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"AN' YE HARM NONE, DO WHAT YE WILL":

NEO-PAGANS AND WITCHES IN CANADA

by

SHELLEY TSIVIA RABINOVITCH, B.A.

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

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Religion

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
July, 1992**

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**"AN' YE HARM NONE, DO WHAT YE WILL":
NEO-PAGANS AND WITCHES IN CANADA**

submitted by

SHELLEY TSIVIA RABINOVITCH, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts

John J. Cove, Thesis Supervisor

Joseph Ramisch, Chair, Department of Religion

Carleton University
August, 1992

Abstract

This thesis investigates the existence of Neo-Pagans and Witches in Canada as a bona fide religious group. Empirical data collected in a year-long series of interviews with participants from Newfoundland to British Columbia highlights who Neo-Pagans and Witches in Canada are, what they believe, and how they self-identify. Included are discussions on Witchcraft traditions (sects), classification of Neo-Pagan traditions by belief and practice, and the vesting of power in a non-institutionalized religious system. Of note are the discussion of a relationship between childhood experience and choice of Neo-Paganism as a religious philosophy, and the investigation of magic as a healing metaphor within Neo-Paganism and Wicca.

BENEDICTION

There are countless stories that sing to the heart,

And countless truths that weave mind and soul...

I am the author of none, and the vessel of many.

Let my hand not falter, and my words ring true

So that all will hear, and remember.

Let that which was begun in fear, end in hope.

So Mote It Be.

- - Meredydd, Second Degree Priestess, 1992

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, John J. Cove for badgering me when I began to lose my focus and for reminding me that an M.A. is not supposed to be a 'warm human experience'...(You lose John: I loved it!) I would also like to thank Dr. Marie-Francoise Guédon of the University of Ottawa, who hovered anxiously over this project with a helping hand and a pot of tea. My gratitude is also due to Sian Lee Reid and Lucie DuFresne, for their loving attention to detail as proofreaders and brainstormers, and to Louise Bleackley for babysitting both myself and the departmental printer at obscenely late hours.

This work is jointly dedicated to Beatrice Rabinovitch, my long-suffering mother, and to Dr. Johanna Stuckey of York University, my academic role-model.

I would like to thank all those who, for reasons of their job security and personal safety, I cannot name. Of those I can thank, I would like to specifically mention (in random order): Branwen Mevlannen Stonecypher, Priestess, teacher, friend, and Elder; Rowan Starseeker for her house, her recording equipment, and her friendship; Moria and Senet, for accepting a seeker "from away"; Monica P. for a warm home and a warm smile; Barb Comstock and the Philosopher's Stone bookstore for recording facilities and for rounding up more informants than I knew what to do with; Sigurd, Pheonix and Darryl for all their help and hospitality; Kate, for giving me a chance to try out the plate-smashing ritual in her fireplace; Sam Wagar for invaluable help in networking and meeting people; Linda Gibb for contacts and great spaghetti; Dobhran, for allowing me to haunt the Occult Shop and brainstorm with patrons; Charles Arnold for names, addresses and trust over many many years; and to the many members of the Society for Creative Anachronism across Canada for crash space, contact names and friendship as I travelled.

To all who participated in the survey both formally and informally: Blessed be and my heartfelt thanks!

This research was aided in part by grants from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and from the Department of Religion, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Preface

I was amazed at the fear expressed by friends, family, and strangers when I indicated I was studying Witches in Canada. More than anything else, I was asked "Why would you want to do your thesis on such a weird group of people?"

Many of my friends are Witches and Neo-Pagans of various traditions. I have grown up with Witch-friends since my high school days in Arizona. Their philosophy of all things as sacred, and the ability to heal and perform spells, has always fascinated me. I could not help but wonder what drove them to such a counterculture religion.

My travels across Canada in 1991 were aided by many, many people. I gained literally dozens of new friends and found myself cared for and helped in large and small ways. People I had never even talked to suddenly opened up their houses and lives to me, fed me, and acted as liaisons for my research¹. The Witches and Neo-Pagans I met across Canada are people I am proud to call friends.

