell, 1978
- McCutcheon, Russell T. *The Insider/Outsider Problem In the Study of Religion* New York: Cassell, 1999
- McGraw, Barbara *Rediscovering America's Sacred Ground: Public Religion and Pursuit of the Good in a Pluralistic America.* New York: State University of New York Press, 2003
- McHale, Brian *Constructing Postmodernism* London: Routledge, 1992
- McHoul, Alec and Grace, Wendy *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, power and the subject.* New York: New York University Press, 1997
- McLuhan, Marshal and Fiore, Quintin *The Medium is the Message* New York: Bantam Press, 1967
- McLuhan, M and Powers, B. R. *The Global Village: transformations in world life and media in the 21st century.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989
- Melton, Gordon J. *Magic, Witchcraft and Paganism in America: a bibliography* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992
- Mesthrie, Rajend, Swann, Joan, Deumert, Andrea and Leap, William L. *Introducing Sociolinguistics* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000
- Mishler, Elliot G. *Research Interviewing: context and narrative* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986
- Moorey, Teresa *The Teenage Witch's Essential Handbook* London: Rider, 2002
- Mouton, Johan *Understanding Social Research* Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1996
- Mouton, Johan and Marais, H.C. *BASIC CONCEPTS in the methodology of the social sciences* Pretoria: HSRC Research Council, 1990
- Murray, Margaret A. *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921
- Neuman, Lawrence W. *Social Research Methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997
- Niehaus, Isak *Witchcraft, Power and Politics: Exploring the Occult in the South African Lowveld* Claremont: David Philip Publishers, 2001
- Ng S. H. *The Social Psychology of Power* New York: Academic Press, 1980
- Nightmare, Macha M. *Witchcraft and the Web: Weaving Pagan Traditions Online* Ontario: ECW Press, 2001
- Nightmare, Macha M. *Pagan Pride: Honoring the Craft and Culture of Earth and Goddess* New York: Citadel Press Books, 2004

- O'Donnell, Mike *Introduction to SOCIOLOGY* Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1997
- O'Leary, Stephen *Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks* in Dawson, Lorne L. and Cowan, Douglas E. *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* New York: Routledge, 2004, pp 37-58
- O'Neill, John *The Poverty of Postmodernism* London: Routledge, 1995
- Orion, Loretta *Never Again the Burning Times: Paganism Revived* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1995
- Paper, Jordan *The Deities Are Many: a polytheistic theology* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005
- Parker, Ian and Shotter, John *Deconstructing Social Psychology* London: Routledge, 1990
- Parker, Ian *Social Constructionism, Discourse and Realism*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 1998
- Partridge, Christopher *The Re-Enchantment of the West: alternative spiritualities, sacralisation, popular culture and occulture Vol. 1* London: T & T Clark International, 2004
- Pearson, Joanne, Roberts, Richard H. and Samuel, Geoffrey *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998
- Pearson, Joanne *Assumed Affinities: Wicca and the New Age* in Pearson, J et al. *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp 45-56
- Pearson, Joanne (ed.) *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002a
- Pearson, Joanne *The History and Development of Wicca and Paganism* in Pearson, Joanne (ed.) *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002b, pp15-54
- Pearson, Joanne *Witches and Wicca* in Pearson, Joanne (ed.) *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002, pp 133-172
- Pike, Sarah M. *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001
- Pollack, Rachel *The Body of the Goddess: sacred wisdom in myth, landscape and culture* Dorset: Element Books Limited, 1997
- Potter, Jonathan, Stringer, Peter and Wetherall, Margaret *Social Texts and Contexts: Literature and Social Psychology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984
- Pretorius, Hennie and Jafta, Lizo "A Branch Springs Out": *African Initiated Churches* in Elphick, Richard and Davenport, Rodney *Christianity in South*

- Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* Claremont: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 1997, pp 211-226
- Purkiss, Diane *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* London: Routledge, 1996
- Rabinovitch, Shelley *Spells of Transformation: Categorising Modern Neo-Pagan Witches* in Lewis, James R. (ed.) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* New York: State University of New York Press, 1996, pp 75-92
- Rabinovitch, Shelley and Lewis, James (eds) *The Encyclopedia of Modern Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism* New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2002
- Rajchman, John *The Identity in Question*. New York: Routledge, 1995
- RavenWolf, Silver *Teen Witch Kit: everything you need to make magick* St. Paul MN: Llewellyn Press, 2000
- Rees, Kenneth K. *The Tangled Skein: the Role of Myth of Paganism* in Harvey, G. and Hardman, Charlotte (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Traditions* London: Thorsons, 1995, pp 16-31
- Rheingold, Howard *The Virtual Community: Surfing the Net* London: Minerva Press, 1994
- Riggins, Stephen Harold *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*. California: SAGE Publications Inc, 1997
- Roszak, Betty, Gomes, M and Kanner, A. (eds) *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995
- Roszak, Betty *The Spirit of the Goddess* in Roszak, Betty, Gomes, M and Kanner A. (eds) *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995, pp 288-300
- Rountree, Katherine *Embracing the Witch and the Goddess: Feminist Ritual-Makers in New Zealand* London: Routledge, 2004
- Russell, Jeffrey *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans* London: Thames and Hudson Limited, 1980
- Said, Edward W. *COVERING ISLAM: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. Parktown: Random House South Africa (Pty) Limited, 1997
- Saler, Benson *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives and Unbounded Categories* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993
- Salomonsen, Jone *Enchanted Feminism: Ritual, Gender and Divinity among the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco* London: Routledge, 2002
- Salomonsen, Jone *Methods of Compassion or Pretension? The Challenges of Conducting Fieldwork in Modern Magical Communities* in Blain, Jenny, Ezzy, Douglas and Harvey, Graham (eds) *Researching Paganisms* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004, pp 43-58

- Sardar, Ziauddin *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture* London: Pluto Press, 1998
- Sarup, Madan *An Introductory Guide to post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988
- Schofield-Clark, Lynn *From Angels to Aliens: teenagers, the media and the supernatural* New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2003
- Shotter, John and Gergen, Kenneth J. *Texts of Identity*. London: SAGE Publications, 1989
- Simes, Amy *Mercian Movements: Group Transformation and Individual Choices Amongst East Midlands Pagans* in Harvey, G and Charlotte Hardman (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Traditions* London: Thorsons, 1995, pp169-190
- Slater, Phil *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School: a Marxist perspective*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1977
- Spickard, James V., Landres, Shawn and McGuire, Meredith B. (eds) *Personal Knowledge and Beyond: Reshaping the Ethnography of Religion* New York: New York University Press, 2002
- Starhawk *The Spiral Dance: a Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1989 (first edition 1979)
- Starhawk *Webs of Power: notes from the global uprising* Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2002
- Starhawk *The Earth Path: Grounding your Spirit in the Rhythms of Nature* New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2004
- Starhawk, Nightmare, Macha M. and the Reclaiming Collective *The Pagan Book of Living and Dying: practical rituals, prayers, blessings and mediations on crossing over* New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1997
- Stark, Rodney and William Bainbridge *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985
- Steyn, Chrissie *Worldviews in Transition: an investigation into the New Age Movement in South Africa* Koedoespoort: Unisa Press, 1994
- Sutcliffe, Richard *Left-Hand Path Ritual Magic: an Historical and Philosophical Overview* in Harvey, G and Charlotte Hardman (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Traditions* London: Thorsons, 1995, pp109-137
- Sutcliffe, Steven *Between Apocalypse and Self-Realisation: 'Nature' as an Index of New Age Religiosity* in Pearson, Joanne et al. *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp 33-44
- Sutcliffe, Steven and Bowman, Marion *Beyond New Age: exploring alternative spirituality* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000

