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A PORTRAIT OF JANUS:

**The Social Construction of Witchcraft
in the Ottawa Citizen, 1980-1989**

by

SIAN LEE MACDONALD REID

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Graduate Programme in Religion
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

June 1992

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ISBN 0-315-79896-3

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"There are no whole truths: all truths are half truths." [Alfred North Whitehead: Dialogues: Recorded by Lucien Price]

"The man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them, inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors." [Thomas Jefferson: Writings XI]

"It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances." [Oscar Wilde: Picture of Dorian Gray II]

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank that multitude of people who made writing this thesis possible, if not always easy: Marc Tyrrell, for timely photocopies and encouragement through competition; Shelley Rabinovitch, for countless hours on the telephone in the name of academic cooperation; Kristen Pederson, for well-informed opinions on my construction of the traditional paradigm; David Corbett, for meticulous editing; Daniel Cormier, for hours of check-coding; Marc Donovan, for making looking at newspapers on microfilm a family outing; and my thesis advisor, John Cove, for warning me in advance that this would not be a warm human experience.

This research was completed with financial assistance from the David and Rachel Epstein Foundation, and from the government of Ontario, through the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Programme.

Preface: A Portrait of Janus

Janus is the two-faced god of the Roman pantheon. One face looks forward, and one looks back. He is the god of gates and doorways, departures and returns, and "by extension," the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* notes, of all forms of communication. It is Janus whom Margaret Murray posits as the God of the witches she describes in her book of the same name, and in *The Witch-cult in Western Europe*.

This thesis is, in many senses, a portrait of Janus. It is a study in balanced dualities: etic and emic, qualitative and quantitative, theory and practice. Even the research topic mirrors this symbolic concern. Like the two faces that appear on Roman coins, the two paradigms for discussing witchcraft are distinct, but not separate. One looks to the future, the other, to the past. This is research into gateways, that which separates one realm from another -- the transition place.

Throughout the writing of this piece, the researcher, like Janus, has felt the compulsion to look in two directions simultaneously. Although it is not uncommon in the field of religion, to see Christians writing about Christians, and Jews about Jews, in the social sciences, such involvement with one's material often gives readers pause. One's objectivity is questioned. As a respected part of the Ottawa Craft community, my familiarity with the religious conceptualizations of witchcraft is deeper than my academic background might suggest. Yet, far from stripping me of 'scholarly distance', that sensitivity to the concerns of the community has guided the research from its inception.

In fact, it is doubtful that I would have been able to frame this research project in the way I have, had I been outside the Craft community. The paradigm conflict demonstrated in the articles, if it was evident to me at all, would not have commanded the same sort of interest, or attention. It is one thing to look at a newspaper article, to read it, and set it aside as a curiosity; it is another thing to wince. It is yet another to question *why* one winces, what the structural dynamics of the claims-making processes are that make one feel misrepresented. However, it is not only my involvement in the Craft community

that has given me the strange sense of double-vision that I bring to this research; I have also spent six years on the staff of a newspaper. I know what goes into the production of a news story, and have a real sense of the editorial decisions that are made on an ongoing, day to day basis. It is a sense of personal engagement, both with the subject matter, and with the media through which it is being examined, that has fuelled this research, without, I believe, diminishing its value. However, it is not for me to judge the value of my work; that is a task best left to others, who are at a greater distance from it than I.

As a final note, were I to offer a prayer for this paper, I would send it to Janus, god of beginnings, in the fond hope that what is offered here represents not a closed avenue of thought, but a gateway into a rich and rewarding avenue of future research.

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"There are no whole truths: all truths are half truths." [Alfred North Whitehead: Dialogues: Recorded by Lucien Price]

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Introduction: Looking Forward

This study focuses on the way in which social constructionist frameworks and content analysis methodology can be profitably used within the field of religious studies. This is demonstrated by examining how witchcraft and its practitioners have been characterized in the print news media in Ottawa from 1980 to 1990. Witchcraft, for the purposes of this analysis, is to be defined as 'western witchcraft' and shall exclude those tribal practices in Africa, Asia and South America which, although quite different in content, are also commonly referred to as 'witchcraft'. In particular, attention has been given to the interplay between two conflicting paradigms for constructing witchcraft: a traditional, demonic paradigm, and a newer, religious paradigm.

The research wishes to assess the degree to which the information presented to the public has served to reinforce the 'traditional' images of the witch, and at what times and in what contexts this information has been presented. The analysis has also attempted to determine the extent to which contemporary witchcraft's perception of itself as a religion has been reflected in reporting by the print news media. It has accomplished this through a number of complimentary analyses: an analysis of the voices present in the articles (the claims-making process); an analysis of the presence or absence and type of conflict represented; an analysis of the frequency and context of references to witchcraft as a 'religion' or 'religious movement' inasmuch as words or phrases generally reserved for those types of descriptions are applied to it; an analysis of the origin of the article and its 'action'; and an analysis of the characteristics attributed to witches in general, as well as to individuals specifically identified as witches within the articles.

The current study is regarded by its author as a pilot project. A pilot project is a smaller-scale initial version of a potentially larger research endeavour. Technical difficulties arising from the materials used or the

indicators and techniques employed can be addressed during this microcosmic work, so that the more extensive work at a later date can be done with more refined and proven instruments. This study hopes to synthesize a set of techniques and indicators that can be used in a meaningful way to study news media reports on witchcraft in any city, and can be used to compare the type of reporting that occurs in more than one city. It is the exploratory and developmental aspect of this study that has caused this author to restrict it to a single newspaper and a relatively short time frame, rather than opting for a broader focus.

The theoretical perspective in which the study is situated is that of social constructionism. Social constructionism, as outlined by Spector and Kitsuse (1977), is an investigative and analytic framework which allows a researcher to examine the construction of a social problem without engaging in debate about the factual reality of the alleged conditions.

Our definition of social problems focuses on the process by which members of a society define a putative condition as a social problem. Thus, we define social problems as *the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions*. (Spector and Kitsuse 1977:75)

An outgrowth of the labelling (or societal reaction) perspective in studies of deviance, and the symbolic interaction perspective in sociology¹, social constructionism operates on the premise that it is not the study of social problems in and of themselves that is of importance, but rather the study of the problem making process. "The notion that social problems are a kind of *condition* must be abandoned in favour of a conception of them as a kind of *activity* ." (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977:73).

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¹ Joseph Gusfield argues that social constructionism is a part of a much wider intellectual movement in the social sciences. "The constructivist approach in the study of social problems is an aspect of the great impetus toward a reconstituted sociology which has been one of the dominant theoretical movements in the realm of ideas during the last decades. It has gone by many names and in many directions: ethnomethodology, phenomenology, various kinds of structuralism, cognitive sociology, hermeneutics, symbolic interaction. *What all of these have in common is that they focus on the processes of interpretation by which a subject matter is constructed by its users.* " (Gusfield, 1984:37, emphasis added).

The study of problematic conditions ignores the process by which these conditions are defined as problems. Social construction advocates believe that the presence or absence of certain conditions is not, by itself, enough to present a social problem. It is instead the kinds of claims that are made about a condition, and the reactions to those claims, which form the common ground of social problems.² Stephen Markson comments,

...those who have sought to locate social problems purely in objective conditions that are intrinsically harmful to the society have overlooked this process of collective definition. It is the *process* that determines which social problems arise, how they are shaped and defined in discussion, and how they come to be addressed in official policy. The 'careers' of such issues as poverty, racial and gender-based inequality, and environmental concerns vividly demonstrate that it is the emerging perspective on an issue, rather than its objective makeup, that ultimately determines its fate as a high priority problem or a non-issue, absent from the public agenda. (Markson, 1990:32)

This framework, although developed in order to facilitate the study of social problems, lends itself nicely to the study of other phenomena, especially those portrayed in the media. It is also a framework which lends itself well to qualitative textual studies. Christians and Carey espouse a very 'constructionist' position when they say of qualitative research that,

Qualitative research self-consciously avoids the assumption that the problem or social group under study is an autonomous creation arising by spontaneous combustion and challenges the ahistorical basis of empiricism. (Christians and Carey 1989:365)

Christians and Carey give the purpose of qualitative research as "recovering the fact of human agency" (Christians and Carey, 1989:359). This focus is congruent with the central concerns of the social constructionist framework, inasmuch as the *process* of social construction *is* 'the fact of human agency'. It

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² In this sense, social constructionists operate in the same manner as those who Fortner and Christians refer to as 'culturalists.' They comment, "The culturalist does not assume a priori that only the views of the major figures in events or controversies are germane. *The texts themselves establish the parameters of interpretation, classification (typification), and eventual explanation (valuation).*" (Fortner and Christians, 1989:379. emphasis added).

is unsurprising that qualitative method and constructionist theory are so often found together (Markson, 1990; Johnson, 1989; Fine and Christoforides, 1991; Rowe and Cavender, 1991; among others).

The central concerns of the social constructionist framework are definition and claims-making. A constructionist wants to know how a phenomenon is being defined and by whom, as well as what claims are being made about it, by whom, where, and in what context. (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977; Gusfield, 1984; Markson, 1990) The media are an important forum in which claims are made, not only about social problems, but about the whole range of situations, activities and conditions with which the media concern themselves. For example, Beckett uses this framework to examine the various constructions of aboriginal identity (Beckett, 1988). Thus, this analysis will apply the social constructionist framework to the portrayal of witchcraft and its practitioners by the Ottawa print news media, because although this is not considered a 'social problem' *per se*, there are still important elements of claims-making and definition occurring around the topic as the traditional and neo-pagan [Craft] witchcraft paradigms come into conflict.

Claims-making is, simply put, what is being said about the issue at hand. It includes any information, opinion, narrative or other rhetorical device that explicitly or implicitly makes a statement, a 'claim', about the topic under consideration. It also concerns the manner in which this material is presented. The social constructionist perspective does not recognize any 'neutral,' that is to say, unmotivated, information. If it is being presented, then it has some purpose or importance for the presenter. It is this assumption, that communications are intended to be meaningful and not spurious, that is the theoretical foundation of the constructionist analysis of communication.

Contemporary witches claim to represent one aspect of a wider ranging pagan religious movement.³ Whether or not this is valid, in terms of any

³ The term 'religious movement' is used here in the sense that Bainbridge and Stark define it. "...religious movements are social movements that wish to cause or prevent change in a system of beliefs, values, symbols and practices concerned with providing supernaturally based general compensators." (Bainbridge and Stark, 1985:23, emphasis in original)

definitions that one might want to impose from the outside, is not the issue here. What is important from a social constructionist perspective is that there is a group that is *constructing itself* as a religious concern. In doing so, witches, both individually and in more organized groups, are involving themselves in a quest for the legitimation of their own religious identity. This manifests itself through a variety of avenues, from the foundation of support networks, newsletters, computer bulletin boards, and publishing houses to legal challenges aimed at securing religious rights and freedoms. These are all probably important and valuable steps, however, it is popular attitudes that will ultimately determine the social acceptance or rejection of witchcraft as a valid religious choice. The persistence of traditional images of witchcraft makes it more difficult for the movement to recruit new members, in addition to making it socially uncomfortable for existing members. Although it is certainly possible for a religion to survive through periods of misunderstanding and even outright hostility, as the histories of Christianity and Judaism will attest, the task of establishing a new religion is made easier by a general acceptance of one's own definitions of its purpose, function, and meaning.

This paper examines one aspect of witchcraft's quest for legitimation, by examining how it is being portrayed in the news media. The popular media, especially the information media, have the power to inform and direct popular opinion, and thus to help or to hinder this legitimation enterprise. Witchcraft faces some unique challenges in its struggle to establish a religious identity. It already has an identity, a demonic, Satanic identity which is the legacy of the Reformation. No other cult in recent history has had to deal with such deeply entrenched, profoundly negative stereotypes evoked by its name alone. Hutton captures this dilemma nicely when he writes,

The advantage of the label 'witch' is that it has all the exciting connotations of a figure who flouts the conventions of normal society and is possessed of powers unavailable to it, at once feared and persecuted. It is a marvellous rallying-point for a counter culture, and also one of the few images of independent female power in early modern European civilization. The disadvantage is that by identifying themselves with a very

old stereotype of menace, derived from the pre-Christian world itself, modern pagans have drawn upon themselves a great deal of unnecessary suspicion, vituperation and victimization which they are perpetually struggling to assuage. (Hutton, 1991:335)

Witchcraft must overcome these negative stereotypes in order to be recognized as a legitimate religious movement. This study attempts to address the extent to which this has occurred in the Ottawa Citizen.

Chapter One: The Portrait Gallery -- Images of the Witch

witch (wich) *n.* 1. A woman who practices sorcery; one having supernatural powers, esp. to work evil, and usu. by having association with evil spirits or the devil. 2. An ugly, malignant old woman; a hag. 3. A bewitching or fascinating woman or girl. -- *v.t.* 1. To work an evil spell upon. 2. To effect by witchcraft. 3. To fascinate or bewitch; enchant. [OE *wicce* witch, fem. of *wicca* wizard]. (Funk & Wagnells, 1976)

The word 'witch' has a powerful hold on the Western imagination. Even now, several hundred years after the end of the Inquisition in Europe, in a country that has never seen an officially sanctioned witch hunt, the word alone can still conjure up images of a frightening darkness, and gut-level feelings of strangeness and fear. To say of someone, 'She's a real witch,' can imply a whole range of things about a person's dress, their appearance, their interpersonal skills, and their general demeanour, none of them complimentary. Witches still frighten children in fairytales, and adults in horror films.

This chapter will introduce and contextualize two competing paradigms for conceptualizing the words 'witch' and 'witchcraft', -- what this research will refer to as the 'traditional' and the 'Craft.' These paradigms will subsequently be used as a framework for the analysis of the news article sample. The traditional paradigm grew up in the medieval and renaissance periods, and comes to us through popular culture from the time we are old enough to go out for Hallowe'en; the Craft paradigm is a contemporary minority view, articulated by those who have chosen these labels to describe themselves and their religious practice. There are only two common elements to these divergent portrayals: the words themselves, and a perceived or asserted belief in magic.

1.1 The Traditional Paradigm

Kristen Pederson, in her thesis *The Nature of Medieval Witchcraft*, argues that the perceived presence of magic was the only consistent defining characteristic of a witch from the early to the late Middle Ages.

The difference between a medieval witch and a heretic or just a curmudgeon, is that magic was believed to be involved. The witch, in addition to any other qualities, was a magic worker, who knew how to manipulate the world through unseen forces, and to perform supernatural acts... the witch was a being who was able to dance along the fine line between the known and the unknown, and the line itself was the practice of magic. (Pederson, 1991)

How the remaining qualities traditionally associated with the world 'witchcraft', such as devil worship, human sacrifice, sexual perversity and cannibalism, came to accrue to this label will be briefly examined below.

In the traditional paradigm, 'witch' is a label that is externally defined. It is unlikely that any group, class, or occupation designated itself by that term before the nineteenth century. As an accusation, it is used first by those who perceive themselves to have been the victims of 'witchcraft', that is, malevolent misfortune. 'Witch' is a label used to assign blame.⁴ It is adopted later by those who make it their business to promote conformity and punish dissent, inasmuch as it manifests itself in socially harmful behaviour, such as the courts and the churches.

Within the emerging Christian framework of the medieval period, 'witch' is a label of deviance, used as a fluid repository for characteristics and actions considered reprehensible. Although the label itself remained semantically unchanged over a long period of time, its connotative contents evolved as the aims and theology of the Church changed. "Witchcraft was not a normative label as much as it was a descriptive one." (Pederson, 1991) In addition, the

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⁴ The operation of the traditional paradigm in modern times can be seen in Favret-Saada's studies of witchcraft in the Bocage.

power of the accusation seemed to rest more in what it came to imply through the machinations of theology than in anything that was ever actually observed.

Specifically, 'witch' was used by the Christian church as a designation for a variety of beliefs and practices perceived to be non-Christian, and therefore threats to Christian civilization. These changed over time. While the label began as a weapon to battle the extra-Christian practices which were a feature of medieval peasant life, it ended as a powerful tool to put down heresy within the framework of the Church itself. Russell comments, "In the beginning, European sorcery⁵ was very similar to that elsewhere in the world. The transformation [of the general perception of the practice, to refer to demonolatry] was largely the result of Christian thought upon pagan sorcery and religion." (Russell, 1980:39) Christianity did not move into a vacuum as it spread outward from the Middle East, but met with a bewildering variety of local religions and customs, few of which conformed to either their notions about the nature of God or to their concept of the proper relationship between God and humanity. In order to convert in these areas, it was necessary to satisfactorily account for, and summarily dispose of, these indigenous beliefs. One very effective means of accomplishing this end was to recognize the existing gods as demons, and thus to condemn those who continued traditional observances as working against the plan of salvation set out by the one true God.⁶ Russell notes,

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⁵ Russell is particular about his use of the word 'sorcery'. He defines it as "automatic magic: one performs a certain action, and one gets results accordingly... This book uses the term 'sorcery' for the sorcery practised round the world whether beneficent or maleficent, and whether mechanical or invoking spirits." (Russell 1980:14) He uses 'witchcraft' "to mean either the diabolical witchcraft of the witch-craze or modern neo-pagan witchcraft." (ibid)

⁶ Another effective method of accomplishing this was to Christianize the existing deities as saints, thus legitimating some practices within a new framework. Nachman ben Yehuda comments, "After the disintegration of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity, the church made many serious efforts to convert European pagan tribes. Many Christian missionaries found that the 'barbarians' already possessed quite a large spectrum of local deities (Lea 1901, 3:395). In the most sensible manner, the missionaries sought to convert these people by canonizing local idols so that the native population could continue to worship them as Christian saints." (Ben Yehuda 1985:33) This can be seen especially in Ireland in the similarities between the triple goddess Brigid, daughter of the Dagda and St. Brigit of Kildare, in Ireland.