I am grateful for the people who helped me in my venture in so many ways. I am grateful also for the chance to travel across this wonderful country I love so much (even if it was by Greyhound and Voyageur buses!) and experience one of the most mystical, magical, and wonderful summers of my life.

Witches are not bad. They do not eat babies, and do not consort with the Devil. Witches are normal members of Canadian society who happen to believe in something other than Judaism, Christianity or Islam. It is my hope that this piece of scholarship will aid in some small fashion towards making Canada a slightly easier place for a Neo-Pagan to worship freely by explaining who Canadian Neo-Pagans and Witches are.

¹ By doing so, these individuals put their own reputations as Neo-Pagans and as judges of character on the line. I am deeply grateful for their support in all things.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Also growing rapidly are such belief systems as the Earthmother religions including Wicca (Celtic Witchcraft), Children of the Earthmother (Neo-Pagans), and various other cults which typify God as a woman. Both Satanism and the earthmother [sic] religion are 'fed' by the New Age Movement.¹

...The images of witches are quite different, since always they are secretly placed somewhere by the command of the devil for the hurt of a creature; and they who walk or sleep over them are harmed, as the witches themselves confess.²

There is much popular literature on the shelves on Witches - as wicked, haglike, malevolent, or evil. Witches are the demons with which many Canadians scare their children into bed. However, there is a growing trend within this country for adults and children to self-identify as Witches, or Pagans. With confusing labels and nebulous cosmology and axiology, the question arises as to who these Neo-Pagans and Witches

¹ From a pamphlet entitled Occult Crimes Investigations by Dr. Clifford Alford, Oklahoma City, OK., p. 2 (date unknown, probably 1990 or later). Quoted in the Wiccan Information Network Intelligence Summary, October 1991.

² These words come from one of the most infamous books of Christian history, the Malleus Maleficarum, or the "Hammer Against the Wrongdoers [witches]". Written by two Dominican monks, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, it first saw print in 1490 (manuscript dates are uncertain). The Malleus offers very detailed instructions on finding witches, and trying witches, as well as reasons as to why feeble-minded women so often become witches. This quotation is from the Dover Publications edition (Summers, 1971), pg. 39.

are. This thesis will try to answer this question, along with where they come from, and what they believe.

The 1981 Canadian census indicated that 2,295 Canadians self-identify as Pagans. Many of these Pagans are also Witches, Wiccans, Neo-Pagans, and Goddess worshippers. The statistic is very misleading as there is no definition of Pagan for the census.

The very same 1981 Census indicated that 2,810 Canadians self-identify as members of the Society of Friends (Quakers). It is probable that no one in Canada will argue about the validity of Quakers as being members of a valid religion. Why then, are Neo-Pagans treated with such ridicule when another religious group with comparable numbers of adherents across Canada is treated seriously?

Witches in Canada reflect a "hidden religion"³, one which is virtually invisible unless one knows a practitioner. Statistics Canada and other institutionalized bodies find accessing the number of Witches virtually impossible. Devotees meet alone, or in small groups by night. They worship in many forms, often furtively and away from the questioning eye of researchers and the idly curious. When questioned about their beliefs, many indicate they are Unitarian, Quaker, or 'non-traditional' in religious outlook⁴.

³ Perhaps better described as a family of religions in the same way Christianity is a family of religions.

⁴ As related by a Neo-Pagan from Nova Scotia after a near-fatal car accident outside Oromocto a few years back: "I must have been in pretty bad shape, because when they asked my religion I told them [emphasis in original]".