- Tajfel, Henri (ed.) *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982
- Tarnas, Richard *The Passion of the Western Mind: understanding the ideas that have shaped our world view* New York: Ballantine Books, 1991
- Terre Blanche, Martin and Durrheim, Kevin *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences* Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (Pty) Ltd, 1999
- Thomas, Keith *Religion and the Decline of Magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* London: Penguin Books, 1991
- Thompson, Kenneth (ed.) *Media and Cultural Regulation*. Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1997
- Tomaselli, Keyan, Tomaselli, Ruth and Muller, Johan *Narrating the Crisis: Hegemony and the South African Press*. Johannesburg: Richard Lyon and Co, 1987
- Trompf, Garry *In Search of Origins* New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1990
- Vale, V. *Modern Primitives* San Francisco: RE/Search Publications, 1989
- Vale, V. and Sulak, John (eds.) *Modern Pagans: an investigation of contemporary Pagan practices* San Francisco: RE/Search Publications, 2001
- Van Dijk, Teun A. *Prejudice in Discourse: an analysis of ethnic prejudice in cognition and conversation* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984
- Van Dijk, Teun A. *Handbook of Discourse Analysis: discourse analysis in society. Vol.1*. London: Academic Press Inc. Ltd., 1985
- Van Dijk, Teun A. *Handbook of Discourse Analysis: discourse analysis in society: Vol.3*. London: Academic Press Inc. Ltd, 1985
- Van Dijk, Teun A. *Handbook of Discourse Analysis: discourse analysis in society: Vol.4*. London: Academic Press Inc. Ltd, 1985
- Victor, J. *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1993
- Viola, Frank *Pagan Christianity: The Origins of Our Modern Church Practices* United States of America: Present Testimony Ministry, 2002
- Vos, Donna Darkwolf *Dancing Under an African Moon: Paganism and Wicca in South Africa* Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2002
- Wanamaker, Charles A. *The rhetoric of uncivil society: Deviance labelling as uncivil discourse* in de Gruchy, J. W and Martin, S *Religion and the reconstruction of civil society* Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1995, pp 304-315
- Warner, Marina *World of Myths* London: The British Museum Press, 2003

- Wetherell, Margaret *Identities, Groups and Social Issues* London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997
- Wetherall, Margaret and Potter, Jonathan *How to Analyse Discourse in Discourse and Social Psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour* London: SAGE Publications Limited, 1987
- Wetherall, Margaret and Potter, Jonathan *Discourse and Social Psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour* London: SAGE Publication Ltd., 1987
- Wetherall, Margaret and Potter, Jonathan *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation* Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992
- Wilson, Bryan *Religion in Sociological Perspective* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982
- Wilson, Bryan and Cresswell, Jamie *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response* New York: Routledge, 1999
- York, Michael *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements* London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 1995
- York, Michael *New Age and Paganism* in Harvey, G. and Hardman, Charlotte (eds) *Pagan Pathways: a complete guide to the Ancient Earth Traditions* London: Thorsons, 2000, pp157-168
- York, Michael *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* New York: New York: University Press, 2003
- Zegeye, Abebe *Social Identities in the New South Africa: After Apartheid - Volume One.* Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001

Articles

- Agger, Ben *Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance* (nd) <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/agger2.htm>
- Albanese, Catherine *Religion in America* (nd) <http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/mazur/courses/reli206/albanese.html>
- Bowman, Marion *Nature, the Natural and Pagan Identity* in DISKUS Vol 6 (2000) <http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus>
- Bruner, Jerome *Narrative Knowledge: Knowing through Storytelling* in *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1), 1-21 (1991) <http://web.mit.edu/commforum/mit4/papers/worth.pdf>
- Chidester, David *Scientology: A Religion In South Africa* Los Angeles CA: Freedom Publishing, (nd)
- Clifton, Chas *Nature Religion for Real* published in GNOSIS 48 (1998) <http://www.chasclifton.com/papers/forreal.html>