All survivals of pagan belief, worship and practice were condemned as demonic and gradually suppressed by Christian theology and law. Roman law had been stern in dealing with sorcery. Teutonic law was much milder. But in the course of the eighth and ninth centuries, the growing influence of theology upon civil law produced a legal association of sorcerers with demons... the law fixed the identification of paganism with demonolatry. (Russell, 1980:52)

As late as the tenth century, however, the Church's official position on witchcraft, or at least on some of the practices that became associated with it, was that it did not exist except in the minds of the faithless. It had no tangible, physical reality. This assertion can be seen in the *Canon Episcopi* (c. 900 C.E.) which states,

Some wicked women are perverted by the Devil and led astray by illusions and fantasies induced by demons, so that they believe that they ride out at night on beasts with Diana, the pagan goddess, and a horde of women... They say that they obey Diana's commands and on certain nights are called out into her service... Many other people also believe this to be true, although it is a pagan error to believe that any other divinity exists than the one God... Such fantasies are thrust into the minds of faithless people not by God, but by the Devil.
(translation from Russell, 1980:53)

By the eleventh century, Christianity had firmly established itself as the religion of Europe. Paganism had died out as a coherent worldview, although some pagan practices doubtless persisted.⁷ Paganism, therefore, was no longer the principal threat to the dominance of the Christian church. This place

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⁷ This is the position of almost all scholars in the field. The exception to this view is Margaret Murray, whose books *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, *God of the Witches* and *The Divine King in England* argue for the organized survival of paganism as a popular religion. Although these works inspired an enthusiastic following at the time of their publication, they have largely been dismissed as works of serious scholarship today. Regarding the evidence put forth to support Murray's thesis, Rose notes, "Of course, many popular festivals and perhaps all dances, were survivals from paganism; this is not the same as a survival of paganism." (Rose, 1962:64) Russell more scathingly comments, "That this 'old religion' persisted secretly, without leaving any evidence is of course possible, just as it is possible that below the surface of the moon lie extensive deposits of Stilton cheese. Anything is possible. But it is nonsense to assert the existence of something for which no evidence exists. The Murrayites ask us to swallow a most peculiar sandwich: a large piece of the wrong evidence between two thick slices of no evidence at all." (Russell 1980:42) Murray's influence on the Craft paradigm will be discussed below.

of distinction came to be held by heresy, dissenting theological views within the context of Christian belief. It is significant to note that many of the charges characteristic of the renaissance and reformation era witch trials were recorded as being levelled against heretics in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These charges included orgiastic practices, human sacrifice, cannibalism and adoration of the Devil. The significance of this lies in the way in which these charges inform subsequent accusations of witchcraft.

Many of the heresies against which the Church was forced to take a firm stand were dualistic heresies.⁸ These heresies were most theologically notable for their radical separation of the principles of good and evil. In this process, evil becomes reified and personified in a figure who comes to stand in opposition to the force of good. This separation seemed, in the eyes of learned churchmen, to elevate the Devil (the principle of evil) by ascribing to him powers appropriate only to God. The practice of simple sorcery, and later that of Renaissance magic, was believed by these same churchmen to occur through the supplication of demons, the devil's minions. As this again appeared to elevate the devil, it is perhaps unsurprising that these two separate persecutions should come together under a single set of charges.

The melding of the notions of witchcraft and heresy served an additional purpose for the ecclesiastical enforcement arm of the Church by allowing both to be handled by the papal Inquisition, which was not possible when witchcraft was considered to be separate from heresy.⁹

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⁸ Notably the Cathars.

⁹ It must be made clear at this point that both the legal trends and the witchcraft referred to here are that of continental Europe. England showed a markedly different development, due at least in part, to its freedom from the Inquisition. Witchcraft was always prosecuted as a civil, rather than an ecclesiastical, offence, and subject to the same judicial restrictions as any other civil offence. Although something resembling the continental witch-craze with its ideas of diabolism did take hold in England, it began late, (under James VI of Scotland) and petered out at about the same time it did elsewhere.

For the most part, witchcraft was considered to be malevolent, but not explicitly Satanic. Russell notes, "As late as the 1560s, Essex witches differed markedly from their continental colleagues: they did not fly, meet for orgies, dance and feast, or practice sexual perversions. Most significantly, they did not sign a pact with the Devil or worship him. Rather, English witches, like African sorcerers, caused disease and fits, harmed livestock, hurt infants and small children, and

Pope Alexander IV (1254-61) refused the request of the inquisition to give it jurisdiction over all sorcery, but he turned over to it all cases of sorcery that 'clearly involved heresy'. The inquisitors rapidly learned to use this loophole and to introduce charges of heresy into sorcery trials. (Russell, 1980:71)

Thus the identification of witchcraft and sorcery became enshrined as what Russell refers to as "a bureaucratic and legal convenience" (Russell, 1980:71).

The establishment of the Inquisition as the prosecuting institution for charges of witchcraft, fully confirmed by a Bull of Pope Innocent VIII in 1484, had enormous impact on subsequent ideas about witchcraft. The Inquisition was not bound by the rules of the civil courts; it did not require an accusation be filed in order to investigate; it abolished the traditional Teutonic penalties for false accusation; it combined the roles of prosecutor and judge; and it could freely use torture to extract evidence. In order to facilitate prosecution, standard lists of questions to be put to the accused came into general use.¹⁰ The *Malleus Maleficarum*, published in 1486, is probably our best surviving example of these quasi-judicial manuals, as well as being a compendium of the beliefs about witches and their powers held by the learned Dominicans who authored it, and by extension, probably of much of the learned church.¹¹ The *Malleus*

kept familiars." (Russell 1980:92) The best literary example of England's conception of witchcraft is, of course, to be found in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. There is not a trace of diabolism attached to these figures, however malign their actions may have been, rather, they are said to worship Hecate, who was a Greek crone goddess associated with death and with magic.

¹⁰ In time, taking their cue from inquisitorial procedure, civil courts on the continent began to utilize similar tactics. (see Klaits, 1985; Kieckhefer, 1976)

¹¹ Richard Kieckhefer, in his *The Medieval Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture*, emphasizes the care one must take in generalizing about the content of popular belief on the basis of trial documents generated by a learned elite. For those trials in which the accuser's original depositions survive, he notes that the charges brought against the accused were frequently very different than those which were confessed before an ecclesiastical court. He says in summation, "In short, the thirty-five most reliable trials point to a clear conclusion: in the majority of cases, the townsmen or villagers who took their neighbours to court did so for essentially practical reasons. They felt that these individuals were noxious creatures, who were undermining their health and welfare. Though in a few cases the accusers suggested that bewitchment was accomplished through invocation of the devil, there is no indication of popular belief in veneration of the devil. No ritual contact with him was alleged, and even the nature of the

went through fourteen editions by 1520, and underwent another flurry of reprinting at the end of the century (Klaits, 1985).¹² The availability of this kind of 'manual for the prosecution' promoted a standardized view of witchcraft, which was by now deeply coloured by the charges of heretical diabolism. Russell notes, "The tortured were confronted by standard lists of questions and in their agony usually confessed to most of what was put to them. Each confession convinced the authorities of the validity of the lists and reinforced their use at the next trial." (Russell, 1980:81-82) Elliot Rose comments,

...the appearance of uniformity thus imposed on the cult [by the publication of the *Malleus*], and the appearance of a cult imposed on the practice, were, as we must recognize, wholly artificial. Many Renaissance writings on the subject, as well, probably, as many trials, were rendered useless by the tendency, which is still with us, to presume the whole of the cult where one of its elements exists, counting everything down to talisman-peddling and the Evil Eye as such an element. (Rose, 1962:33)

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during the height of the witch-craze, Kieckhefer's distinction between the popular notion of sorcery and the learned notion of diabolism becomes more difficult to apply strictly. The sensationalism of the local trials, the availability of lurid printed accounts of trials outside of the local area, and the usage of diabolical motifs in sermons directed at the general population are sure to have had some influence.¹³ Whatever the popular beliefs might have been, the witchcraft literature of this period, which had become both plentiful and available by virtue of the fifteenth century invention of the printing press, clearly embodies the identification of witchcraft with Satanic diabolism.

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connection was left unspecified... The idea of diabolism, developed and elaborated on the Continent, was evidently the product of speculation by theologians and jurists, who could evidently make no sense of sorcery except by postulating a diabolical link between the witch and her victim." (Kieckhefer 1976:36).

¹² It should be noted here that the *Malleus* was not translated into English until the modern period.

¹³ Elliott Currie notes that, "...confessions were publicly read at executions, and distributed to the populace at large..." (Currie, 1974:195).

There is much academic speculation about what led to the transformation of the scattering of witch trials in the medieval period to the full-blown witch-craze of the Renaissance and Reformation. It is clear, through this scholarship, that no one theory will ever suffice to explain this temporally and spatially diverse phenomenon (Klaits, 1985). One thing that certainly contributed to the escalation of the craze, however, was another idea derived from the earlier heresy trials. This was the theory that witches, like other problematic heretics, met in groups. This notion gave the entire accusation an even more sinister flavour, because the witch was no longer believed to be a misguided individual, but part of a larger, organized group, working actively against the rule of God, and by extension, the societies built upon that rule. It meant that the scope of malevolence was extended far beyond an individual farmer and his cows, and into the whole Christian community. Even more significantly, it meant that where there was one witch, there were others.

Now, when an individual was accused, they were pressured to name the others with whom they had met to venerate the devil, thus laying the groundwork for subsequent trials. Excerpts from the letter of Johannes Junius to his daughter Veronica, written while Junius was in a Bamberg prison awaiting trial for witchcraft in 1628, clearly indicate this emphasis on the part of the prosecution. He had already been tortured into making a confession, though he writes explicitly that "it was all a lie."

Then I had to tell what people I had seen at the witch-sabbat. I said that I had not recognized them. "You old rascal, I must set the executioner at you. Say -- was not the Chancellor there?" So I said yes. "Who besides?" I had not recognized anybody. So he said: "Take one street after another; begin at the market, go out on one street and back on the next." I had to name several persons there. Then came the long street. I knew nobody. Had to name eight persons there. Then the Zinkenwert -- one person more. Then over the upper bridge to Georgthor, on both sides. Knew nobody again. Did I know nobody in the castle -- whoever it might be, I should speak without fear. And thus continuously they asked me on all the streets, though I could not and would not say more. So they gave me to the executioner, told him to strip me, shave me all over, and

put me to the torture. "The rascal knows one on the market-place, is with him daily, and yet won't name him." By that they meant Dietmeyer: so I had to name him too. (cited in Klaits 1985:129-130)

Junius adds in the margin of the letter that he himself has been denounced by six people, "all false, through compulsion, as they have all told me, and begged me forgiveness in God's name before they were executed... They were forced to say it, just as I myself was." The application of torture, or even the threatened application of torture, was a powerful motivator for people to confess to all that was put to them. Klaits goes so far as to say "without torture, there would have been no witch-craze" (1985:128). This emphasis on group meetings also meant the sabbat¹⁴ became a much more central fixture in the witchcraft literature of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and it is here that the picture of the witch as a sexual deviant, entirely absent in the earliest trials, is developed to the fullest (Klaits, 1985; McGowan, 1977).

For two hundred years, the witch-craze captured the scholarly and theological imaginations of the Western world, and only with the emergence of the scientific-rationalistic-mechanistic world view in the late seventeenth century would it begin to let go. Even so, this paradigmatic reform did not change the imagery that had come to accrue to the word 'witch' as much as it made it unfashionable and increasingly difficult to believe that it had any objective reflection in the real world. (Russell, 1980; Thomas, 1971) Even when belief was present, prosecution had become much more difficult. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Pierre de Lancre had burned and tortured some 600 people on charges of witchcraft in the Labourd region of France, all in the space of four months. For this reign of terror, he was rewarded by being made a Councillor of State (McGowan, 1971). In 1682, not even a century later, Louis XIV declared that "witchcraft had no reality other than as a type of fraud" (Klaits, 1985:163). The elite were being won over to a more skeptical position, and the legal system began to reflect that new consciousness. Klaits notes,

¹⁴ Also rendered 'sabbath' or 'synagogue' probably as an intentional insult to the Jews.

Together with many of their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, the French parlementaires came to insist on uncoerced confessions or the firsthand testimony of at least two trustworthy witnesses as grounds for conviction. Such judicial demands did nothing more than apply to cases of witchcraft the same criteria for conviction used in judging other offenses. When judges stopped seeing witchcraft as an exceptional crime requiring extraordinary remedies, they were well on their way to ending witchhunts altogether. (Klaits, 1985:163)

The images promulgated in the literature of the witch-craze have been preserved down to the present time. Even those writers, both contemporary to the witch-craze and modern, wishing only to refute those stereotypes cannot help but cite them, thus bringing them forward yet again. With the advent of widespread literacy, these often lurid expositions are now far more directly accessible to any interested party than they were to their fifteenth and sixteenth century counterparts. Print is a very permanent medium, and there will always be credulous individuals without the critical tools at their disposal, or without the desire, to distinguish fact from fantasy. In addition, modern writers, especially those in the horror genre, have made free use of the diabolical images which were the staple of the witchcraze in their popular entertainment. Thus, it is unsurprising that a notion of Satanic witchcraft persists in many segments of the modern population.

The only other common literary portrayal of witches is found in folk and fairy tales. This representation tends to differ from that offered up by medieval and renaissance theologians inasmuch as the elements of paganism and diabolism are both generally absent. Despite their focus on ideas of good and evil, religion does not seem to be a concern of these stories. Nevertheless, their portrayal of witchcraft is ultimately no more positive than that found in other forums. Russell comments,

Folk-tales about witchcraft and sorcery generally reflect both a fear of sorcerers and a sense of their power. The 'witch' of the folk-tale is basically a sorcerer (rarely do charges derived from the witch-craze enter into folk-tales). She is closely associated with the powers of nature and has many of the aspects of a nature spirit herself. She is close to the 'woodwives' or 'wild women' of folklore who represent

the wildness of nature as opposed to the force of civilized humanity... This manner of portraying the witch is very ancient and probably archetypal. This witch is neither a simple sorceress, nor a demonolator nor a pagan. She is a hostile presence from another world. (Russell, 1980:46)

These tales of malign, otherworldly hostility have a similar ability to arouse fear and distaste as do the sensational accounts of the inquisition trials, perhaps even moreso, as most people can be expected to have encountered the powerful ambivalence of nature and the night, while few have had any contact with anything resembling a 'typical' witches' sabbat. In addition, in modern culture, folk and fairy tales tend to be told to children, whose ability to separate the objectively real from the imaginary is not as keenly developed as the adult's, while descriptions of diabolical witchcraft are generally encountered later in life.

In summary, the traditional paradigm describes witchcraft as Satanic diabolism. Witches worship the devil, have obscene and orgiastic meetings, cause others to sicken and die by magical means, kill animals, blight crops, cause impotence and infertility, and are generally a threat to the social order. They are evil, and they are 'other', undeserving of the rights and protections conferred by membership in society.

1.2 The Craft Paradigm

With the weight of this kind of cultural prejudice arrayed against it, it is surprising that any movement would choose the term 'witchcraft' to describe itself. In some ways, the designation can be seen as a misnomer, based upon a historical misunderstanding. Contemporary witchcraft, also known as Wicca or the Craft, considers itself to be a pagan religious movement which draws upon pre-Christian folklore and mythology for its inspiration. (Adler, 1986; Crowley, 1989; Marron, 1989; Starhawk, 1979; Skelton, 1990; for additional references, see bibliography) The historical difficulty which gives rise to the explosive nomenclature is that, for many years after it first became visible in the 1950s, Wicca insisted that it was a pre-Christian nature religion -- a *survival* rather than a *revival*.

Although it is probably not possible to completely disprove this assertion, it is nevertheless regarded as very dubious in scholarly circles today (Rose, 1962; Kelly, 1982; Russell, 1980). It is certainly possible to speculatively construct an explanation of why an essentially new religious movement should have chosen to burden itself with such a negative and unwieldy label. The historical justification lies with Margaret Murray.¹⁵ A noted Egyptologist and British professor, two of the books she published, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* (1921), and *God of the Witches* (1931), developed her theory that those burned during the witch-craze of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, those who had been branded as witches, were in fact members of an organized pan-European, pre-Christian pagan fertility cult.

It is almost certain that the man to whom most of modern witchcraft owes its impetus, Gerald Gardner, had read Margaret Murray.¹⁶ In fact, the preface to his ground-breaking 1954 work, *Witchcraft Today*, was written by none other than that redoubtable woman herself. Gardner was a British customs agent and amateur anthropologist who had been stationed extensively in Malaya. He retired to Britain in 1936. This much is easily verifiable. Also verifiable is that he was involved in the occult/theosophical scene in England. Less verifiable is

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¹⁵ Klaitz notes, "Although the popular reputation of Murray's works remains remarkably strong, no serious student of the subject accepts her evidence. Her theories nevertheless continue to provide an imagined historical foundation for members of witchcults today. Such modern witches practice a kind of pagan worship of Mother Earth. They reject completely a belief in Satan and have no connection with the supposed devil-worshipping witches of witch-hunt lore." (Klaitz, 1985:10)

¹⁶ For example, Gardner states, "Among the most common charges against witches is that they denied or repudiated the Christian religion. All I can say is, I and my friends have never seen or heard of such denial or repudiation. My opinion is that in the early days everyone was of the old faith and regularly worshipped the old gods before they were initiated. To people like the Romans and Romano-Britons it would only be worshipping their own gods who had become identified with Celtic ones, so there would be nothing to repudiate.

"Possibly during the persecution times if unknown people turned up at a big religious meeting they would be questioned to see if they were spies and might be asked to deny Christianity, as a sort of test. They would never initiate anyone, take him into the circle, unless they knew him well as one of the old faith. When the persecution grew fierce, the cult dived underground and practically only children, born and bred into the cult, were ever initiated." (Gardner 1954:43)

Thus, Murray's work gave Gardner a 'legitimate' historical framework, and Gardner's work 'proved' Murray's theory.