1.1 Neo-Pagans and Witches: Definition of Terms

Neo-Pagans are usually one or more of the following: animist, pantheist, polytheist, monist (Adler, 1986). The word Pagan is derived from the Latin word *paganus*, described as "rustic, peasant", and has historically meant one who was not one of the three religions often referred to as "People of the Book": Judaism, Christianity, and Islam⁵. Under the latter definition, a Hindu is a Pagan, as is a Buddhist, but for simplicity's sake some Neo-Pagans drop the "neo" when explaining their worldview and refer to themselves as Pagans. Neo-Pagans sometimes view themselves as returning to old religious roots, seeing their form(s) of belief as holistic and balanced (diZerega, 1988). These Neo-Pagans are striving to live in some sort of relationship with nature, often personified as Gaia.

Witches (also called Wiccans) are a subset of Neo-Paganism; followers of a Goddess and a God in what they view as a pre, or non-Christian religion from the British Isles. Neo-Pagans have no hell and no heaven. Almost all believe they will reincarnate in some form, whether that is as a human, a non-human, or as part of the collective unconsciousness.

The popular anthropological uses of "witch" to denote tribal practitioners causing illness or misfortune⁶ must be ignored when discussing Neo-Pagan Witches in Canada

⁵ This is out of the 1972 Webster's English Dictionary. Most dictionaries give similar definitions of the term.

⁶ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, in both Nuer Religion and Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande indicates that witchcraft is "a pseudonym for malice, envy, and spite" (I.M. Lewis, in Lehmann and Myers, 1989). Lewis himself explains that the anthropologist's encounter with the supernatural is ambiguous. Whether or not the Neo-Pagan in Canada views him/herself as

(Johnson, 1991; Luhrmann, 1989). Unlike a Navajo witch, Canadian Witches use this term exclusively to indicate an allegiance or alignment with a specific religious and/or philosophical system of belief. Virtually every informant across Canada, urban or rural, indicated they did not use their "powers" or abilities for ill. For the purposes of this thesis, a Canadian Neo-Pagan Witch is a self-identified believer in a Goddess/God based religion⁷.

The academic community can find much of relevance in the study of the Neo-Pagan and Witch communities in Canada. Neo-Paganism appears to give the scholar a new religious philosophy which can be studied while still in its infancy. There are arguably many parallels between the emergence of Neo-Paganism out of the Jewish and Christian milieu of the West and the formative years of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism in the first two centuries C.E. Both formative Christianity and Neo-Paganism began in non-institutionalized forms, and both can be perceived as forms of rebellion against the religious 'status quo' of their periods.

1.2 Neo-Paganism as a New Religious Movement

Neo-Paganism seems to be something other than a New Religious Movement as studies have defined them in the past. The study of New Religious Movements, active

using magic and/or directly accessing supernatural powers will be discussed at some length in Chapter 6.

⁷ Although the more radical Dianic and Feminist branches will rarely use God imagery in worship, they nearly always acknowledge the male Deity form, or the presence of male power within the Goddess (in the yin/yang form).

for about 30 years, indicates that there is some sort of 'religious quest' in which many individuals are engaged. The whole "New Age" movement of the 1980s and 90s points to a massive movement within North American culture towards a new form of religions and religiosity. With forms and variants of Eastern thought and charismatic or millenarian sects arising out of the late twentieth century, a great deal of literature has been produced on religions and religiosity. Out of this literature have arisen typologies dealing with churches, sects, and cults. Despite this, a pivotal issue is being overlooked: that there is a change occurring in what it means to be religious in 20th century Canada.

It is interesting to note that virtually all the journal articles and books on NRMs deal with religions which feature some form of organization and/or institutionalized framework⁸. Neo-Paganism not only avoids organizational efforts⁹, it is quite blatant in its condemnation of institutionalizing efforts (Skelton, 1990; Farrar and Farrar, 1984; Valiente, 1989).

Many NRMs are termed "exotic" or "destructive" (Halpern, Markowitz, in Halpern 1983). Much of the literature on NRMs indicates that many who join these religious groups start with weak egos or poor family identification. These devotees can be adversely affected by the unwavering allegiance expected from the religious group. Indeed, the conversion of adherents to new religions is often described by relatives in

⁸ At the forefront of this effort to classify religions using only organizational forms are Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge (1980; 1982; 1984; 1985).