- Cuhulain, Kerr *South African Police Services Occult Related Crime Unit* (2005)
http://www.witchvox.com/whs/dt_whs.html?aid=cabc&id=8980
- Dellinger, Brett *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995)
<http://users.utu.fi/bredelli/cda.html>
- Drury, Nevill *Magic and Cyberspace: Fusing Technology and Magical Consciousness in the Modern World* (nd)
<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Volume1V/MagicCyber.htm>
- Elst, Koenraad *Hindus and Neo-Pagans*
<http://www.koenraadelst.bharatvani.org/articles/hinduism/neopaganism.html>
- Ezzy, Douglas *White Witches and Black Magic: Ethics and Consumerism in Contemporary Witchcraft* published in *The Journal of Contemporary Religion* Vol. 21, No 1, 2006, pp 15-31
- Ezzy, Douglas *New Age Witchcraft? Popular spell books and the re-enchantment of everyday life* in *The Journal of Culture and Religion* Vol. 4, No1, 2003
- Fereday, Andrew *Are the Neo-Pagans Merely Another Branch of the Culture Industry Provoked by the Postmodern Condition?* (August 29, 2002)
http://www.lillyweb.btinternet.co.uk/witchwords/academic_af_neo=paganism.htm
- Gallacher, Susan *TechnoPagans: Hybrid Identities on the Net* (nd)
<http://www.conferences.aoir.org/viewabstract.php?id=554&cf=5>
- Gergen, Kenneth *Social Psychology as History* in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 26, 1973, pp 309-320
- Gergen, K. J. *The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology* in *American Psychologist*, 40, 1985, pp 266-275.
- Gover, Mark R. & Gavelek, James *Persons and Selves: The Dialectics of Identity* (nd)
<http://www.msu.edu/user/govermar/ident.htm>
- Gover, Mark *The Narrative Emergence of Identity*. in J.Knuf (ed.) *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Narratives* Lexington, Kentucky: College of Communication and Information Studies, University of Kentucky October 18-20, 1998
- Green, Steven *How can some of Foucault's ideas and perspectives be usefully applied to the study of mass media in society?* (nd) <http://www.theory.org.uk/f/sa1.htm>
- Harris, Adrian *Notions of Embodied Knowledge* (2003)
<http://www.thegreenfuse.org/harris/notions-ec.htm>
- Harris, Adrian *Sacred Ecology* (1994)
<http://www.thegreenfuse.org/harris/sacredco.htm>
- Harvey, Graham *Fantasy in the Study of Religions: Paganism as observed and enhanced by Terry Pratchett* in *Paganism* in *DISKUS* Vol 6 (2000)
<http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus>
- Harvey, Graham *The Authority of Intimacy in Paganism and Goddess Spirituality* in *DISKUS* Vol. 4 (2000)
<http://www.unimarburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus>
- Kellner, *Critical Theory Today: revisiting the classics* (nd)
<http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell10.htm>

- Lanning, Kenneth V. *Satanism, Occult, Ritualistic Crime: a law enforcement perspective* (nd) <http://www.locksley.com/6696/ritukill.htm>
- Letcher, Andy 'Virtual Paganism' or direct action? *The implications of road protesting for modern Paganism* in DISKUS Vol 6 (2000) <http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus>
- Lewis, James R. *Who Serves Satan? A Demographic and Ideological Profile* in Marburg Journal of Religion 2001 Vol. 6 No 2 <http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/lewis2.html>
- Meyer, Birgit *Religion, media and the public sphere* (2001) <http://www.2.fmg.uva.nl/conferences/2001a.htm>
- Neuschler, C. *On women and Nature: How Western Theoretical Constructions Affect Environmental Degradation and the Shaping of Roles of Women in Structures of Environmental Governance and Development* (2001) http://www.macalaster.edu/-envirost/MacEnyReview/women_nature.htm
- Nieder-Heitmann, Jan H. *The Missionary Challenge of Christendom and Modernity in South Africa: A Dutch Reformed account in The International Review of Mission* (2003) http://academic.sun.ac.za/buyton/Vennote/GOCN/Jan_Nieder_Heitmann_The%20missionary.doc
- Pearson, Joanne *Demarcating the Field: Paganism, Wicca and Witchcraft* in DISKUS Vol 6 (2000) <http://www.unimarburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus>
- Pearson, Joanne *I am the Soul of Nature who gives Life to the Universe: Wicca, Esotericism and Living Nature* delivered at the IAHR XVIII Quinquennial Congress, Durban, 5th – 12th August, 2000
- Snyman, Gerrie *Constructing and Deconstructing Identities in Post-apartheid South Africa: A case of hybridity versus untainted Africanicity?* <http://www.ars-rhetorica.net/Queen/VolumeSpecialIssue5/articles/Snyman.html>
- Steyn, Chrissie *Spiritual Healing: A comparison between New Age groups and African Initiated Churches in South Africa* (nd) <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=7360>
- Taylor, Bron & Kaplan, Jeffrey *ERN – Conceptual Framework* <http://www.religionandnature.com/encyclopedia/framework.htm>
- Taylor, Bron *Nature Religion* (2000a) <http://www.religionandnature.com/bron/encNatural.htm>
- Taylor, Bron *ERN Overview Essay* presented to the Nature and Religion Consultation at the Quinquennial Congress of the International Association of History of Religion, Durban, South Africa, August 2000b <http://www.religionandnature.com/overview.htm>
- Timms, Duncan *Identity, Community and the Internet* (2002) <http://www.psychologie-sociale.org/6cirs/Timms.pdf>
- Van Dijk, Teun *Editorial: Discourse Analysis with a Cause* in Volume 2 (1) of *The Semiotic Review of Books* (nd) <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb/srb/2-1edit.html>
- Van Dijk, Teun *Critical Discourse Analysis* printed as a second draft in 1998, <http://www.hum.uva.nl/-teun/cda.htm>