Gardner's assertion that he was initiated into a witch-coven, which preserved some traditions from the pre-craze era, in 1939. He claims that the rituals he learned while a member of this coven formed the basis for the rituals which later appear in his own 'Book of Shadows'. In fact, Aidan Kelly argues that there is nothing present in the Gardnerian Book of Shadows that shows any evidence of its purported antiquity, and that most of the material can be easily attributed to Gardner's familiarity with the works of Murray, Frazer, Leland and the British magical societies. Kelly asserts that most of the rituals, in their final forms, were likely written in the mid to late 1950s by Doreen Valiente, an associate of Gardner's, who wrote with a much more goddess-oriented focus, *a la* Robert Graves. (Kelly, 1982; 1991)¹⁷

This aside, it is not difficult to imagine that, in an age when Murray's theories were very much in vogue, it would be tempting for an individual trying to develop a pagan magic and nature-based religion, especially in England, to embrace the prevailing intellectual climate and call it 'witchcraft'. The connection with the persecuted pagans of Murray's theory lent to the movement a historical legitimacy that it would not have otherwise possessed.¹⁸ The designation 'witchcraft' has been retained, despite its uncomfortable associations, both by those who continue to accept its Murrayite claims of origin (Crowley, 1989; Skelton, 1990; Valiente, 1978; Farrar and Farrar, 1981), and by those who are merely used to it, and can find no term they like better (Buckland, 1986; Warren-Clarke, 1987). It is also used by those who utilize the term in an

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¹⁷ This supposition may be seen to be given some support by Valiente's admission that she did, in fact, write much of the material that appears in the Book of Shadows. She asserts, however, that she worked with Gardner on constructing the rituals, and that she is personally convinced that he was basing them on 'traditional' material from the group into which he was initiated *although she never saw any of this material herself*. (Valiente, 1989)

¹⁸ The difficulty of basing the movement's legitimacy claims on a dubiously historical basis has been acutely felt as historical scholarship has refuted those claims, and in dismissing them, has dismissed the whole movement as a lie and a hoax. This dismissal of the Craft is not entirely justified, as its historical claims have little bearing on its actual religious function, as perceived from within. Russell notes, "That Gardner (or Crowley) invented the religion does not invalidate it. Every religion has a founder, and much that surrounds the origin of any religion is historically suspect. Lack of historicity does not necessarily deprive a religion of its insight." (Russell, 1980 154)

overtly political sense, especially feminists, to call attention to the marginalized status of women's power (Budapest, 1979; Starhawk, 1979). Others within the same general religious framework have opted to use the less controversial labels Wicca or Craft (for example, Cunningham, 1989).

Even where the historical assertions are no longer believed to be absolutely factual, the Murrayite account continues to be disseminated, but as myth rather than history. Often, outsiders to the movement have difficulty discerning between these uses -- a mythopoeic history sounds much like a factual history, and both Craft writers and those reporting on the movement are often very vague about which kind of account they are giving (see especially: Crowley, 1989; Marron, 1989). Thus the criticisms of historicity continue. In this sense, modern witches find themselves in much the same position as Christians were in the nineteenth century, when science first made it possible to question the Bible's validity as a literal historical document. These questions, and the inherent unprovability of much of the Biblical history, have not led the Christian churches to jettison the Bible, but instead to its adoption as a metaphorical, rather than a literal truth. The Murrayite history is slowly coming to be viewed in the same way by witches (Adler, 1986; Cunningham, 1989).

The chief point to be made from all this is that contemporary witches do not draw upon the stereotypes perpetuated during the witch-craze in formulating their beliefs or practice.¹⁹ The only common element between the contemporary witches and their historical counterparts is magic. Historical witches were accused of malevolent magic, and modern witches claim that magic exists and that they can use it. They would deny that it is necessarily malevolent, but acknowledge that it can be, in the hands of an essentially unethical practitioner. (Skelton, 1990; Adler, 1986; Farrar and Farrar, 1984; Valiente, 1978; Weinstein, 1979) This association with magic, taken in

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¹⁹ Because of the early belief in the veracity of the Murrayite history, however, some of the terms used are the same. For example, most witches refer to the eight seasonal festivals as 'sabbats' and the thirteen (or twenty-six, depending on the tradition) lunar meetings as 'esbats'.

conjunction with the label 'witch', can probably explain much of the continued attribution of historical stereotypes to modern witches. As Eliot Rose notes, there is still the tendency to presume the whole of the cult where one of its elements exists (Rose 1962:33).

In many ways, it is much easier to describe what modern witchcraft is not, than to describe what it is, as it is a decentralized movement with no sacred texts and little consistent dogma.²⁰ The label 'witch' continues to be descriptive rather than normative. There will be individuals within the movement who will not hesitate to take issue with any generalization this study chooses to present; however, this is a built-in danger with any generalization. The picture presented below is by no means exhaustive, and is a distillation of the most common elements to be found in many of the books on modern witchcraft to be found in the bibliography. For this reason, specific citations have been omitted, as they would necessarily be either unwieldy or arbitrary.

Modern witches consider themselves to be members of a pagan religious movement or spiritual tradition which draws upon pre-Christian traditions, usually of Europe and the Middle East, but occasionally of other locales as well. They reject the concept of devil-worship as a Christian innovation. They worship a divine principle that is considered to be immanent, and whose representations generally resolve themselves into a God and a Goddess. These can be a god and goddess of any pantheon, in any aspect, depending on the season of the year and/or the nature of the working. Some groups, especially those working out of a feminist consciousness, will place more emphasis on the goddess images and the ideas of female power therein contained. Even in groups that are more balanced in their use of divine imagery, the female images are both more positive and more prevalent than those found in the major Western religious traditions. In some traditions of

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²⁰ There are two good overviews available of the neo-pagan movement today, both written by journalists who did extensive travel and interviewing for their collections. *Drawing Down the Moon* (1986) by Margot Adler is primarily concerned with the American scene, while *Witches, Pagans and Magic in the New Age* (1989) by Kevin Marron deals exclusively with Canada.

witchcraft, the coven leader must be female, and in most others, it is just as likely to be a woman as a man. This gives women an access to status and authority that is denied them in many other religions.

The major religious observances (sabbats) center around the seasonal cycles, although there is neither a set mythology nor a set format connected with these observances. Individuals and groups are free to make these observances meaningful in any way that seems appropriate. The idea that the divine is immanent, and the focus on the physical seasons as a framework for worship produces a sense among witches that the earth itself is sacred. This may, in some cases, lead to explicit environmental activism.

Witches believe that there is both a non-material and a material reality, and that the two are interconnected. They do not assert the superiority of one reality over the other. Most believe in 'magic' though definitions of that word vary.²¹ Many assert that magic can be used for healing, in much the same way that Christian 'faith healers' believe that the power of the Holy Spirit can heal. Witches subscribe to the general moral principle 'An' harm ye none, do what ye will" and leave the specific application of it to the individual. This very situational morality extends into the beliefs surrounding sexuality. Human sexuality is not stigmatized in any way; it is viewed as natural, and subject to the same sort of caveats that apply to any other natural ability. Witches also tend to believe in some variety of *karma*. This is often referred to as 'the law of returns' and refers to a belief that everything one does will return on one, at least in equal measure, and some would say three-fold. This can occur either in this life or in another life; most witches believe in reincarnation.

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²¹ Most definitions of magic prevalent among witches are variations on the formulations of two early twentieth century high magicians -- Aleister Crowley and William Butler. Crowley's definition is "Magic is the Art and Science of causing change to occur in accordance with Will"; Butler's is "Magic is the art of effecting change in consciousness at will." (Bonewits, 1971:28-30)

The emphasis seems to be on causing change to occur through methods that cannot be explained by physical laws of causation. Many who would not deny that magic exists, however, would assert that it is a psychological metaphor, and does not necessarily have an 'objective' physical reality.

Where the notion of time is linear in historical religions such as Christianity, it is cyclical in witchcraft. Christianity begins with a historical event, and works through history on its way to another event, the final judgement. Similarly, Christians are born, work through their lives in a linear fashion, die and face a final judgement. There is no second chance. In witchcraft, this life is viewed as just one in a series of lives, just as this spring is one in a series of springs. After death, one may face some kind of judgement, but will eventually be reborn to build on the knowledge of past mistakes and to gather new learning. There are an infinite number of chances.

As a movement, witches publish but do not proselytize. As they tend to believe that all religions fulfill the same essential function, and that the differences between them are largely differences of *how* and not of *what*, there is no philosophical push to make converts. Among witches, there is a very high level of tolerance for religious differences, probably arising at least in part from the wide variety of practice within the decentralized movement itself, and partially from the consciousness of the cultural marginality of their beliefs.

There is a very heavy focus in witchcraft on self-knowledge and personal development. Many of the rituals, meditations, visualizations and other techniques, both those considered to be primarily 'magical' and those considered primarily 'spiritual' by those who care to make those distinctions, are directed at increasing the individual's level of self-knowledge and sense of personal direction and empowerment. In this sense, the movement has much in common with the new, spiritually-oriented psychotherapies.

1.3 Summation

It should be clear, even given the superficiality of these examinations, that the traditional and Craft paradigms for conceptualizing witchcraft are very different. The traditional paradigm sees a malevolent Satanic cult; the Craft paradigm sees a benign nature religion. Modern witches are in the awkward

position of trying to substitute in the public mind several centuries of culturally powerful images and ideas with those of their own making. They generally recognize that only in this way will they be allowed the same kind of religious freedom and legal protection that is almost automatically accorded to other religious groups. However, it is also recognized that the perceived deviance of the movement and the prejudices against it make it very difficult for the prevalent negative stereotypes to be changed by making it almost impossible for people to come forward and openly talk about their religious beliefs without fear of persecution.²² There is a very strong tradition of secrecy in the Craft, not just because many witches conceive of it as a mystery religion, but for the protection of the practitioners. Thus, many (although not all) of the people who are willing to publicly claim they are witches are those who have little to lose by making this claim. They are often already marginalized in other ways, such as in their employment (ie: self-employed, student or unemployed, and therefore in no danger of losing their livelihood). This representation of the Craft by already marginal individuals reinforces the notion that it is not a 'serious' movement.

With these considerations in mind, this study will examine the portrayal of witchcraft and its practitioners in the Ottawa print news media from 1980 to 1990. The print media are viewed as more 'safe' than other forums by many witches, as journalistic ethics are very specific where the confidentiality of sources is concerned, names can be changed, and permission to take photographs can be denied. In this way, a greater measure of anonymity can be preserved than is the case with, for example, television appearances. Of course, the print media have their own pitfalls, not the least of which is that the interviewee has no control over what form the final article will take, and what other materials will be incorporated. Selective editing can make even the most banal statements into sensational indictments.

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²² For example, witches are not protected under the 'freedom of religion' clause of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms because they are not recognized by the government of Canada as belonging to a religion

Articles included in this study will be examined with particular attention paid to which paradigm they appear to draw upon more heavily, the extent to which they characterize witches as deviant or marginal, and the internal context in which these characterizations are made. In this way, the study hopes to begin to determine to what extent the Craft paradigm is asserting itself in the Ottawa market, and to speculate on possible explanations for the trends it observes.

Chapter Two: The Canvas, the Tools and the Frame

This chapter addresses the choice of the materials, methods, and operational categories for the present study from both a theoretical and a practical standpoint. It examines the nature and role of the print news media in modern society in order to demonstrate its suitability and relevance to the research question, as well as outlining the strengths, weaknesses and varieties of content analysis. The chapter also discusses the way in which the analysis has been operationalized in order to incorporate the theoretical concerns of the social constructionist framework. A sample analysis demonstrates how the operationalized categories will be used on the material in question. The chapter ends with a discussion of various theoretical concerns about validity and reliability in research, and how those were addressed during the course of the current project.

2.1: Print News Media

The news media occupy an important and influential place in modern society, as they are the major source of information about events and occurrences outside of one's immediate experience for a vast segment of the general populace. Denis McQuail, a sociologist of mass communication, cites C. Wright Mills' argument that "in so far as men [sic] live beyond their immediate range of contacts they must live in the world created by the mass media" (McQuail, 1969:30). Mass media information is presented in such a manner as to be accessible to the non-specialist, in an available and affordable format. This is especially true of the print news media, which do not require the availability of sometimes expensive radio or television receivers. These media are additionally influential because of the implicit assumptions regarding the truth value of the material they present. There is a perception that 'news' and, by extension, that which is contained in a 'newspaper', is 'true', that is, it is an

accurate reflection of reality "The main function of language in this context is to convey information about the real world." (Findahl and Höjer, 1981:115) Thus, although the print news media are not the most abundant source of images and discussion about witchcraft, a distinction which should probably be given to entertainment media such as horror movies, fantasy novels and their ilk, they provide what is popularly considered to be a more reliable source of information with which to formulate explicit beliefs about witchcraft and its practitioners.²³ Tuchman comments, "...the news media have the power to shape news consumers' opinions on topics about which they are ignorant" (Tuchman, 1978:2). It is for this reason that the print news media, and not the entertainment media, have been chosen for analysis.

There has also traditionally been an assumption, less prevalent now, that newspaper reporting is objective, that it reports situations exactly, without bias or interpretation. This is, needless to say, impossible. Most newspapers are commercial enterprises with limited space. They depend on revenue, both from sales and from advertising, and therefore the content must succeed in both generating and sustaining widespread public interest. To meet these objectives will inevitably require certain editorial decisions be made about content and style. Furthermore, space limitations necessitate choosing to print only certain items out of a much wider range of available options. By the very act of choosing to print an article as a 'news' piece, the editor is making an implicit statement both about its perceived interest value and its perceived importance in relation to other items which are not included. Regardless of the care with

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²³ An 'explicit belief' is used here to mean one that is consciously held, and informs one's rational thought on a subject. It can be argued systematically with another individual. An 'implicit belief' is to refer to one that is held unconsciously or semi-consciously, and which tends to surface as a reaction to information or events. It is less easy to explain and to argue out in a logical fashion. These two types of belief can be in conflict. For example, a person may well explicitly believe that air travel is safe, and yet refuse to fly because of an inner conviction that something awful will happen to them if they do. Many people in this culture have a wealth of implicit beliefs about witchcraft, which they rarely need to articulate or justify, and which are the product of the cultural saturation with the medieval and renaissance images of witchcraft.

which these choices are made, they will still constitute a bias, albeit a hidden, and little acknowledged one. Tuchman notes, "...the act of making news is the act of constructing reality itself rather than a picture of reality..." (Tuchman, 1978:12).

2.2: Considerations affecting the choice of material

The choice of print news media to be examined was circumscribed carefully in order to address certain methodological and practical concerns. It was decided that a daily newspaper would be examined, rather than a weekly or semi-monthly publication, because of the larger and more general circulation of the former. The researcher decided to limit herself to Ottawa because of Ottawa's status as a 'known' area. There was a possibility that factors having to do with the local witchcraft community might need to be addressed in the interpretation, and therefore, that the researcher would be best advised to restrict herself to a city in which she had abundant contacts in that community.

During the period under examination, Ottawa has had a number of daily newspapers, in both official languages. Only the Citizen was considered in this study. The reason for restricting the analysis to the English language media is one of audience. A French-language newspaper, by definition, targets and reaches a different audience than an English-language paper. This effectively constitutes a separate population. Any articles found, therefore, would be most profitably compared to their English-language counterparts, in order to assess a difference between the presentation of the subject in the English-language and French-language media, rather than being considered as part of a homogenous group. In order to do this effectively, a good understanding of the cultural differences between these communities is necessary. Although fascinating, this avenue of research is beyond the scope of the present study.

Of the English language dailies, the Citizen was selected because it was the only one that both originated in Ottawa and had been in operation for the entire length of the study.²⁴ For purposes of consistency, it was decided to

restrict the analysis to the daily offering the best coverage of the period.²⁵ This restriction prevented the temptation to analyse how an individual event was treated in more than one daily, an analysis which would ultimately lend itself better to conclusions about the newspaper, rather than to conclusions about the way in which the subject matter is portrayed.

Also, analysis of the Citizen was restricted to references appearing in articles. Those references appearing in advertisements, which are commercial in nature, do not originate with the newspaper, and do not carry the same implied truth value, were not considered, nor were those appearing in editorials, signed columns, letters to the editor or letters to 'Dear Abby.' Editorials and columns were omitted because they are, by definition, opinion pieces, what Tuchman refers to as 'news analysis' rather than news, and do not carry the same implied truth value. In fact, these items act to reinforce the truth value of those items not so labelled. "Labelling some items as other than 'objective facts' also reinforces the claim that most stories present facts, for it signals, 'This news organization is seriously concerned with distinctions between factual and interpretive materials.'" (Tuchman, 1978:98-99). Letters, either to the editor or to an advice columnist, are reader-generated rather than newspaper-generated, and are known to be the product of an individual or group which is generally neither attributed, nor claiming objectivity.

In addition, to be considered in the examination, the article must have had witches or witchcraft as a central concern; that is, part of the significance of the story must involve the presence of one of these elements. This allows for the exclusion of stories which make mention of witches as an aside, without

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²⁴ The Globe and Mail was rejected because, although it does produce a 'National Edition' that edition is not aimed at the Ottawa market in particular, but at the much broader Canadian market. As the present study is only interested in dealing with Ottawa, the Globe and Mail was not considered to provide representative Ottawa coverage.

²⁵ The Ottawa Journal ceased publication in August 1980, and the Ottawa Sun did not begin publication until 1987

making any statements *about* them, such as a Citizen article on the history of the jack-o-lantern. Stories of this variety would add little substance to the analysis.

Articles were assembled through a systematic search process over the course of several months. The Citizen is computer-indexed from 1985 onwards and citations from the years 1985 to 1989 inclusive were obtained by running a computer search on the keywords 'witches,' 'witchcraft,' 'pagan,' and 'neo-pagan'. The mass of references thus generated were checked individually on the microfilm to determine their suitability. Articles appearing before 1985 were searched manually, by scanning each page of each day's edition from January 1980 to December 1984 from microfilm.

2.3: Content Analysis

Content analysis was chosen as the primary methodological tool for this study because of its inherent suitability for handling the consistent application of a measurement standard or set of indicators across a sample of print specimens. It is superior to impressionistic reading because it demands that categories and techniques be defined in such a manner that it would be possible for someone other than the original investigator to use them on the same material to generate comparable, if not identical, results. It allows the researcher to systematically assess the significant items in the text, thereby providing a more uniform basis of comparison between texts. An impressionistic reading may miss some things, and magnify others disproportionately to their mention; content analysis is an attempt to compensate for impressionistic bias in readers (Carney, 1970).