⁹ With very few exceptions, every effort to create an umbrella organization or council for Neo-Pagans in Canada has failed. Efforts included trying to open a Canadian branch of the Covenant of the Goddess (U.S.A.), the Communitas in Toronto, and a Cross-Tradition Priesthood Council in Ottawa.

terms such as brainwashing or cursing. Neo-Pagans are easy targets for such allegations, as they claim to use magic in their forms of worship.

1.3 Magic and Religion

The word Witch is usually linked to magic, spells, malevolence and curses. It would appear odd that a religious movement in modern-day Canadian society would turn to magic and its related activities as religion. However, the line between religion and superstition is a fine one, and in many cultures the two are linked. Do Canadian Neo-Pagans and Witches use spells? Do they even perceive themselves to be doing "magic" at all? Is this magic integral to their cosmology and axiology? Expressions of religiosity from within strong folk-traditions often feature some sort of magical thought, such as in the *religiosidad popular* of Hispanic Christianity (Romero, 1991).

Studies on "occult" and "magical" thinking often are inapplicable to the Neo-Pagan use of magic, as they deal either with very specific phenomena such as tarot card readers (Jorgensen and Jorgensen, 1982), or dismiss the Witchcraft revival as a "flash in the pan" or fad movement (Truzzi, 1971, 1972, 1974). How magic is perceived by the practitioners themselves and what purpose it serves in their worship and expression of belief is in itself an interesting avenue for discussion.

From the familiar sleight-of-hand tricks to more sophisticated notions of cursing or blasting, North American culture still holds firm to the belief of magic as a real force, even if it scoffs at those who claim to practice it. Again the question of religion versus folk practice arises - most Canadians would probably deny they practice magic, yet if

they hope for something special they might knock on wood. Are Canadian Witches returning to old folk beliefs and institutionalizing them? Or are they doing something completely different? The investigation of magic and its relationship to Canadian Neo-Pagans is an avenue this thesis will try to explore.

1.4 Literature on Neo-Paganism

The study of this growing new religion has been sadly ignored in the academic literature to date. Little research has been carried out on Neo-Pagans and Witches in the fields of religion, sociology, anthropology or psychology. Sociological literature does deal with some of the issues which will be discussed in this thesis, such as non-institutional forms of religious expression, and how this form of religiosity relates to the existing social order and hierarchies.

Scholars are starting to note the Neo-Pagan movement, although it is being investigated with far more frequency as an indicator of social trends than as a religion in its own right. Issues such as the institutionalization of power (Tyrrell, 1992) or praxis and social action (Sandilands, 1988) have been touched on by recent studies of the Canadian Neo-Pagan movement. However to date, there has been no study of Neo-Paganism in Canada with a view to who Neo-Pagans are and what they believe as religious individuals¹⁰.

¹⁰ A recent M.A. completed by Lynn Johnson of the University of Calgary looks at the history, structure and cosmology of some Neo-Pagans. Johnson's thesis was unavailable to this researcher during the writing of this thesis, but telephone contact indicated that Johnson did some interviewing with Neo-Pagans in Alberta and British Columbia and contrasted these results with interviews conducted in Ireland, Britain and Wales.

In sharp contrast, there is a flood of books on Neo-Pagan and Witchcraft topics in commercial bookstores. Popular literature on Witchcraft has been available in increasing volume since the mid 1960s when the turbulence of the times created many new religious trends and interests. Since the appearance of The Spiral Dance (Starhawk, 1979) and Drawing Down the Moon (Adler, 1979) there has been a strong increase in Neo-Pagan self-identification in Canada and the United States¹¹.