Zegeye, Abebe *Narrative Discourse, Social Crisis and the Construction of the Beta Israel Identity* <http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/BDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20zegeye1.pdf>

Zell, Oberon *Witchcraft, Satanism and Occult Crime: Who's Who and What's What, A Manual of Reference Materials for the Professional Investigator (4th Edition)* Phoenix: Phoenix Publishers, 1991

Unpublished Theses

Wallace, Dale *An Exploratory Study of Paganism as a New Religious Movement in the South African context.* University of Durban-Westville, 1998

Wallace, Dale *An investigation to develop a theory of Pagan identity in relation to the New Age Movement: an assessment of their historical foundations and the degrees of convergence in both movements in South African society today.* University of Durban-Westville, 2000

Websites

Academic

<http://www.religionandnature.com/overview.htm>

<http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/mazur/courses/reli206/albanese.html>

<http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell10.htm>

<http://www.theory.org.uk/f/sa1.htm>

<http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/agger2.htm>

<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb/srb/2-1edit.html>

<http://www.hum.uva.nl/-teun/eda.htm>

<http://www.religionandnature.com/overview.htm>

<http://www.msu.edu/user/govermar.htm>

http://www.macalaster.edu/-envirost/MacEnyReview/women_nature.htm

<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Volume1V/MagicCyber.htm>

<http://www.conferences.aoir.org/viewabstract.php?id=554&ef=5>

<http://www.psychologie-sociale.org/6cirs/Timms.pdf>

<http://www.2.fmg.uva.nl/conferences/2001a.htm>

<http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/BDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20zegeye1.pdf>

<http://www.chass.colostate-pueblo.edu/natrel/>

<http://www.chass.colostate-pueblo.edu/paganstudies/index.html>

<http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus>

<http://www.chasclifton.com/papers/forreal.html>

<http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/lewis2.html>

<http://www.theory.org.uk/f/sa1.htm>

Pagan

http://www.lillyweb.btinternet.co.uk/witchwords/academic_af_neo=paganism.htm
<http://www.witchvox.net>
<http://www.thegreenfuse.org/harris/notions-ec.htm>
<http://www.thegreenfuse.org>
<http://www.witchschool.com>
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bos/bos492.htm>
http://www.witchvox.com/whs/dt_whs.html?aid=cabc&id=8980
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bos/bos492.htm>
<http://www.geocities.com/paganrightsalliancesouthafrica/>
<http://www.geocities.com/aradiancooperative/apc.htm>
<http://www.geocities.com/ptonmagazine>
<http://www.activeboard.com/forum.spark?>
<http://www.geocities.com/zapfdm>
<http://www.paganrights.co.za>
<http://www.thegrove.za.net>
<http://www.pfsa.org.za>
<http://pagan-home.net>
<http://www.geocities.com/ariasafrika>
<http://www.cam.za.net>
<http://www.vuya.net>
<http://www.redpath.imagitronix.co.za>
<http://clanofkheper temple.co.za>
<http://sapagans.tripod.com>

General Interest

<http://www.geocities.com/-anntothill/demo/religion.htm>
http://academic.sun.ac.za/buyton/Vennote/GOCN/Jan_Nieder_Heitmann_The%20missionary.doc
<http://www.davidicke.net/emagazine/vol6/spectmutwap2.html>
<http://www.world-action.co.za/vaccinate.htm>
<http://www.actup.co.za/pages/infodesk.htm>
http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome_Bruner
http://www.kznwildlife.com/flora_medicinal.htm
http://www.rhino.org.za/symposium_02.htm
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/115/46.0.html>
<http://www.iol.co.za>
<http://www.mg.co.za>
<http://www.news24.com>
http://www.tibet.ca/wtnarchive/1999/12/12_2.html
<http://www.koenraadelt.bharatvani.org/articles/hinduism/neopaganism.html>
http://www.weed.wcape.gov.za/documents/religion/religion_in_education1.html
<http://www.policy.org.za>
<http://www.saps.gov.za>
<http://www.saps.gov.za/0%5Fdynamicmodules/internetsite/buildingblocks/units/22.htm>
<http://www.servamus.co.za>
<http://www.locksley.com/6696/ritukill.htm>