Content analysis can be quantitative or qualitative (some writers prefer the terms frequency analysis and non-frequency analysis). These designations refer not only to the technique employed, but to the kind of information that is the object of the search. Both varieties have been used in this analysis, although the emphasis is on non-frequency analysis.

2.3.1: Quantitative [frequency] Analysis

Quantitative, or frequency, analysis is what is most often thought of when the term 'content analysis' is mentioned. It involves ascertaining the frequency with which a given word, theme or image occurs in a given sample unit.

Quantitative content analysis is... a statistical technique for obtaining descriptive data on content variables. Its value... is that it offers the possibility of obtaining more precise, objective and reliable observations about the frequency with which given content characteristics occur... In other words, the quantitative approach substitutes controlled observation and systematic counting for impressionistic ways of observing frequencies of occurrence (George, 1955:8)

Two significant assumptions are inherent in this kind of analysis. The first is that "there is a basic assumption of the relation between the frequency of the linguistic units and the interest of the text producer. In principle, the text producer is more 'interested' in frequent units than infrequent units..." (Lindkvist, 1981:34). While this may or may not be justified in individual cases, it is a useful assumption to make, as it is rarely feasible to seek out the producers of a text and question them in depth regarding their interests and motives. The second is that "quantitative content analysis... is based on the often subconscious presupposition that what the audience perceives and retains is identical to the text." (Findahl and Höijer, 1981:114) This is clearly not the case. Were this assumption true, there would be no need for content analysis; impressionistic readings would suffice, being entirely photographic, and consistent among individuals.

The chief weakness of content analysis, even of the more rigorous quantitative variety, is demonstrated by these two assumptions. Although content analysis does provide the researcher with a very powerful tool to unearth the substance of a text in a systematic manner, it is not able to give the data thereby obtained any meaning or relevance to a research problem. To make the data give anything more than a simple frequency count requires a process of interpretation on the part of the researcher, based upon some kind of methodological framework which may be more or less adequate.

Frequency analyses are also limited in terms of what they can count. If the function of content analysis is, as Findahl and Höijer, assert,

...to characterize, to condense and to elucidate the content, to bring out the essentials or point out certain typical characteristics. It [content analysis] is a matter of describing the content not by itemizing all the words or clauses, but by revealing features that are not immediately apparent to readers, listeners or viewers. (Findahl and Höijer, 1981:111)

then clearly, a mere statistical tabulation is inadequate. A content item can reflect a feature of an article even if it appears only once. The absence of an expected characteristic should also give one pause. In order to get at this sort of information, a different type of content analysis, qualitative or non-frequency analysis, is in order.

2.3.2 Qualitative [non-frequency] Analysis

"We employ the term 'non-frequency' to describe the type of non-quantitative, non-statistical content analysis which uses the presence or absence of a certain content characteristic or syndrome as a content indicator in an inferential hypothesis." (George, 1955:10) Qualitative analysis also attempts to go beyond the explicit, or manifest, level of the text, on the assumption that the latent content, that which the text implies but does not state directly, can also be significant in an effort to determine the 'meaning' or impact of that text (Glassner and Corzine, 1982).

Qualitative analysis, however, in addition to providing the researcher with access to another whole level of data collection, provides a veritable slew of methodological difficulties. In attempting to take into account what is implied by the text, the researcher is imposing an interpretation at the level of data collection. A statement may not imply the same thing to all readers. Individual experience and personal bias are apt to affect an individual's perception of latent content, thus results obtained in a qualitative study are not generally as replicable as those obtained in its quantitative cousin. As one of the primary

advantages of content analysis as a technique is that it eliminates impressionistic bias, it is possible to wonder if qualitative analysis does not defeat its own purpose entirely.

This author would assert that this is not the case. Qualitative analysis demands that the researchers be as open and honest about their biases as possible in order to minimize their impact on the results of the analysis. Few dedicated researchers in any field want to invest time and effort in a project that will be written off by their peers as uselessly subjective. The choice of a qualitative method, with all its concomitant cautions, demands a high level of intellectual honesty about one's personal hermeneutic -- not a negative thing in any research project. All the same criticisms that are levelled at qualitative analysis can be similarly levelled at quantitative analysis, even though the latter is more statistically verifiable. The very choice of what constitutes a significant item for the purpose of counting is the product of a research bias and, because quantitative analysis so frequently parades itself under the label 'objective', this bias is more subversive. Certainly all of the interpretation involved in assessing the results of either form of analysis is open to question as to its bias. Alexander George comments,

Frequency tabulation of words, clichés, stereotypes and slogans may provide an indication of propaganda emphasis and techniques as well as of intentions. But such tabulations in themselves give no clue to the meaning of the content in question. They are of value, therefore, only when the investigator has prior knowledge of their meaning, role, and significance in the system of language habits under study. (George, 1955:23)

This 'prior knowledge' is almost certainly informed by someone's research bias. To dismiss qualitative analysis as useless because it incorporates subjective judgments is really to dismiss the entire realm of human knowledge. To treat this form of analysis with greater care and caution as a researcher because it is known to have great potential for producing results which are not reliable is a more appropriate response, and one which allows the researcher to make use of the wealth of data that qualitative analysis can yield.

2.4: Decontextualizing Text

The analysis to be presented in this paper has tried to capture neither the motives of the text producer nor the response of the reader, but rather to assess the characteristics of the information being presented to the reader for their perusal. In this way, it attempts to avoid some of the methodological difficulties inherent in the inferential assumptions discussed earlier. This is not to say that the constraints imposed by the structure and organization of the print news media will not be considered in the interpretation of the data derived from the articles, only that they are not, in and of themselves, what the study is designed to assess systematically. Therefore, consideration of these factors must be relegated to interpretation and speculation, perhaps to be confirmed or denied in a subsequent study. Although this may seem to leave the text in a contextual vacuum, it is merely an acknowledgement that a text can, in fact, be treated as an artifact in order to examine its internal workings and its relationship to other texts in the context of literature. This ignores the referential nature of textual discourse, its 'truth' or 'falsity' relative to the 'real world', and allows the researcher to deal solely with the nature and organization of its representations. Paul Ricoeur argues for the value of this approach when he writes,

We can make the text into a first kind of reading, a reading which acknowledges, so to speak, the text's interception of all the relations with a world which can be shown and with subjectivities who can converse. This transfer into the 'place' where the text stands constitutes a special project in regard to the text, that of prolonging its suspension of the referential relation to the world and the reference to the author as the speaking subject. By means of this special project, the reader decides to stay within the 'place of the text' and within the 'enclosure' of this place...This project is not only possible but legitimate. Indeed, the constitution of the text as text and the system of text as literature justifies the interception of this double transcendence of speech towards a world and another person. On this basis an explanatory attitude in regard to the text becomes possible. (Ricoeur, 1971:139)

As the purpose of this study is to examine textual representations, rather than to give any estimate of the 'accuracy' of these portrayals, the approach as outlined by Ricoeur above seems particularly apt.

2.5: Operationalizing within the social constructionist framework

The practical goal of this study is to examine the portrayal of witches and witchcraft in the Ottawa Citizen. It is concerned with the composite picture or pictures generated by that information, rather than with any sort of judgment about the facticity of the information which the articles present. It is this concern for the actual *content* of the articles that has led to the use of the theoretical framework developed by the constructionist school in sociology. Because the present research has been undertaken with a content analysis methodology, individual claims have had to be transformed into countable categories. For instance, the constructionist question 'what claims are being made concerning the status of witchcraft as a religion?' requires some further refinement before it can be a useful indicator in this analysis. This question presupposes that it has already been established that such claims are being made, which is by no means certain in the early stages of most research, and it also presupposes that the criteria for designating a statement as 'having to do with the status of witchcraft as a religion' have been developed. These are not givens, and are in fact crucial to the shape of the final research. For, as much as the constructionist researcher recognizes that it is people's definitions and their perceptions of a situation that construct its boundaries in discussion, so must it also be recognized that the researcher's choice of definitions and operational categories circumscribes the boundaries of the research. If these are flawed or inadequate, no amount of brilliant interpretation can save the project.

This analysis has chosen to operationalize the question of whether witchcraft is being portrayed as a religion by examining the specific content of the individual descriptions that occur within each article. There is a special vocabulary, a jargon, that accrues to the discussion of religion and religious concerns that is used for almost nothing else in this society. Words such as priest, congregation, clergy, spiritual, prayer and worship, to name a few, are clearly and easily associated with religion. If words or phrases that come out of this vocabulary are used to describe witches or witchcraft, then it is the opinion

of this researcher that some statement is being made, perhaps implicitly, about the status of witchcraft as a religion. Thus, these references have been counted and recorded in order to address this question.

Other categories of claims were operationalized in a similar manner. All descriptions of witches or their activities that appeared to draw strongly on the traditional paradigm were recorded and counted, as were all of the instances in which witchcraft and satanism were associated, either affirmatively or negatively.²⁶ A list of all the activities attributed to those identified in the articles as witches, implicitly or explicitly,²⁷ or attributed to the practice of witchcraft, as well as how often these attributions occurred, was compiled from the articles in order to generate a composite picture of the portrayal. The list excluded actions whose function was obviously narrative, such as spoke, walked, and claimed, among others. It was not believed that enumerating these could add anything to the present analysis. It also excluded those actions which were presented with a negative structure (ie: witches do not...) as the goal of this particular section of the analysis was to examine what witches were portrayed as *doing*, not what they were portrayed as *not doing*, and not what they were portrayed as *believing*. The composite portrayal was augmented by carefully noting all instances in which individual witches were described and the content of said descriptions.

These categories, in addition to providing information about the pervasiveness of the traditional paradigm in contemporary accounts, should also allow for some interpretative analysis about the extent to which the practice of witchcraft is being portrayed as deviant or marginal, and the extent to which its adherents are being similarly characterized. This is significant, as allegations of deviance often occur in inverse relation to those of power. Clinton Sanders comments,

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²⁶ For a detailed description of how these observations were checked for reliability, please see below.

²⁷ For the distinction between an explicit and an implicit identification, see chapter three.

Power has further relevance to this definitional/subjectivist perspective on deviance. Power insulates one from the reactive consequences of behaviour which has the potential of being socially discrediting. The powerful actor can engage in rule-violating activities apart from situations in which he or she runs the risk of being observed and subsequently subjected to negative social reaction. Should knowledge of this discreditable behaviour somehow slip out of the protective boundaries of privileged information control, however, those in positions of power typically possess the economic, political, legal and interpersonal resources by which they can deflect or avoid negative repercussions. (Sanders, 1990:4)

Thus, if witchcraft is seen to be consistently portrayed as a deviant activity, one would not expect to find powerful individuals as being portrayed as involved in its practice.

Equally important as what is being said, however, is by whom it is being said. For instance, if the statement 'witches eat babies on Sundays' were to appear in an article, it would have very different implications if made by a fundamentalist minister, a self-identified witch, or a person on the street, whom the reporter had stopped and asked what they knew about witchcraft. These connotative differences exist despite the fact that the denotative content is identical. In discussing the relationship between claims and those who make them, Joel Best notes,

Claims cannot exist without claims-makers. Claims-makers both create claims and promote them. Claims-making can be difficult, frustrating work, and not everyone is willing to do it. Claims-makers tend to be interested parties -- individuals who stand to gain something if their claim is successful -- but not all claims-makers have similar interests. (Best, 1989:75)

Although the concern with vested interests is perhaps slightly less relevant to this particular research question than it is to those other phenomena which are being explicitly identified as 'social problems', it is nonetheless an important issue to bear in mind. If any group or category of claims-maker produces a fairly uniform set of statements across a range of articles, especially if they are the only group to make these kind of statements, then their vested interest in the

acceptance of these claims must be, at least speculatively, examined. This imperative again derives from the constructionist principle that information is not to be treated as unmotivated.

Identifying the origin of a statement or claim is not as straightforward as it might seem. Where an individual is cited directly, with the reference in quotation marks, the statement in question is easily attributed. However, these statements do not form the majority of most newspaper articles. Often the reporter will paraphrase individuals, crediting them for their comments but not using them exactly as they were given. This kind of indirect quotation is less reliably attributable only to the person credited with the statement. The reporter, hereafter called the narrator, has participated in the formulation of the statement, and may have altered it, or distorted it away from its original intent. Although ascertaining the intent of statements is not the goal of this research, these methodological concerns make it imperative that the routing of a claim through various claims-makers be noted. If this is not done, a claim which actually originates with a single group, but is referred to by others, could be mistaken for being widely held. It also helps to determine if all of the people espousing a particular claim 'prove' that claim by citing each other recursively. For the purposes of this research, all claims will be traced through as many routes as are acknowledged in the article.²⁸ Although this cannot be considered absolutely complete, as the person identified as the 'source' in the article also must have received the information from somewhere, it is necessary. This analysis treats the world of the text, therefore, that which does not appear in the text does not exist.

Other contextual factors have also been considered in the analysis. These include the location of the action in the article, when it appears and whether or not it focuses on some kind of conflict. Location is important

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²⁸ For example, "Wendy Smith said, 'I went to the store.'" would be recorded as *Wendy Smith*. "Wendy Smith said that she went to the store." would be recorded as *Wendy Smith through narrator*. "Bill Scott, Ms. Smith's lawyer, said that on the day in question, his client claims she went to the store." would be recorded as *Wendy Smith through Bill Scott through narrator*.

because a locally based newspaper such as the Ottawa Citizen carries stories from national and international wire services, and thus, witchcraft may not be constructed as a local phenomenon, even if articles do appear in a local medium. Timing has been considered because of the commercially 'seasonal' aspect of interest in witchcraft. The traditional paradigm would suggest that there should be a flurry of articles concerning witches or witchcraft in late October, around the time of Hallowe'en. Conflict portrayals were selected as a category because of the nature of the medium itself. Farnen and Payerhin note that "the predominant journalistic values require news to be about *unexpected, sensational and conflictive* events." (Farnen and Payerhin, 1990:103) Thus, one would expect that a fair number of the articles to be examined would contain some kind of conflict in order to account for their 'newsworthiness'. This expectation is reinforced by Hart, Turner and Knupp's research on the portrayal of religion in *Time* magazine, in which they found that between 74 and 83 percent of all articles (depending on the year grouping) dealt with some kind of conflict (Hart, Turner and Knupp, 1980).

The utilization of a social constructionist framework and a content analysis methodology to examine newspaper coverage of witchcraft is not novel. It was used by Laurel Rowe and Gray Cavender in the study which resulted in the 1991 publication of "Calderons Bubble, Satan's Trouble, but Witches are Okay: Media Constructions of Satanism and Witchcraft". Despite the differences in the two studies, however, the conclusions to which Rowe and Cavender come about the media's construction of witchcraft are valuable indicators, not only to the types of questions to which this analysis can profitably address itself, but also to the outcome it can expect if the portrayal is found to be consistent with their study. Comparisons between their conclusions and those of this study will be made throughout chapter three.

2.6: A Sample Analysis

Thus far, the theory and methodology used in this research has been discussed in abstract terms. In order to better elaborate the analytical process, this section will present the coding, verification, and interpretation stages, as they were performed, in a more concrete fashion. The following article was taken from the Toronto Star [date unknown]. It is one of the group of articles that was used in the pre-test, and will serve to demonstrate the coding and interpretation process. Reliability and validity testing will be discussed below, but not performed in detail on this article.

Witch has the right to paid holidays board rules

A high priest of Wicca, the little-known and much-misunderstood religion of witchcraft, has won the right to take off religious holidays with pay from his job.

Humber College typist Charles Arnold, 40, will be able to celebrate on Beltane and Samhain, much as Christians celebrate Christmas and Good Friday.

"I offered to work on Good Friday or over Christmas, but it wasn't taken very seriously," Arnold said in an interview yesterday.

Arnold is the Elder of Spendweik Coven, which he founded in 1984, and High Priest of the Temple of the Elder Faiths on Elm St.

He's also vice-president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union at Humber College. The union took his case to arbitration two years ago.

In a majority decision issued this week the arbitrators partially upheld Arnold's claim, ruling Wicca is a religion and the college's collective agreement states that paid religious holidays "shall not be unreasonably denied."

The arbitrators ruled Arnold should receive back pay for Beltane 1987. But he won't receive back pay for the 1986 holidays on the grounds that the college did not act unreasonably in turning down his request that year, since Arnold didn't provide them with enough information.

Wicca is a secretive religion and Arnold was reluctant to tell the college about the celebrations of the two days.

This is a court/conflict article concerning religious discrimination. Witchcraft is associated with the plaintiff and the presentation is contemporary. There are four voices in the article: 1. narrator; 2. Charles Arnold; 3. collective agreement through arbitrators through narrator; 4. arbitrators through narrator.

There are five religious references in the article:

- "high priest of Wicca, the little-known and much-misunderstood religion of witchcraft... religious holidays with pay..." voice 1. confirming
- "...will be able to celebrate on Beltane and Samain, much as Christians celebrate Christmas and Good Friday." voice 1. confirming
- "...Elder of Spendweik Coven... and High Priest of the Temple of the Elder Faiths..." voice 1. confirming
- "...Wicca is a religion..." voice 4. confirming
- "Wicca is a secretive religion..." voice 1. confirming

There are no associations made between witchcraft and satanism in the article. There are no traditional references in the article. The reference to secrecy might be considered a traditional reference, however because 'secretive' is used as an adjectival modifier to 'religion', the researcher decided not to code it in that way.

Charles Arnold is the only person identified as a "witch" in the article. This word is only used in the headline, and does not appear anywhere in the body text. He is described by the narrator as being:

- "Humber College typist..."
- "...40..."
- "...Elder of Spendweik Coven..."
- "...High Priest of the Temple of the Elder Faiths..."
- "...vice-president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union at Humber College".

This description of Arnold, with the possible exception of his age, contains only information relevant to the case the article purports to discuss, that is, his employment, his religious titles and his union leadership. No extraneous or

potentially marginalizing personal information has been included,²⁹ nor has he been discussed in terms of appearance. The narrator makes no statements that imply that Arnold is deviant, or that he might have any motives other than those stated -- to gain paid religious holidays as he is entitled by his union agreement.