The popular literature does not, however, address many of the questions scholars have about religion and belief. In fact, the popular literature available suggests a very wide range of variability in what a Neo-Pagan is. The volume of new publications on Witches and Neo-Pagans in a economic time when many publishers are going bankrupt seems to indicate there is a very strong grassroots demand for the information. This appears to reinforce the notion that there is a growing search for something 'new' or fresh on the Canadian religious scene. Investigating Neo-Paganism from the literature in both the academic and popular fields might answer some of the questions about this religious movement, but not all.

In order to address some of these issues, it became obvious that primary empirical research was needed within the Neo-Pagan communities of Canada. This thesis is based on 67 formalized interviews which were taped during the summer of 1991, plus years on the fringes of Neo-Pagan communities across Canada and in the United States.

¹¹ These two books are most often cited by Neo-Pagans as the two they first came in contact with.

Approximately 20 off-cassette interviews were also conducted during the same period of time, plus over 40 informal discussions on many of the questions from the interview schedule. In all, over 130 Neo-Pagans and Witches were contacted and used as sources for this thesis.

This research attempts to ask Neo-Pagans themselves who they are and what they believe in. To date it appears there has been no systematic attempt to interview Neo-Pagans across Canada as to their cosmology and axiology, something this researcher attempts to do in this thesis.

This is not a definitive study on the Canadian Neo-Pagan; rather it is exploratory in nature. This thesis reports on the descriptive information collected in a summer of field research, and then analyses the data using sociological, anthropological, psychological and religious studies methodologies. This body of work not only attempts to describe the Neo-Pagans in Canada, but also to try and interpret why these individuals leave the organized religions in Canada for Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft. It is hoped that this thesis will not so much answer questions about Neo-Paganism in Canada as bring up further questions for future study.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Working from the assumption that Neo-Pagans are a semi-private group of related religions that would not be willing to be interviewed by an 'outsider', a blend of participant-observer methodology and interviewing appeared to be the best means of investigating Neo-Pagans in Canada. The popular literature available indicated Witches and Neo-Pagans in general would not be forthcoming about their beliefs unless they were dealing with someone they could trust not to portray them as "crazy" or in some way dangerous.

Two types of questions appeared to be of interest when discussing Neo-Pagans: who are the Neo-Pagans (etic), and what cosmology and axiology do they express about their religion (emic)¹². Both issues have been discussed to some limited degree in the popular literature, but the researcher questioned whether issues exclusive to the Canadian Neo-Pagan community would be found when talking with Canadians.

2.1.1 The Participant-Observer Role

The researcher has been 'on the fringes' of the Canadian and American Neo-Pagan world for over 20 years, since her first ritual attendance in 1971. From merely

¹² Emic and etic are anthropological terms. Emic may be remembered as "ME": what the participant believes about a given topic. Etic, "IT", is the comments a scientist or uninvolved observer would make about a group or topic.

having friends who self-identified as Witches, this contact increased through hobbies and other activities to a strong familiarity with many of the Neo-Pagans and their practices. As well, for four years the researcher worked as an occasional employee of the Ottawa Occult Shop (which functions much like a community centre for the public and semi-public Wiccans in that city). This mix of contacts through hobbies and occasional employment allowed for an ease of contact and discussion which might not have been otherwise possible before this research was undertaken. If a Neo-Pagan self-identified as a Gardnerian Witch for instance, the researcher understood much of the emic content of that statement.

However, in order to be accepted by the Neo-Pagans across Canada it became evident that the writer would have to undergo at least one initiation into a form of Neo-Paganism. Ultimately the choice was made to take Oaths within two of the most respected (if not the largest) traditions in North America: Gardnerian Wicca and Dianic Witchcraft.

Participant-observer methodology is the only one which can allow the researcher complete freedom when researching a community or group. For this project the researcher chose to identify herself to the participants as a researcher and as a Neo-Pagan. Other systems of data-gathering (such as interviews or questionnaires) immediately inform the subject that s/he is being studied, and their normal attitudes or actions may be therefore changed.