It is the narrator who makes most of the statements regarding witchcraft's status as a religion. One of these, citing Arnold's religious titles, is essentially a reference of necessity; this is the vocabulary with which the narrator has been provided to describe Arnold, presumably by Arnold, and the description is necessary to the article. The status of witchcraft as a religion is confirmed repeatedly in the article, but no substantive information is provided about its beliefs or practices, other than that it has two holidays called Beltane and Samhain. The narrator describes the religion as 'little-known' and 'much-misunderstood' but makes no effort to address the nature of the obscurity or misinterpretation, nor to correct it.

The article marginalizes neither witchcraft as a religion, nor the individual whom it has portrayed as a participant. It draws upon the Craft paradigm in that it is centrally concerned with witchcraft as a religion, but it does not elaborate that paradigm; it merely asserts it as an accomplished vision. There is no paradigm conflict in the article, as there are no traditional elements present.

2.7: Reliability and Validity Testing: Theory and basic procedure

Validity and reliability are two key concerns of social science researchers. A measure or indicator must be both valid and reliable in order to be of use in a piece of research. Validity refers to the extent to which the operational definition of the measure or indicator, as determined by the researcher, can be taken to be an adequate representation of that which is

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²⁹ By extraneous and potentially marginalizing, I refer to the sorts of gratuitous references that are often found in these articles -- what I call 'naked under their robes statements', after a particularly good example that was mailed to me at one time. Although content analysis measures what the articles actually *contain*, the interpretation must equally note what they *do not contain*. This is one of the useful features of qualitative analysis.

supposed to be measured or indicated (Singleton et al., 1988:111). For example, church attendance has been frequently used as a measure of religiosity. Questions as to the *validity* of this measure are those that ask to what extent religiosity can be adequately determined by church attendance, or which suggest motivations other than religiosity to explain church attendance. Critics citing the prevalence of other manifestations of religiosity (listening to gospel radio, watching televangelists, home-based worship groups, non-institutional religious forms) are arguing against the *validity* of using church attendance, particularly in isolation, as a measure of religiosity (see for example Bibby, 1987; Glock and Stark, 1965). Validity problems tend to produce systematic,³⁰ rather than random,³¹ errors in the analysis, which are intimately related to the researcher's underlying theory.

Within the context of this study, validity was assessed primarily as 'face-validity' that is, according to the extent to which *commonsense* indicated that the measure was effective and appropriate in the context in which it was used. This is the weakest, and least objective form of validity testing, and the one most open to disagreement; however, it would appear to be the only usable one in this situation. As the study is a content analysis, designed to test for the presence or absence of various types of statements, rather than an experiment or a survey designed to measure attitudes and responses, very few previously tested and certified valid measures are available. Thus, although this chapter attempts to explain why the current researcher believes the indicators to be

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³⁰ "Systematic measurement error results from factors that systematically influence either the process of measurement or the concept being measured. Assuming interval level measurement, systematic error would be reflected in ratings or scores that are consistently biased in one direction -- either too high or too low. A cloth tape measure that has stretched with wear would create error in the form of constant underestimates of length. Systematic errors are recurring. They are consistent across measurements taken at different times or are systematically related to characteristics of the cases being measured." (Singleton et al., 1988:112-3)

³¹ "Random measurement error is unrelated to the concept being measured. It is the result of temporary, chance factors, such as transitory upswings and downswings in the health and mood of subjects and respondents, temporary variations in the administration or coding of a research measure, momentary investigator fatigue, and other transient factors." (Singleton et al., 1986:113)

valid within the context of the interpretative framework, controversy may still arise on these points.

Reliability is the extent to which a measure or indicator will yield a consistent result; it is meant to limit the likelihood of random error. (Singleton et al., 1988:114) If used on similar material, under similar conditions, a reliable measure will produce similar results. For example, if one is trying to measure the dollar value of charitable giving by Presbyterians in Canada, and one does this by taking the reported dollar value of donations in a single church, and multiplying it by the number of Presbyterian churches in Canada, one will not have a reliable estimate of the dollar value of charitable giving. Another researcher could choose a different base congregation and, using exactly the same procedures, arrive at a radically different result.

Within the context of this study, reliability was ascertained by means of a test-retest procedure known as 'check-coding'. Check-coding is the process whereby individuals other than the original researcher re-code all or part of the material. Those new results are matched to the researcher's original results.³² If the correspondance [intercoder reliability] between the two is less than 80%, a reliability problem could be indicated (Singleton et al., 1988:114). It may be that the categories were not described clearly enough in the coding instructions, or it may be indicative of some more systematic problem with the study. If the problem seems to be with the coding instructions, these should be re-written to address the problems that have emerged, and a new check-coder asked to review the material. Correspondance should again be checked. If, however, some radical re-definition of the categories is necessary, the original researcher must begin the process from scratch.

It is this re-definition of the project at hand while well into the coding that the pre-testing process hopes to prevent. Pre-testing often takes the form of a 'dry run' on material that is similar to that which the researcher will use, but

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³² "Assuming that the different users has been properly trained, a reliable operational definition must yield comparable results from user to user... It is the norm in social science research to check for intercoder reliability whenever measures are derived from systematic observation or from archival records." (Singleton et al., 1988:116)

which is not to be included in the final study. Its purpose is to underline problems with the operationalization of the study and the methodological tools used, before a great deal of time is invested in them. In the present study, a pre-test was conducted by gathering a number of articles about witchcraft from various Toronto-area daily newspapers, and coding them across the variables chosen for the study. What this quickly revealed was that one category, the number of sentences concerning witches or witchcraft, designed to measure *how much* of any given article was devoted to these topics, was completely unworkable. It was impossible to define with any consistency what constituted a sentence *about* witchcraft. On the strength of the pre-test results, this category was dropped from the study altogether.

2.8: Format and results of the reliability test

Two check-coders were employed in this study. One is a university-level student in the 'hard' sciences, the other holds a BSc. Neither had any previous experience with the research methods of the social sciences, nor background in religion. Each was given approximately half of the articles, and asked to code both worksheets [for worksheet examples, see Appendix A: Forms and Instructions]. Two different coders were used in order to minimize the possibility of a non-systematic communication problem skewing the results. If correlation across a given variable was high with one coder but not the other, then a problem with the one coder's understanding of the task would most likely be indicated. The use of only one check-coder disguises those difficulties. Coders were provided with detailed instructions [see Appendix A], and with a draft of chapter one of this manuscript.

The coding process occupied approximately six weeks. The original researcher spent one week, working in six-hour stretches, coding the thirty-one articles. The articles were then divided and check-coded with coders working two to three hour stretches three or four times per week. The researcher then spent ten to fifteen hours manually checking congruency.

All of the congruency totals fell within respectable levels, with the exception of 'images deriving from the traditional paradigm'. The researcher tended to select more, and sometimes different, examples than those selected by the check-coders. This is probably attributable to the difficulties inherent in defining this category in exclusive terms, and to the check-coders far less comprehensive understanding of, and familiarity with, the Renaissance and Reformation materials. Because the reliability on this variable is only very marginally below the generally accepted standard, it shall be used, although with appropriate caution.

In fact, some categories which could be considered very 'subjective' and which one would therefore suspect would be difficult to code reliably, such as the number of times a word from the 'religious' vocabulary was used to refer to witches or witchcraft, had much better congruency than more 'objective' measures, such as how many sentences were in the article. A difference of opinion which reflects in the 'court case' and 'conflict' variables involves the status of a board such as the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The researcher considered this to be a court, one check-coder did not. As this is, in fact, a debatable point, and as these categories tend to be collapsed in the actual discussion, no redefinition of the original coding was made. Tabular results, for each coder and combined, are provided at the end of this chapter.

2.9: Summation

Both the materials and the methodology for this study have been chosen to address issues arising out of the most basic goals of the research. News media were selected for analysis because of their perceived relationship to public awareness. The treatment of a subject in the news media will both reflect and inform the level of public awareness about that subject. (Tuchman, 1978:2) It will reflect inasmuch as subjects which are not perceived to be issues by the public will tend to be ignored by the media, which are dependent upon sustaining public interest for their continuance. It will inform inasmuch as the

news media is likely to reach a wider audience than that which generated the original concern, thus creating an issue for a broader population.

Print has been selected over other forms of news media because of its relative accessibility, and its amenability to textual analysis. In keeping with the status of the study as a pilot project, the media to be examined have been limited to a single English-language daily newspaper, over a ten-year time period. Content analysis, specifically non-frequency analysis, has been chosen as the primary methodological tool for this research because of its ability to apply a consistent set of measurement standards across a sample of print specimens, as well as for its compatibility with the goals of social constructionist theory.

The paradigms for defining witchcraft described in Chapter One have been rendered into countable categories for the purpose of content analysis. Categories and indicators have been operationalized in order to provide data about the manner in which claims and claims-makers interact in the articles to construct the image of witchcraft, as well as to address expectations that have arisen out of the examination of some related literature. A sample analysis has been performed in order to demonstrate the way in which these categories have been applied and verified.

Check-Coding: Tabular Results

Table 1: Coder A

	researcher	coder	congruent	reliability %
# sentences	16	16	13	81.2
voices	86	81	80	93
court cases	16	16	13	81.2
conflict	16	16	14	87.5
religious ref.	35	33	30	88.5
ident / char	32	31	30	93.7
contemporary	16	16	16	100
satanism	17	17	17	100
traditional	28	25	21	75

The 'researcher' and 'coder' totals represent the total number of decisions made by each about the variable in question.

The 'congruent' total represents the number of times those decisions coincided exactly.

The 'percentage reliability' was calculated by dividing the number of congruent decisions by the number of researcher decisions, as it is with the reliability of the original results with which we are concerned.

Check-Coding: Tabular Results

Table 2: Coder B

	researcher	✓ coder	congruent	reliability %
# sentences	15	15	12	80
voices	68	68	66	97
court cases	15	15	15	100
conflict	15	15	14	93.3
religious ref.	70	69	67	95.7
ident / char	51	41	41	80.3
contemporary	15	15	15	100
satanism	22	20	18	81.8
traditional	35	30	28	80

Check-Coding: Tabular Results

Table 3: Combined Totals

	researcher	coders	congruent	reliability %
# sentences	31	31	25	80.6
voices	154	149	146	94.8
court cases	31	31	28	90.3
conflict	31	31	28	90.3
religious ref.	105	102	97	92.3
ident / char	83	72	71	85.5
contemporary	31	31	31	100
satanism	22	20	18	81.8
traditional	63	55	49	77.7

Chapter Three: Interpretation and Analysis

This chapter intends to give the quantitative findings of the analysis,³³ to elaborate and interpret these findings within a social constructionist framework, and to subject the substance of the articles in question to a qualitative textual analysis. The focus of the qualitative analysis will be on the manner in which individuals, articles of belief and practice, and activities are presented, how those presentations act to direct attention to aspects of both the traditional and Craft paradigms, and on what can be implied about the prevailing popular and media attitudes towards witchcraft by the manner of these presentations.

3.1: A Few Bold Strokes: Quantitative Results

There were 31 articles considered in this study. These ranged from half page features to three sentence blurbs. These articles were distributed through the newspaper as follows: 20 were in the 'News' section, half of which were found in sections other than the front section, but designated 'News'; three articles were found in each of 'Living', 'Local' and 'Features'; one article was under 'World'; and one was under 'Travel'.

Two of the years under consideration, 1981 and 1983, have no examples of witchcraft articles, while the two years 1987 and 1988 produced more than half of the total articles for the ten year period. The disproportionately large number of articles during these two years can be attributed to legal challenges brought by practicing Wiccans: the Charles Arnold religious discrimination suits, which were waged against a number of different bodies in Ontario from late 1986 to late 1988, and the Lion Serpent Sun libel trial, which occurred in British Columbia from mid- to late 1988. The Arnold cases generated six

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³³ The article distribution information contained here can be found in tabular form in Appendix B

articles, the Sun case, three. These two instances generated almost half of the total number of articles dealing with conflicts or court cases (9 of 21) and well over half of articles of that type which originated in Canada (9 of 15). These cases will be examined in more depth below, as they embody many of the features of the way in which the conflict between the traditional and the Craft paradigms is evident in media reporting.

Although 20 of the 31 articles originated inside Canada, only one of these appears among the eight articles written before 1985. Six of the 31 articles were produced locally, and it is a local article that is the sole Canadian representative before 1985. Four of the remaining local articles are concerned with the Occult Shop, or the activities and beliefs of its owners.

As was to be expected, given the traditional association of witches with Hallowe'en, there were a disproportionately high number of articles published in the month of October (9 of 31). Five of these articles originated outside of Canada, and only three of the nine were based around any sort of conflict or court case; these were all isolated, as opposed to ongoing, cases.

Two thirds of the articles (20 of 31) contained some form of religious reference. However, this does not imply that claims about the status of witchcraft as a religion are widespread. In fact, religious claims are being made only by a very limited group of voices: 47% of all of the confirming references were generated by witches, either directly, or as indirectly cited through the narrator. The narrative voice speaking alone was responsible for 35% of references, but these were, in many cases, references of necessity (for example, titles of individuals or groups)³⁴ rather than references that implied

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³⁴ References such as 'high priestess of the Wiccan Church of Canada' or 'elder of Spindweik Coven, which is a part of the Temple of Elder Faiths' are references of necessity. The narrator has no vocabulary to use for the proper titles except that which is provided by the adherents. To call Tamarra James the 'leader of the Wiccan Group of Ontario' would skirt the necessity of using religious references, but would be both inaccurate [in that the title of the group is rendered incorrectly] and would probably unnecessarily antagonize the interview subjects. To call her the 'alleged' or 'putative' high priestess has the same sort of effect, in that it directly challenges her claim to any such appellation. The narrative voice does not, in most cases, launch any sort of direct challenge, but neither does it give any support.

any commitment on the part of the narrator to the perspective espoused by the Craft paradigm.

The distribution of explicit traditional references is somewhat different. Fifty-six percent of the references confirm the traditional paradigm. Of these, 48% are generated by the narrator, six percent are generated by 'witches'³⁵ and 45% are generated by other voices. Of the 27% of references which are disconfirming, which challenge or refute the claims and images of the traditional paradigm, 66% are generated, directly or indirectly through the narrator, by witches, and 33% by other voices. There are no disconfirming references in the narrative voice. Of the remaining 16% of the total references, which have been classified as 'neutral', meaning that they mention a traditional paradigm image without making any implied claim about its current applicability, 56% are generated by the narrator, 11% are generated by witches, and 33% originate with other voices.³⁶

The explicit associations between Satanism, devil-worship and witchcraft showed the same pattern. Of the 22 references, 23% were confirming; they reinforced the link between the two phenomena. None of these references were made by implicitly or explicitly identified witches. Eighteen percent of the references were neutral; they made an association, but neither affirmed nor denied it. The remaining 59% of references were disconfirming; they specifically disavowed any link between Satanism and witchcraft. Eighty-five percent of these references were made by witches, while the rest were made by voices other than the narrative voice. The narrative voice itself made no disconfirming references.

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³⁵ 'Witches' in this case, refers both to those who have been explicitly identified by the article as being witches, and those who are strongly implicitly identified as being witches. For discussion of how implicit identifications are established, see below.

³⁶ Due to rounding errors, percentages do not always total 100.

3.2: Building the Image: A Look at Context

As was noted above, 9 of the 31 articles being examined were published in October, the month most closely associated with witches in popular culture, due to the persistence of Hallowe'en traditions in North America. Most of these articles would be expected to be 'seasonal filler'. If this assumption holds true, one would expect to see more reliance on images and ideas from the traditional paradigm in the portrayals offered by these articles. In fact, in terms of the sheer number of explicit references made by the articles, this is not borne out, but if the underlying assumptions of the pieces are considered, this is generally the case. For example, two of the October articles deal with very marginal predictions³⁷ for the following year, made by witches at the New York 'Centre for the Strange'. Neither of these articles is replete with explicit images from the traditional paradigm, in fact, one of these articles contains none at all, but both obviously rely on the traditional assumption that witches can see the future. It is doubtful whether a similar article could have been published if the predictors were alleged Anglicans, or putative restaurateurs. One article discusses vacation possibilities in Salem. Another gives the history of a well-known, Ottawa-valley 'witch'. All but one of the articles published in October contains some explicit reference to the traditional paradigm. Articles such as these reinforce the idea that witchcraft is a kind of 'novelty item', like the rubber spiders and plastic skulls that are hauled out of dusty storage once a year at Hallowe'en.

The perception of these articles as 'seasonal filler' is further borne out when it is considered that two-thirds (20 of 31) of the articles in the study contain some form of religious reference, but only one-third (3 of 9) of the October

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³⁷ For example: 'A South Korean manufacturer will introduce a fuel-efficient automobile that runs on a mixture of orange juice and vodka.' (October 31, 1986) and 'British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher will appear in a Jane Fonda aerobic dancing video.' (October 29, 1987)

articles do. The articles published in October thus largely concern themselves with issues other than those of the emerging Craft paradigm, which is centrally concerned with the perception of witchcraft as a religion.

Hallowe'en, with all its traditional overtones and expectations, was the most common context in which articles about witches and witchcraft were found. However, several of the other articles are inspired by other, less obvious external influences. The July 11, 1987 articles featuring the Occult Shop and the Wiccan Church of Canada were published at the height of the popularity of The Witches of Eastwick, a film released earlier that summer. The headline of the longer article, "The Witches of Ottawa" suggests very strongly that the article was written, not because of any intrinsic interest in the subject matter, but to capitalize on the popularity of a blockbuster movie.

Similarly, another local feature article, "Witchcraft: ancient religion that believers shroud in secrecy" followed very closely on the heels of the verdict in the Lion Serpent Sun trial, discussed below. Although the trial is not specifically mentioned in the article, the timing of its publication suggests that it was inspired by the highly publicized B.C. libel suit.

It would seem that attention must be brought to witches through some external means before they are worthy of coverage. This suggests that the release of substantial articles dealing with the Craft in the Ottawa Citizen had more to do with contexts that are external, and even coincidental to the modern witchcraft movement than it did with the movement itself.

Only eight of the 31 articles examined were produced in the first half of the time frame under consideration, 1980-84. This is significant, as the Occult Shop opened in Ottawa in late 1985. Four of the six locally produced articles focus on the Shop and its owners. The existence of the Ottawa Shop provided reporters with easier access to 'real witches' than they previously had, which probably reflects in the increased number of articles. The existence of the Shop also gave an immediacy and local relevance to the phenomenon of witchcraft, which is part of what constitutes 'newsworthiness.' (Tuchman, 1978:139)

Although the Occult Shop had been open in Toronto since 1979, and was occasionally covered by the Toronto media, it was given no coverage in the Ottawa Citizen until after the Ottawa satellite was opened. In general terms, given two articles with a similar level of interest, one local and one off a wire service, foreign or otherwise, the local article will be printed. Until the Occult Shop had a presence in Ottawa, news stories about witches were necessarily decontextualized. There was no reason for an editor to believe that they had relevance to the community. If there was enough interest to support the store, however, then perhaps there was enough interest to print the articles.³⁸ It is this change in circumstance, combined with the increased availability of Canadian articles due to the aforementioned court cases, that probably accounts for the sharp increase in Citizen articles in the mid- to-late 1980s.

3.3: Fixing Perspective: Rowe and Cavender's Findings

Rowe and Cavender's study, which resulted in the publication of "Caldrone's Bubble, Satan's Trouble, but Witches are Okay: Media Constructions of Satanism and Witchcraft" (Rowe and Cavender, 1991) is the only other social constructionist analysis of the witchcraft phenomenon encountered during the course of this research. It differs from the present one in a number of significant ways. Firstly, Rowe and Cavender's stated purpose was to contrast depictions of satanism and witchcraft. Thus, they frame their constructions in a manner which will allow comparisons between what they operationalize as dissimilar categorizations, rather than examining the interplay of satanic and witchcraft elements within a single category of article.

Secondly, they utilized all articles concerning their chosen subjects which appeared in the Newsbank index for a year and a half (January 1, 1987 to June 30, 1988), rather than in a single newspaper for a decade. Relying on

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³⁸ It is also in 1985 that the Craft began to form a 'community' in Ottawa. Although there had been solitaires, and even very secretive groups, practicing in the area prior to that year, 1984 and 1985 saw a significant influx of trained Craft people into the Ottawa area. These included Jennifer Holding, Meredydd, Khaled, Adrienne, Random and Sekhet-Sophia. (Marc Tyrrell, M.A. thesis, in preparation).

an index classification required them to select only the articles which dealt substantively with the issues they wished to examine. This could decrease the number of spurious and incidental references with which they were confronted. Although this can certainly be seen to have its advantages, it can also be seen as limiting their material by removing from their purview articles which might have mention of witchcraft as a secondary or tertiary, but still genuine, concern. For example, it is doubtful that the fraud articles examined in this study would have been captured in Rowe and Cavender's search. Lastly, Rowe and Cavender's study used exclusively American material.

Rowe and Cavender assert that "The most prevalent theme [in witchcraft articles] is the connection to women. This theme often had a decidedly feminist cast" (Rowe and Cavender, 1991:266). This is not a generalization that can be applied to the Citizen material under examination. Only one of the articles mentions that witchcraft might have any special appeal to women, or gives any prominence to Goddess-worship. This article says,

Although there are male witches, Siegrist says the primary attraction is for women because witchcraft "recognizes women as important, valuable human beings.

"Our primary deity is a goddess" she says. "The god is her consort... Women's liberation is a fact in the craft. The men in the craft are exceptional. They are feminists. (August 17, 1989)

It is significant that this article originates in Boston, and is thus very closely related to the material to which Rowe and Cavender had access.³⁹

That the Canadian articles, even those of the feature type, do not have the feminist slant Rowe and Cavender would lead one to expect probably has much to do with the sources cited in those articles. Many American witches, especially those who are willing to be public about their beliefs, have been profoundly influenced by American feminist witches such as Z. Budapest and Starhawk.⁴⁰ Robin Skelton, the man who is featured in the October 1985

³⁹ This article would not have been captured in Rowe and Cavender's study because it is outside of their time-frame.

⁴⁰ For an excellent discussion of the linkage between the feminist and witchcraft movements, see Margot Adler *Drawing Down the Moon* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986 [2nd ed]) pp. 176-229.

article, is probably much less inclined to discuss a strictly feminist form of witchcraft, and Tamarra James, one of the more cited sources in the feature articles, practices a form of Wicca that is unusually gender-balanced. Jennifer Holding, as a student and employee of Jameses', takes a similar viewpoint; and those interviewed while attending rituals at the Occult Shop, which during the eighties were run almost exclusively by the Wiccan Church of Canada, headed by the Jameses, can also be expected to take a stance in line with her teachings.⁴¹ The Wiccan Church of Canada has had a substantial impact on the form which is taken by witchcraft in Southern Ontario, but it has not made any major inroads south of the border (Rabinovitch, 1991). Thus, Rowe and Cavender's material can be expected to take a somewhat different slant from what is found in the Ottawa Citizen in those areas in which the Wiccan Church of Canada is different in its emphasis from much of the rest of the neo-pagan movement.

3.4: Drawing the Scene: The Dynamics of Claims-making

The relatively high percentage of articles that contain some ostensibly religious reference in association with witches or witchcraft might be taken to indicate that the Craft paradigm is beginning to make real inroads in the reporting on witchcraft, especially when it is additionally noted that most of these are confirming rather than disconfirming references. Such a conclusion, however, is too broad, and ignores the reality behind the distribution of these references. As was noted above, it is primarily insiders to the movement who are involved in portraying witchcraft as a religion. The second highest number of religious references were made by the narrator, who is often constrained by the vocabulary provided by the participants.

More significant than the 35% of ostensibly religious references that are generated by the narrator are the 56% of traditional references generated by

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⁴¹ This information is derived from a nine-year long informal observation of the Wiccan Church of Canada, both in Toronto, and since its inception in Ottawa, as well as from four years as part-time staff of the Occult Shop under the indirect supervision of the Jameses

the narrative voice. As the traditional references are not part of such things as proper titles and group names, the narrative voice can be seen as much more interested in confirming traditional images than Craft ones. This supports Rowe and Cavender's assertion that "the media's constructed reality tends to reinforce existing stereotypes and dominant ideologies" (Rowe and Cavender, 1991:264).

Thus, it is apparent that while witchcraft is getting more coverage as something that is spoken of in religious terms by the latter part of the eighties, that coverage is due to the increased incidence of the participants speaking on their own behalf, rather than being written about by others. This agrees with Rowe and Cavender's finding that "...witchcraft stories relied on insiders who denied negative allegations and stereotypes, and provided information about their beliefs" (Rowe and Cavender, 1991:269). The dominant view would still seem to be that of the traditional paradigm, as the narrative voice persists in referring to it, and witches persist in spending much of their energy denying it. Additionally, it is often only in the longer, feature-like articles that witches are given their own voice. In the shorter articles, and in the court and conflict articles, such statements of belief are truncated, when they are included at all.

It is unsurprising that the highest concentration of religious references in connection with witchcraft comes from witches themselves. As a category of claims-maker, they stand to gain the most from the acceptance of this definition. In addition to such institutionalized prerogatives as the right to take religious holidays, to marry and bury their own adherents, and to deduct their monetary contributions to their covens on their income tax, increased acceptance of witchcraft as a religion would make it socially easier to become and to remain a member by removing some of the stigma of deviance. Stark and Bainbridge note that "the more costly it is to be religiously deviant, the greater the countervailing pressures (deprivations) required to motivate joining" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985:312). Witchcraft, because it is unprotected legally and frowned upon socially, is a costly religious option for its participants. This is also pointed out in articles.

Interestingly, while 'fringe religions' and 'new religious movements' such as the Hare Krishnas and the Unification Church are often treated perjoratively as 'cults'⁴² by the media, this was not observed to be the case with witchcraft. Beckford compiles a reasonably comprehensive list of the constellation of popular anxieties about cults.

The major issues form a litany of allegations about brainwashing; deception and fraud in the recruitment processes; systematic undermining of personal autonomy and freedom of will; exploitation, bordering on extortion, in the remuneration of paid workers; profiteering and dishonesty in setting the level of fees for services; excessively harsh living conditions; physical and mental impairment resulting from inadequate diet and health care; deliberate alienation of members from their families; manipulative arranging of marriages; psychological terrorism and blackmail against would-be defectors; separation of members from their young children; authoritarian styles of leadership; collusion with undemocratic political forces and regimes; and unjustifiably harsh treatment of perceived enemies. (Beckford 1985:94)

These are not concerns that are raised about witchcraft in the articles examined, even though it has been argued, often persuasively that the contemporary Craft qualifies as a new religious movement, just as those movements labelled 'cults' do (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985; Luhrmann, 1989; Kirkpatrick, Rainey and Rubi, 1986; Moore and Melton, 1982). Cults are considered to be deviant religion, but religion nonetheless. Witchcraft is not even allowed this much. It is portrayed as a kind of individual deviance, and therefore not worthy of as much concern and anxiety as the organized, institutionalized religious deviance of most of the groups and ideologies considered to pose serious threats.

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⁴² With reference to media portrayals, this study follows the usage of the word 'cult' established by Beckford, that is. "...'cult' is used here in its popular sense to refer to groups considered small, insignificant, inward-looking, unorthodox, weird and possibly threatening... The underlying assumption is that a cult is not an expression of what every right-minded person knows to be religion " (Beckford, 1985:12-13).

3.5: Fleshing our Characters: Identification and Characterization

Rowe and Cavender note that the characterization of participants affects public acceptance of a phenomenon (Rowe and Cavender, 1991:265). As the phenomenon described by the word 'witchcraft' is not consistent throughout the articles, as some draw upon the Craft paradigm and others do not, the manner in which 'witches' are identified and characterized also varies widely.

The articles employed various strategies when identifying people as 'witches'. The most straightforward was to allow people to explicitly identify themselves, or to have the narrator clearly designate them. This was the technique most often used when the person being identified was speaking out of the Craft paradigm, for example in the Charles Arnold discrimination suits, and in the articles that feature Richard and Tamarra James.

In Arnold's case, the point of the legal actions which he initiated was that he be identified as a witch in order to make a point about the way non-Christians, and most especially individuals involved in non-institutionalized spiritual movements, are marginalized by current social and legal conventions about religion. Thus, the articles would not make any sort of sense without identifying him as a witch. This identification is made clearly and explicitly, either in his own voice or in that of the narrator, in every article in which he is showcased. Arnold's claims about witchcraft are made from the standpoint of a participant with something to gain by the recognition of witchcraft as a religious movement.

The Jameses case is similar, and further complicated by their overlapping religious and business interests. As 'high priest and priestess' of a group calling itself the 'Wiccan Church of Canada,' and as owners of two stores that cater to witches and 'other pagans,' they clearly have an interest in portraying both enterprises as socially acceptable, and the former as religious. Articles tend to characterize the Jameses as business people first, and religious figures second, frequently blurring the distinction between the Church they head and the stores they own. This presents a very commercialized picture of Wicca, one that focuses on the unusual outer trappings, "the tools of the trade" as the December 1985 article puts it, rather than any examination of philosophy.

Sometimes the articles identify people as witches implicitly. This is usually accomplished by association, either with a person, a practice or a belief. For example, an October 1985 article in which Robin Skelton is interviewed does not say that he is a witch, but the reader is left with that impression. The narrator says that "Skelton...does the things expected of witches" and then goes into Skelton's own description of his spellcraft and magical workings. All of Skelton's statements about witches are made in the third person ('witches believe,' never 'I believe'), and yet the final impression is very much that this has been an interview with a witch.⁴³ In the August 1988 article, Trevor Strudwick, who is explicitly identified as a "bartender, psychic and reader of tarot cards" speaks about what he has seen / experienced in a [witch's] ritual. Again, although not explicitly stated, the inference could be made that those who participate in witchcraft rituals are witches. In these cases, identification with an activity attributed to witches has indirectly implied participation in witchcraft itself. Although this might be a justifiable assumption within the context of the articles, it is nonetheless a logical fallacy, and unprovable with the information the stories actually contain.

A sense of vagueness and confusion about what a witch is, in terms of identification, as well as about the significance of that identification for the purposes of the discussion contained within the story, is also evident in several other articles. This is especially notable in the relationship between what is contained in an article, and the headline it is given. The October 1982 article, "Girl removed from witches' coven" states that two year old Purdy Tran's mother, Laura, lived in a 'rundown mansion' which was the headquarters for 'a coven of 13 lesbian witches'. It does not say that she was involved with the coven as a participant, although that impression is given by the association. The impression is also given by the article, which is concerned with a temporary custody suit brought by the child's father, that she is a 'bad' mother for exposing the child to the environment in which she is allegedly living. However, although

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⁴³ In 1985, at the time the article was written, Skelton's book, *The Practice of Witchcraft*, in which he does identify himself as a witch, had not yet been published.

the headline features the witchcraft accusation prominently, the body of the article is more concerned with the presence of pit bulldogs on the property. The section of the court order which is cited by the article states that "The court finds that living in a residence containing pit bulldogs poses a significant danger to the minor child... and expressly bases its order on that finding and not on the various other allegations...". The article also cites the lawyer for the plaintiff as saying, "I'm delighted... (Schnider) made his decision on the imminent danger to the child and not on somebody's lifestyle. That is absolutely correct. A very thorough piece of work that he did here." There is nothing in the article which suggests that the practice of witchcraft and the keeping of pit bulls are related by anything other than their perceived status as marginal and socially dangerous pastimes. The substance of the article itself does not support the prominence of witchcraft as a significant feature of the custody suit that is implied by the headline.

Another example of spurious usage of a witchcraft allegation can be seen in the two 1980 accounts of the Kleinfelder murder trial in Chicago. One headline declares, "Witch convicted in boiling water killing." A perusal of the article reveals that Yvonne Kleinfelder, the defendant, has stated that she was "the high priestess of a double coven of witches" at some unidentified point in the past. It goes on to report that she has since joined a Pentecostal church, and is attending a Chicago-area Bible study institute. No connection is made as to why her past claims to be a witch are a valid concern of the trial; in fact, she states that she did not call a doctor for her victim because she believed that "God would heal him." The headline should more properly read 'Born Again Christian convicted in boiling water killing'. The fact that it does not reinforces the traditional stereotypical notion that witches are malevolent beings intent upon harm. Witches kill people for irrational and trivial reasons, like the mistreatment of cats, which is cited as the motive in the Kleinfelder case; Christians, by implication, do not. This impression is conveyed by the article without needing to resort to any explicit images from the traditional paradigm;

the assumptions that allow the article to have mentioned witchcraft, for sensational effect, in a context where it would clearly seem to be irrelevant to the putative subject matter, designate it as traditionally inspired.

Similarly, there are two articles which deal with the prosecution of individuals under the Canadian Fortune-telling and Witchcraft Act [section 323 of the Criminal Code]. This law prohibits fortune-telling when the intent is "to delude or defraud", according to the December 9, 1985 article. The November 1986 story states that "...police are not concerned with the fairground and storefront fortune tellers who charge \$5 to \$50 for a reading, Wilson [a police officer] said ' it becomes a matter of interest to us when these people allege they have special powers and can help the weak or the sick and remove curses or evil spirits. Then it becomes fraud.'" The cases presented involved people who had been charging clients for the placement or removal of 'curses'. Cursing is an activity widely attributed to witches in the traditional paradigm. Neither of these articles contains any religious reference; this is significant because it indicates that no distinction is being explicitly made between those who refer to witchcraft as their religion, and those with whom the police are concerned. A distinction is made only between various types of 'fortune tellers', the apparently benign 'fairground and storefront' variety, and the grifters. The title of the statute semantically equates a constellation of illegal, fraudulent practices with witchcraft. If a person convicted of murder is a murderer, and a person convicted of burglary is a burglar, then it is a logical step to assume that one convicted of witchcraft is a witch. Again, it is the association with a practice traditionally ascribed to witches which has suggested this identification. The equation of the term 'witchcraft' with this type of fraud reinforces the notion that witches are unsavory individuals who prey on the weak and unsuspecting.

The positioning of statements, especially quotations, can also facilitate an indirect identification. The August 1988 article states that "Most Wiccans in Ottawa prefer to use their Craft name" and then immediately quotes someone identified only as Khaled. The implication is that 'Khaled' is a Craft name, and

that the speaker is therefore a witch. The article goes on to say, "Khaled explains the root of his beliefs. 'Pantheism is common to all Wiccans (or witches)...!'" As the reader cannot know how the question was phrased by the interviewer, they must make an identification between Khaled's beliefs and Wiccan beliefs, creating an identification that the text does not explicitly support. Khaled's wife, Andrienne, is identified as a witch through her association with Khaled. A similar technique was used in the October 1980 article. The narrator gives a quotation attributed to the 'head witch of the Church of Wicca' which indicates that the speaker is male, and then immediately cites Skip Tarrant, also male, by name. The impression is left that the two are identical, although that connection is not explicitly made.

Witches are also characterized as a vague collectivity when no individual identification is made at all. The most common themes involved in these *in absentia* characterizations are the mutilation of animals, and the alleged ability of witches to predict the future.

Only once is a high status individual (Sophia Loren) described as a witch, and she uses the term as a designation for her putative precognitive abilities (June 16, 1984). This lack of high status identification, however, is ambiguous, and could reflect any number of realities. It could be that the cost of joining a movement perceived as deviant might deter those who have power, and are therefore insufficiently deprived for membership in the movement to be appealing. It could also be that the cost of having such an existing affiliation revealed might deter high status members from speaking with the press. The current study is not equipped to determine which of these alternatives is more likely. However, the lack of high status individuals publicly professing involvement in the movement contributes to its portrayal as deviant, and somehow lacking in legitimacy.

3.6: Shading in Greys: Charles Arnold and Lion Serpent Sun

The cases of Charles Arnold and Lion Serpent Sun are somewhat unique among the court and conflict portrayals, because each is treated at

length, through a series of articles. Charles Arnold was the focus of six articles in a two-year period: three concerning his fight for paid religious holidays, one concerning his dismissal from Humber college, one concerning the dismissal of his application to be legally accredited to perform marriages in Ontario, and one concerning a misrepresentation complaint he made to the Ontario Press Council about a story citing him that had appeared in the Toronto Star. The libel suit that Lion Serpent Sun brought against Leonard and Sheila Olsen, David Mainse, and 100 Huntley Street was the focus of five articles, only three of which are included in this study, as the remaining two made no mention of witches or witchcraft. The conflict of paradigms as seen in these cases exemplifies and magnifies the attitudes found in the reporting throughout the study. The articles featuring Arnold, especially those concerning the religious holidays dispute, contain a high concentration of confirming religious references,⁴⁴ suggesting a Craft paradigm focus, while the Serpent Sun articles contain a high number of traditional references.⁴⁵ These cases will therefore be examined in some detail.

Both Arnold and Sun are put in the interesting position of appearing to be on trial in cases in which they are, in fact, the plaintiffs. In both cases, it is the legitimacy of *their* actions (Arnold's religious beliefs, Serpent Sun's practices) that are called into question by the articles, rather than the actions and motives of the putative defendants. For example, the focus of the Lion Serpent Sun libel trial was not defendant Len Olsen's motivations or reasonableness in asserting that Sun had tried to sacrifice him and his wife to the devil, but rather what *Sun* had done to provoke such an accusation. Similarly, the articles dealing with Arnold's attempt to gain paid religious holidays contain no in-depth examination of the philosophy or theology of Wicca, which would have served to

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⁴⁴ Twenty-three percent of all religious references found are contained in the three articles that detail the religious holidays dispute.

⁴⁵ In fact, the three articles concerning the Sun libel case, although they represent only 10% of the articles, contain 31% of the traditional references found in the study, and 36% of the Satanic associations, suggesting that these are a very important element of these articles.

contextualize the debate, preferring rather to have Arnold try to demonstrate the legitimacy of his claims through the chippy, disjointed quotations he is allowed by the narrator.

When Wiccan practice is discussed at all, as it is in only two of the six articles about Arnold, those details which are given seem to be selected for their socially marginal character, and they are not given enough treatment for any symbolic or figurative meanings to become apparent. For example, the November 1986 article describes Wicca as "his [Arnold's] religion Wicca, which involves nude worshipping and fireside celebrations of purification." The days for which he is requesting paid holidays are "Beltane on May 1, a celebration of living, and Samhain on Nov. 1, marking death and reincarnation." (March 1987) No further elaboration is given, and in fact, the article states that "...details of the rites and rituals are secret and can be revealed only to initiates." This emphasis on secrecy could be read to indicate that Wicca is hiding something somehow illegitimate, when in actuality, the number of books published on the subject would suggest that it is the details of any specific Mystery only, and not the wider framework within which it falls, that are not to be discussed with outsiders. The superficiality of these statements can be compared to pagan reaction to the early Christians, whose consumption of the 'body and blood' of Christ was commonly equated with cannibalism.

Sources are rarely employed to substantiate or corroborate Arnold's statements. Only in one article is an 'expert source', in this case, Donald Evans, a professor of religion, called upon to give an opinion about the status of Wicca as a religion. The narrator labels Evans' statement 'unexpected support.' (March 27, 1987) The wording of that statement undercuts Evans' testimony that Wicca meets his criteria for being called a religion by implying that this is somehow a surprise. The article's starting point would seem to be that witchcraft is not a religion, despite Evans' and Arnold's arguments.

The article concerning Arnold's application to solemnize marriages superficially appears to accept witchcraft as a religion. However, there is an overwhelming sense in the story that, despite the religious holidays decision,

affirming Wicca's status as a religion for which all allowances should be made, handed down only three months earlier, Wicca still does not really count. Solemnizing marriages is an institutionalized power, whereas taking religious holidays is a personal statement. While those who make such decisions might have been willing to grant Wicca conceptual equality with other, non-Christian religions, the practical equality to which this would seem to lead naturally, in terms of such things as the institutionalized right to perform marriages, is denied it.

Most often, the extra-narrative sources employed in the Charles Arnold articles are Arnold, a representative of the body against which he is acting, and their respective legal counsel. Articles tended to treat the progress, rather than the substance of the case; for example that Arnold had been refused the right to perform legal marriages, without mentioning why this might be important. This focus, and the fact that Arnold has brought a number of suits against different bodies for different reasons [religious discrimination, sexual discrimination, misrepresentation] combine to make him appear somewhat litigation-happy. It may well be the principle of the matter, rather than the resolution of the individual incident, for which Arnold is fighting. However, as he is never given the opportunity to state his motives, this sense is not captured by the articles. Arnold is presented as an individual who challenges social authority on minor, trivial points for his own benefit, not as a crusader hoping to set legal precedents for the greater good of the witchcraft movement.

The articles about the Lion Serpent Sun trial treat the substance of the case in more depth, but focus on the allegations of attempted ritual murder by the defendants, rather than the plaintiff's assertion that he has been defamed by these allegations. Those extra-narrative sources used in the Sun case, Jean Kozocari, Matt MacLaughlin and Gary Gage-Cole, are all people who have been called to testify about the plaintiff's character. If anyone was called to give a statement about the history and bona fides of the defendants, this is not noted in the articles. This further reinforces the notion that it is Sun who is really on trial, as it seems to be he who must prove the benign intent of his actions.

Whereas in the Charles Arnold cases, there are no assertions by others that what he practices is actually Satanism, rather than being the vaguely marginal-sounding nature religion that he describes; in Serpent Sun's case, a very different picture emerges. The identifications of Sun as a witch and as a Satanist seem to be made interchangeably. In the June 15, 1988 article, the narrator calls him the "former leader of a witches' coven" and also states that he "used a room [of his bookstore] for Satanic rituals." This juxtaposition suggests an equation between the two practices, despite Sun's repeated assertions that he is not, nor ever was, a Satanist, although he is a witch.

The sources used in the articles suggest that Arnold is being characterized as a witch, while Sun is being characterized more as a Satanist, in the sense that Rowe and Cavender (Rowe and Cavender, 1991) have noted distinctions. Significantly, whereas Arnold is allowed to speak in his own voice, not routed through the narrator or another individual, Sun is not. All of the statements attributed to Lion Serpent Sun are reported at one or two removes. This is consistent with Rowe and Cavender's observation that only rarely do articles about Satanism use participants as sources.

Sun and his practices are portrayed in more marginal terms than are Arnold and his. Whereas Arnold is described as "a second degree high priest of Wicca and a clerical worker at Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology" (December 10, 1987) or as "a Toronto man who practices witchcraft" (March 16, 1988), Sun is described as "a former biker" (July 19, 1988). References are also frequently made as to the centrality of drugs and alcohol in Lion Serpent Sun's rituals. Intoxicating substances are not an integral feature of the worship practices of most Western religions, whereas they are a feature in Satanic accounts (Rowe and Cavender, 1991). This emphasis acts to further marginalize Sun, and to stigmatize his actions.

The theme of human sacrifice that is the basis of the Sun articles is also consistent with Rowe and Cavender's findings, if Sun is construed as being portrayed as a Satanist rather than a witch. They found that 72% of their Satanism articles contained reference to human sacrifice. Articles on witchcraft,

they found, lacked this element. Further support for the hypothesis that the Lion Serpent Sun articles construct witchcraft as Satanism is found in the fact that the last two articles in the series that covered the case, including the one that gives the verdict, do not meet the study criteria.⁴⁶ This is because they neither describe Sun as a witch, nor his practice as witchcraft. Instead, they consistently use designations such as 'ex-Satanist' to describe him. Because these articles come at the end of the series, when Sun's claims to be a witch and the use of the word in reference to him are already established, the subsequent use of Satanic designations reinforces the identification of Satanism as witchcraft, and hence the notions of the traditional paradigm

Thus, the two individuals whose legal challenges received the most coverage during the ten-year period under examination are constructed very differently by the media. Both are portrayed as marginal, but whereas Arnold's claims to be a practicing member of a legitimate, if unorthodox, religion are tacitly accepted, Sun's similar claims are rejected in favour of a construction of him as a Satanist. This is consistent with what Rowe and Cavender noted about the constructions of Satanism and witchcraft:

...articles constructed an image of satanism as a vulgar, sick, dangerous phenomenon. Beyond the bounds of acceptable deviance; it constituted a threat. Witchcraft, in contrast, fared better. Newspapers depicted it or permitted its participants to depict themselves as healthy individuals who lead acceptable, if somewhat unusual lives. (Rowe and Cavender, 1991:272)

As a Satanist, Sun is beyond marginal, and into the realm of the potentially dangerously deviant. As Stephen Pfohl notes,

Deviants never exist except in relation to those who attempt to control them. Deviants exist only in opposition to those whom they threaten and those who have enough power to control against such threats. The outcome of the battle of deviance and social control is this. Winners obtain the privilege of organizing social life as they see fit. Losers are trapped in the vision of others. (Pfohl, 1985:3)

⁴⁶ These articles are "Ex-Satanist wins bizarre libel case" *Ottawa Citizen* (July 20, 1988) p. A16; and "B.C. libel case costs appealed" *Ottawa Citizen* (October 28, 1988) p. A21.

Sun's case was portrayed as revolving around a classic conflict: good and evil, God and the Devil. The fact that Lion Serpent Sun was the victor in the libel case does not seem to have vindicated him, but only to have indicated that he did not commit that *particular* heinous act. He is still trapped by the vision others have taken of his practices.

3.7: Setting the Pencil Down: Summation

Spector and Kitsuse write,

Definitions .. are expressed in terms that describe the condition, reflect attitudes towards the condition, and give numerous other hints... Groups often vie for control of the definition... When one group wins, its vocabulary may be adopted and institutionalized while the concepts of the opposing groups fall into obscurity. When terminologies change, when new terms are invented, or existing terms are given new meanings, these actions signal that something important has happened... (Spector & Kitsuse, 1977:8)

Although more articles are allowing witchcraft to be portrayed in religious terms, this reflects an increased number of articles, and an increased incidence of self-identified witches speaking on their own behalf to reporters, rather than any apparent broadening of the acceptance of their definitions. The traditional paradigm, with its notions and potions and Hallowe'en spookiness, still has a powerful hold on the media, and probably the popular imagination. Despite frequent protestations, mostly by insiders to the movement, there is still the tendency to identify Satanism with witchcraft, and to use the same vocabulary to describe both sets of beliefs and practices. This confusion with Satanism, however occasional, decreases the likelihood of witchcraft's easy acceptance as a religious movement by planting the idea that it is threatening, and not what it seems. The hesitancy of some witches, like Arnold, to discuss the details of their practice further reinforces the idea that witchcraft is hiding something, as that which is hidden is assumed not to be legitimate.

Witches are portrayed as marginal individuals, sometimes benign like the Jameses or Charles Arnold, sometimes threatening, like Yvonne Kleinfelder or Lion Serpent Sun, but never entirely integrated into the social and institutional system around them. They are involved in a type of deviance which they may

view as religious, but which is ultimately presented as individual. Unlike Moonies or other groups perjoratively labelled as 'cults', witchcraft is not depicted as a systematic social threat.

Acceptance of the Craft paradigm as the definitional one for discussing witches and witchcraft is hindered by a judicial system which still uses the terms to prosecute fraud cases, and by the use of the word 'witch' to describe anyone with 'paranormal' abilities, notably prediction. Witchcraft as a religious system is not the set of parameters to which narrators default, as is evident from the superficial treatments given to the beliefs which are at its foundation. Articles, even those in which the Craft paradigm speaks most strongly through its sources, are still almost endlessly fascinated by the novelty of the external trappings.

If one is to judge by the treatment given to witchcraft by the Ottawa Citizen, then it has not yet established an accepted religious identity for itself on its own terms. The process, however, can clearly be seen to have begun. It remains to be seen how successful witches will be in dissociating themselves from the negative aspects of the traditional paradigm, while keeping themselves sufficiently in the public eye as to be able to assert their own definition of a positive religious identity.

Conclusion: Looking Back

The image of witchcraft, as it emerges in the articles on the study, is plagued with ambiguity. Neither definitional paradigm holds absolute dominion, so there is a dynamic tension between conflicting constructions. Rarely will an article employ only one paradigm; there is a continuum of possible constructions between the two ideal types which are the paradigms at their purest. There is a tension not only between the tendency to portray witchcraft as something that is illegitimate and not religion and the tendency to portray it as religion, but also between the portrayals of it as a legitimate religion, and the portrayals of it as a pseudo-religion. Portrayals of witchcraft as a pseudo or quasi-legitimate religion use the religious terminology, while simultaneously undercutting this usage by marginalizing the movement or its participants in other ways. This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the articles' treatment of magic.

Magic, and occult belief in general, are not something that fit neatly into Western notions about how the world operates. They are used as catch-all categories for beliefs and practices that are perceived as ranging from the irrational to the absurd. Truzzi notes,

In many ways, the occult is a residual category a wastebasket for knowledge claims that are deviant in some way, that do not fit the established claims of science or religion. And once such a knowledge claim gains acceptance within establishment science or religion, it loses its status as an occultism (Truzzi, 1976:245)

Magic is not perceived as a valid or effective way of dealing with life or the universe, because it is not culturally acknowledged as having any 'real' existence. Singer and Benassi characterize occult beliefs as a kind of dysfunctional thinking when they comment,

The psychological mechanisms involved in occult beliefs may represent more dramatic forms of some mundane pathologies of reasoning ... occult beliefs, which are at the outer limits of irrationality, may throw some light on more ordinary reasoning pathologies. (Singer and Benassi, 1989:383-384)

Thus, if it is effective, it is not magic, and if it makes sense, it is not magic. These cultural beliefs make magic an automatically marginalized category, which has the effect of marginalizing those who treat it as a serious component of their world view.

Magic is often separated from religion for purposes of discussion by Western sociologists and anthropologists. They are treated as two separate categories, with the underlying assumption that if it is magic, then it cannot be religion. Hubert and Mauss describe the difference between them as one of tendency, saying that "Magic tends towards the concrete while religion tends towards the abstract" (Hubert and Mauss, 1974:218). Stark and Bainbridge take a similar approach when they define religion as a system of very general compensators resting on supernatural assumptions, and magic as "a set of *specific compensators* offered for quite specific rewards, which are offered as correct explanations *without regard* for empirical evaluations, and which, when evaluated, are *found wanting*" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980:124, emphasis in original). Durkheim notes a "marked repugnance of religion for magic, and in return, the hostility of the second towards the first" (Durkheim, 1916:43). Durkheim's definition of religion is centrally concerned with the social solidarity and communal life that religions produce, what he calls 'Church'.⁴⁷ He categorically asserts that there can be no 'Church of Magic' because magic fosters individual client relations, rather than over-arching group relations (Durkheim, 1916:44). Weber distinguishes between magic and religion in theory, but acknowledges their intermingling in practice. Weber predicates a

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⁴⁷ Durkheim writes, "The really religious beliefs are always common to a determined group, which makes profession of adhering to them and of practising the rites connected with them. They are not merely received individually by all the members of this group; they are something belonging to the group, and they make up its unity. The individuals which compose it feel themselves united to each other by the simple fact that they have a common faith. A society whose members are united by the fact that they think in the same way in regard to the sacred world and its relations with the profane world, and by the fact that they translate these common ideas into common practices, is what is called a Church. In all history, we do not find a single religion without a Church." (Durkheim, 1916: 43-44) Durkheim's last statement is admittedly problematic, as having defined religion as centering around a church, it would seem somewhat circular. To offer the proof that history has shown no examples of religions without a Church. Even if it had, Durkheim's definition would preclude them from being called religion.

dual relationship of humanity to the supernatural: one based on what he refers to as 'worship' and the other on 'coercion.' The former is religious, the latter, magical (Weber, 1920)⁴⁸. O'Keefe, modelling his argument after the postulates of both Durkheim and Weber, as well as those of Freud, defines magic as "the expropriation of religious collective representations for individual or subgroup purposes -- to enable the ego to resist psychic extinction, and the sub-group to resist cognitive collapse" (O'Keefe, 1982:14). His theory is that magic serves to "defend the self against society" (O'Keefe, 1982:14). In all of these theories, magic and religion are treated as operational categories that seek different ends. Thus, although the presence of magic does not preclude the additional presence of religion, it does not imply the necessary presence of religion. In fact, until recently, it was possible to discard a practice from the consideration of religious impulses *because* it was magical. This tendency to see the magical and the religious as two separate entities has carried over into popular belief, which lags significantly behind the leading edge research in the academy.

The connection between witches and magic is made in both the traditional and the Craft paradigm. The traditional paradigm tends to construct magic as having harmful effects, thaumaturgical method and demonic origin, while the Craft paradigm puts emphasis on the helpful effects, theurgic method and psychological origin of magic.⁴⁹ In the articles examined, magic tended to

⁴⁸ Weber writes, "The relationships of men to supernatural forces which take the forms of prayer, sacrifice and worship may be termed 'cult' and 'religion', as distinguished from 'sorcery', which is magical coercion. Correspondingly, those beings that are worshipped and entreated religiously may be termed 'gods', in contrast to 'demons', which are magically coerced and charmed. There may be no instance in which it is possible to apply this differentiation absolutely, since the cults we have just called 'religious' practically everywhere contain numerous magical components. The historical development of the aforementioned differentiation frequently came about in a very simple fashion when a secular or priestly power suppressed a cult in favor of a new religion, with the older gods continuing to live on as demons. (Weber, 1920, in Robertson, 1969:415)

⁴⁹ Thaumaturgy, Bonewits notes, is "from another Greek word meaning 'the art and science of wonderworking'" (Bonewits, 1971:xlii). It is the science of magic as a product of the combination of personal will and natural forces. Amber K, in the glossary of *True Magick*, defines thaumaturgy as "Low magick' used to influence things and events in everyday life: to protect your house, and a

be characterized as relying on tools and materials and to proceed without necessary reference to any religious framework. One article featuring the Occult Shop pays particular attention to its stock, noting,

There are dozens of colored candles that release spells when they are burned, including love-spell candles, jinx-removing candles, headache-healing candles and exorcism candles. ... There are potions with strange names such as *High John the Conqueror*, *Jinx*, and *Hex Remover*, skin creams for psychics to help them 'turn off' the confusing array of signals they receive, shampoos and soaps with built-in spells, herbs and tiny vials of scented oils for mixing homemade potions ... there is a display case of metal talismans and semi-precious polished stones. A sign above explains the powers of each stone. Tiger's eye, for example, 'averts the evil eye, improves insight and eyesight, and eases asthma'. (July 11, 1987)

Another comments,

For the toilette of the magic-conscious, there's Jinx-Removing Shampoo for \$3. The downtrodden might consider lighting up some Fast Luck Incense. Those in turmoil could turn to a dusting of Confusion Powder. (October 29, 1988)

That same article emphasizes the marginal status of magical practice when it describes the entrance to the Occult Shop by saying, "The door yawns open to reveal a suitably dingy stairway, which climbs to a similarly dingy passageway leading to the store's inner sanctum" (October 29, 1988). The choice of the word 'suitably' indicates that dinginess is considered appropriate for this kind of establishment. 'Dingy' is a derogatory descriptive, defined by Funk and Wagnells as "darkened or discolored, as if soiled; dull; grimy; shabby." The store, and by implication, its merchandise and its clientele are being subtly denigrated by the narrator's description.

When magic is seen as a form of action in the articles, it tends to be associated with prediction or with cursing and consequently, with fraud. In two of the articles, the predictions are about very marginal subjects (the imminent job, heal your cold, travel safely and the like.) (K, 1991:240)

Theurgy, Bonewits defines as "the use of magical means to attain religious salvation," (Bonewits, 1971:ix), although in practical terms, he uses this term to refer to all magic for which a religious referent is necessary. Amber K defines theurgy as "High magick' employed to connect with Deity and foster spiritual growth." (K, 1991:240)

introduction of hand-held sushi fridges, for example), which reinforces the marginal status of any claim to possess insight into the future. The specific discussion of magical cursing underlines the popular assumption of malevolent intent generally ascribed to magical practitioners, and the association of the practice with fraud directly implies that it is not actually possible to curse someone. This reinforces the whole notion that magic does not exist. Thus, the articles' construction of magic can be seen to derive out of the traditional paradigm, and thus to necessarily marginalize those who assert a genuine belief in magic.

The legal system would also seem to have mechanisms in place to marginalize witches. The obvious terminological impact of the Fortune-telling and Witchcraft Act was discussed in chapter three. However, the articles examined in this study would suggest strongly that this is not the only venue in which modern witches find themselves in conflict with the law. The Marriage Act, as it is interpreted in the March 16, 1988 article, provides that "applicants must be ordained or appointed according to the rites of the religious body to which they belong and that body must be permanently established with a 'continuity' of rites and ceremonies." (March 16, 1988) This provision specifically precludes witchcraft or any other decentralized, non-institutionalized spiritual movement from meeting the Marriage Act's criteria, thus depriving them of institutionalized legitimation. The implication is that this is the fault of the religion, and not that of the provisions of the Act, which the article in no way questions. The article entitled "Church fails to conjure up tax-free status" (July 11, 1987) points to another arena in which witchcraft is institutionally marginalized, and kept separate from a 'religious' classification. The way in which the legal system itself serves to de-legitimize innovation is a topic worthy of future consideration.

As with any new religious movement, witchcraft faces the task of establishing itself as a religion with its own identity within the larger social structure. All religions begin somewhere, at some time. Most probably begin as marginal. Those who attempt to assert otherwise, and point to the multiplicity

of faiths in modern society as a sign of moral decay. are nostalgic for a golden age that ignores the reality of history. Stark and Bainbridge note,

An analysis of the sources of sect formation leads to the conclusion that no single religious organization can offer the full range of religious services for which there is a substantial market demand. No one church can minister to the needs of everyone. This means that the natural state of the religious economy is pluralism. To the extent that religious freedom exists, there will be many organized faiths, each specializing in certain segments of the market. Moreover, this market will be dynamic, with a constant influx of new organizations and the frequent demise of others. (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985:108)

Kelly puts it much more bluntly. He writes,

...when we look at history, we discover that people start new religions all the time, all over the world, whenever they are not forcibly prevented from doing so by an established state church. In other words, *starting new religions is the normal state*; in fact, it appears to be about the second favorite human activity (or maybe third, if you count eating as second). (Kelly, 1991:3)

New religions succeed or fail according to their ability to manipulate a wide range of variables, including membership appeal and public acceptance. This is as true for neo-pagan witchcraft today as it was for Christianity almost twenty centuries ago.

It is for this reason that the kind of research this paper and others like it present, about new religious movements and 'fringe' movements, should be of interest to the wider community of religion scholars. Kelly observes,

...if all religions begin at some time and place as new religions, then the study of new religions is not a luxury; it is not the study of fringe sects, marginal people, epiphenomena, weird hippies, and so on. Rather it is the study of characteristics central to all religions. (Kelly, 1991:3)

The process of striving for legitimation can be seen as analagous, although cultural, social, and technological differences between ancient and modern movements will certainly prevent it from being identical. The information which is available to study contemporary new religious movements, however, is vastly superior. It is far more accessible and complete than that which is available to study, for example, the emergence of Christianity. The insights derived from modern materials, then, can be used to inform the interpretations of other, more scattered and distant material.

Two hundred years ago, or even one hundred years ago, the popular literature would not have demonstrated the same paradigm conflict that can clearly be seen in the newspaper articles that provide the material for this study. The traditional paradigm ruled; the Craft paradigm did not yet exist. At some point in the twentieth century, this new paradigm began to faintly colour the interpretations of the word 'witch'. It is interesting to note that, on the 1981 census, almost as many people self-identified as pagans as self-identified as Quakers.⁵⁰ The Quakers are another religious group who have been historically misunderstood, and persecuted on the basis of that misunderstanding. There was a substantial body of hate-literature produced about Quakers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and yet it would be almost unthinkable today to delve into that literature for images of the modern Friends movement. Clearly, it is not numbers alone that confer legitimation. Perhaps it is also time. The Quakers have had three centuries longer than the Craft to gain acceptance for their religious belief and practice. In three hundred years, a similar analysis to that which has been conducted in this work might paint a very different picture. Maybe there would again be no paradigm conflict, because the traditional paradigm would no longer exist.

This thesis is a study of the social construction of witchcraft in the Ottawa Citizen, but ultimately, it is an examination of the success of a group in getting their own definitions accepted into common usage, and a study of the process of the social legitimation of a religious identity. Limited although its scope may be, this research provides a basis of comparison for future scholars who may want to examine other mass media material on witchcraft, either on a different geographical, or a different temporal scale, to see how the generalizations presented here hold up, why and how they change from place to place, and from time to time. Less specifically, the research can be used to inform other studies on the representation of new religious movements, wherever and whenever they might be found.

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⁵⁰ Statistics Canada gives the numbers as 2295 pagans, and 2810 Quakers.

Appendix A: Forms and Instructions

Instructions for Check-coders

The purpose of check-coding is to test the reproducibility of the original coder's results. If wildly different coding results on same articles, depending on who is doing the coding, then it is likely that the categories for analysis have not been formulated in a clear, consistent fashion, and need to be reconceptualized.

Each of the two check-coders involved in the project will be given half of the articles. When each has coded the articles, I will calculate a percentage agreement between the coding and the check-coding across each variable. If it is found that I have very high agreement with one check-coder, and very low agreement with the other, a third coder will be brought in.

Detailed Instructions: Worksheet One

Newspaper name, article date and headline are straightforward, and are used to match the coding sheet with the article.

Origin of Article: refers to the method by which the article was generated. Specifically, I wish to know if it was produced locally, has been reprinted from another newspaper, or was picked up off the wire service. If either of the latter two, please record details (ie: Christian Science Monitor NOT 'another paper'; AP [Associated Press] NOT 'wire service').

Number of sentences: The number of sentences in the article *excluding the headline*.

Number of sentences witchcraft/ % sentences witch: These categories proved to be unworkable during the pre-test; ignore them.

Court Case / Conflict Categories. The type of court case refers to what the charge or concern of the suit is (ie: pornography, drug possession, assault).

To refresh your memories, the plaintiff is the accuser, the defendant is the accusee, and the crime is the act in question.

Conflict other than a court case: asks if the article is focussing on some conflictive situation that has not yet found its way before a judge. (ie: a story about a riot would be listed in this category, if it does not deal with the

prosecution of charges that have been laid as a result of the incident. a story about a break-in would be included, even if the police have no suspects as yet, etc...)

Type of conflict: wishes to know who the conflict is between. (ie: in the earlier examples, the riot could be described as 'mob of Canadian taxpayers vs Revenue Canada taxation office' and the break-in could be described as 'unknown thieves vs Sue Smith, homeowner'. If there are not at least two identifiable parties, then it is probably not a conflict.

Identifying voices: Identifying the voices present in the article is not as straightforward as it might seem. Read these instructions carefully. 'Voice' in the sense of this category describes HOW a statement has been made. A single person may have several 'voices' within the context of a single article. Examples:

-- Wendy Smith said, "I went to the store." would be recorded as *Wendy Smith* because the statement is in quotation marks, and is therefore a direct quotation.

-- Wendy Smith said that she went to the store. would be recorded as *Wendy Smith through narrator*, because it is an indirect quotation by the narrator. It is attributed to Smith, but we cannot be sure that these words are entirely free of narrative tampering.

-- Bill Scott, Ms. Smith's lawyer, said "On the day in question, my client claims she went to the store." would be recorded as *Wendy Smith through Bill Scott*.

-- Bill Scott, Ms. Smith's lawyer, said that on the day in question, his client claims to have gone to the store. would be recorded as *Wendy Smith through Bill Scott through narrator*.

Although all of the statements above are somehow credited to Wendy Smith, they would each be assigned different voice numbers.

Religious References: This section includes not only explicit reference to the status of witchcraft as a religion (ie: 'the religion of these neo-pagans' etc...) but also those that are merely inferred by the use of words associated with religions or religious activities ('witches meet for worship'; 'witchcraft venerates deities associated with nature'; 'witchcraft is devoid of liturgy' etc...)

A confirming usage is one which affirms the similarity between witchcraft and other religions, fostering an identity between them. (ie: 'witches pray to many different gods'). A disconfirming usage is one which denies the similarity between witchcraft and other religions (ie: 'witchcraft is devoid of liturgy').

When you record these statements, list the salient part of the statement (ie: 'witches worship at seasonal festivals...') so that you will be able to see where

coding differences arise, the voice number of the statement maker as you have assigned it above, and whether the statement is confirming or disconfirming. Statements need not be original to be recorded. If a statement is being repeated in an article, it should be coded the same number of times it appears. The unit of analysis for the purpose of this category is a sentence (ie: If more than one religious reference appears in a single sentence, the whole sentence should be recorded as one reference, *unless the two references are made by separate voices within the sentence*, in which case, both should be recorded, and the unusual situation clearly marked on the coding sheet.

Detailed Instructions: Worksheet Two

Contemporary Phenomenon: Does the article present witchcraft as something that is happening NOW.

Other portrayals: Historical or legendary, fantasy or fictional etc...

Identified as witches: Record the name of the individual so identified, the statement in which the identification takes place, and the voice number making the statement. Also record any other descriptions of these identified witches, along with the same information.

For example, let us take the following hypothetical paragraph:

Lisa Gray appears to be an ordinary college student, but she claims to be a witch. Every morning, the petite, 21 year old blonde runs six miles before heading off to her classes in architectural drafting, then she spends the afternoon doing her homework between clients at her part time job. She reads tarot cards at the Occult Shop on Bank Street.

Right now, there are two voices present: the narrator (1) and Lisa Gray through the narrator (2).

Lisa Gray: "claims to be a witch" 2.

-- "appears to be an ordinary college student" 1.

-- "petite, 21 year old blonde" 1.

-- "every morning...runs six miles..." 1

-- "...classes in architectural drafting..." 1.

-- "...reads tarot cards at the Occult Shop..." 1.

Above is how I would code that paragraph in terms of that category. I am interested in seeing what kind of picture is being painted of those identified as witches, as well as who is holding the paintbrush.

Associated with Satanism or devil-worship: 'Associated with' and 'identified with' are not the same for the purposes of this category. The latter is much narrower than the former. The statements 'witchcraft and satanism both use magic'; 'witchcraft is not satanism'; and 'unlike satanism, witchcraft focuses on a pantheon of benign nature gods' should all be recorded in this category. Record the statement and the voice number.

Traditional Paradigm: This category is intended to get a sense of what aspects of the traditional paradigm as still being referred to in modern reporting. You have been provided with a partial list of the statements the traditional paradigm in its purest form makes about witches and witchcraft, and you should have read the applicable section in Chapter One. PLEASE REMEMBER: Not all statements from the traditional paradigm are negative! Record the reference, the voice number, and the type of reference (confirming, denial, neutral).

Confirming, in terms of this category, means that the reference reinforces the aspect of the traditional paradigm it mentions. (ie: 'The Occult Shop carries the herbs and oils that witches require to make their magic potions', I would code as a confirming reference deriving from the traditional paradigm, because it implies that witches DO need these things. On the other hand, I would code 'John Jones, a witch, laughs when you ask him if he rides on a broomstick. He has a car.' as a denial of a traditional image, because it implies witches DO NOT do this.)

I wish you the best of luck, and thank you for your time!

Stereotypical Statements: Traditional Paradigm

- 1) Witches are old.
- 2) Witches are women.
- 3) Witches worship/ are in league with the Devil/ are Satanists.
- 4) Witches are sexually deviant/ promiscuous.
- 5) Witches don't believe in God.
- 6) Witches work/ worship naked.
- 7) Witches curse people.
- 8) Witches are ugly.
- 9) Witches are impossibly beautiful.
- 10) Witches can read minds.
- 11) Witches can see the future.
- 12) Witches eat human flesh.
- 13) Witches consort with demons.
- 14) Witchcraft is a cult. (popular perjorative usage)
- 15) Witches are evil.
- 16) Witchcraft is superstition.
- 17) Witches impair sexual functioning/ reproduction.
- 18) Witches practice blood sacrifices/ mutilate animals.

Stereotypical Statements: Craft Paradigm

- 1) Witchcraft is a nature/ pagan religion.
- 2) Witches do not seek to harm anyone.
- 3) Witches do not believe in 'one true way'.
- 4) Witchcraft is pre-Christian.
- 5) Witchcraft is poly/ pantheistic.
- 6) Witchcraft is feminist.
- 7) Witchcraft gives equal prominence to a God and a Goddess.
- 8) Witches believe magic is a natural force.
- 9) Witches believe in reincarnation.
- 10) Witchcraft has a situational morality/ does not believe in sin.
- 11) Witches do healing magic.
- 12) Witches can work singly or in groups.
- 13) Witches believe in the law of returns/ karma.
- 14) Witchcraft celebrates seasonal festivals.
- 15) Witches believe that sexuality is a normal part of life, subject to normal rules.

Perjorative Statements about Cults (Beckford)

- 1) Cults use destructive mind-control techniques to attract and hold recruits.
- 2) Cults are run by greedy and unscrupulous people.
- 3) Cults amass large amounts of tax-sheltered wealth.
- 4) Cults are authoritarian organizations.
- 5) Cult members/ leaders are sexually promiscuous.

Worksheet 1

Newspaper _____ Publication Date _____

Headline _____

Origin of article _____ Location of story _____

sentences. _____ # sentences witchcraft _____ % sentences witch _____

Is this article centrally concerned with a court case? Y / N   If so, what type? _____

Is witchcraft associated with the plaintiff, the defendant, or the crime? _____

Is this article centrally concerned with a conflict other than a court case? Y / N

If so, what type of conflict? _____

How many voices are present in this article? _____ Please identify each voice below

[illegible]

How many times, in this article, are words or phrases used to describe witches or witchcraft that are ordinarily used to describe religions or religious activities? (ie ritual, congregation, god/s, spiritual, prayer, worship, etc) Please indicate below Include voice #, a + for confirming usage and a - for a denial.

[illegible]

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Worksheet II

Newspaper. _____ Publication Date _____

Headline. _____

Does this article present witches/ witchcraft as a contemporary phenomenon? Y / N

If no, how would you describe the portrayal of witches/ witchcraft? _____

How many individuals are identified as witches in this article? By whom are they so identified (voice number from previous worksheet)? How are they described / what characteristics are attributed to them? Please describe below.

In this article, is witchcraft ever associated with satanism or devil-worship? Y / N By whom, and how?

How many times, in this article, are words or phrases used to describe witches or witchcraft that derive from the traditional paradigm? (ie: broomsticks, eye of newt, telling the future, eating the flesh of unbaptized babies, etc...). Please indicate below. Include voice #, a + for confirming usage and a - for a denial, and a / for a reference perceived as neutral.

Appendix B: Article Frequency

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Jan					+					
Feb										
Mar							*	*	*	
Apr							*	*	*	
May										
Jun					++				**	
Jul								^^	*	
Aug									^	+
Sep										
Oct	+		+ ^			*	+	++	**	
Nov							**		*	
Dec	++					^^		*		

+ = Outside Canada

* = inside Canada, but outside Ottawa

^ = Ottawa local

Appendix B. Article Frequency -- Religious References

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Jan										
Feb										
Mar								*	*	
Apr							*	*	*	
May										
Jun									**	
Jul								^ ^	*	
Aug									^	+
Sep										
Oct	+					*			*	
Nov							*		*	
Dec	++					^		*		

+ = outside Canada

* = inside Canada, but outside Ottawa

^ = Ottawa local

Appendix B: Article Frequency -- Traditional References

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Jan										
Feb										
Mar								*		
Apr										
May										
Jun				++					**	
Jul								^	*	
Aug									*	+
Sep										
Oct	+		++			*	+	+	**	
Nov							**		*	
Dec						^ ^				

+ = outside Canada

* = inside Canada but outside Ottawa

^ = Ottawa local

Appendix B Article Frequency -- Associated with Satanism

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Jan										
Feb										
Mar								*		
Apr										
May										
Jun									**	
Jul								^	*	
Aug									^	+
Sep										
Oct						*		+	*	
Nov							*			
Dec										

+ = outside Canada

* = inside Canada, but outside Ottawa

^ = Ottawa local

Appendix B: Article Frequency -- Court and Conflict

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Jan										
Feb										
Mar							*	*	*	
Apr							*	*	*	
May										
Jun				+					**	
Jul								^	*	
Aug										+
Sep										
Oct	+		+						*	
Nov							**		*	
Dec	++					^^		*		

+ = outside Canada

* = inside Canada but outside Ottawa

^ = Ottawa local

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