Identification with specific Neo-Pagan traditions allowed the researcher ample access to many otherwise unreachable communities within Canada. Once the participants

knew the writer was "oath-bound"¹³ a rapport was established as equals making the researcher an insider and not an outsider. (This also helped avoid the tendency of some informants to tell researchers what they perceive is desired information rather than accurate information.)

It was through the choices of Gardnerian and Dianic initiations that the writer was able to access many of the very underground practitioners in Canada¹⁴. As well, the researcher's twelve years experience as a professional broadcast journalist stood her in good stead, for after that many years one evolves "instincts" as to when one is being fed a 'line' versus the truth.

Hagedorn (1990) indicates various advantages and disadvantages to participant-observation research. Informants could be interviewed wherever and whenever they were comfortable: at a home, at a ritual, or in a park. Trust was achieved through the researcher's identification as a Neo-Pagan far more rapidly than would otherwise be possible. As well the emic meanings of many phrases and allusions were understood by the researcher as a result of her having had contact with this community for so many years.

¹³ A term used in Neo-Pagan belief to indicate one who has sworn an oath of some sort to protect the secrets of the religion (Farrar and Farrar, 1984).

¹⁴ Sandilands (1988), and Tyrrell (1992) both remarked on their acute awareness of having been unable to access either the secretive religionists or the radical Dianic Witches in Canada. Being members of both movements allowed this researcher considerable ability to make contacts and talk candidly (although none of the former group would allow on-cassette interviews to be held).

Of the drawbacks inherent in participant-observation techniques, it is hoped that few have skewed this research. The chief problem with participant-observer research is the concern over observer bias. In this case the researcher came into the study with positive assumptions about the religion after years of contact. Possible loss of objectivity has also been weighted by extensive discussion of the researcher's theories with other academics outside of Neo-Paganism. The issue of being a lone researcher has been bypassed by discussion with other participant-observer researchers into Neo-Paganism (mostly M.A. students). The presence of the observer as an insider did not appear to sensitize the informants to the presence of the research.

2.1.2 Interviewing Techniques

Along with the issues evident in the popular literature and arising from long-term contact with Canadian Neo-Pagans and Witches, two surveys of Neo-Pagans were consulted in formulating the questions for this study. Kirkpatrick et al (1986) was of interest in part because the results found by this group of researchers often did not fit into the expectations of the scholars. A survey distributed in 1989 by M. Slade, researching Witches mostly in the Toronto and Ottawa areas, was also of use.

A semi-structured interview was used, utilizing techniques from sociology and social work. The schedule was used as an open-ended guideline for the interviews with the interviewer allowing long pauses for the participant to formulate answers, query the meaning of the question at hand, or offer additional information to explain an answer.

The four page text broke the questions down into various etic and emic categories (see Appendix 7).

As the interviewer started with the most basic demographic questions (age, education, etcetera), it was possible to earn the respondent's trust and confidence before the difficult questions arose ("Delicate Question Department"). The interviewer's natural comfort level with strangers coupled with her extensive background as a professional journalist made use of this particular technique extremely useful. As the data can be affected to some degrees by the characteristics of the interviewer (Hagedorn, 1990) it was fortunate that a good rapport was established quickly with all informants.

Most of the research was conducted via face-to-face interviews which were audio taped for later reference. The survey questions were not shown to the individual beforehand in the hope that the resulting answers would be spontaneous rather than studied and "correct" (politically or otherwise). As many of the individuals did not know each other, timing was such that one volunteer would leave before the next would arrive, thus protecting everyone's identity.

Volunteers were told they could use whatever name they preferred for the interview, and this would then be the name used for the thesis. Due to the sensitive nature of the last page of questions on the survey all participants were isolated for the final group of questions.¹⁵

¹⁵ This proved to be a prudent decision on the writer's part, as some spouses had never told their partners about child sexual abuse or rapes which had occurred prior to their having met.

A number of interviews were also conducted but not taped, whether because of equipment failure, request of the participant, or the technical incompetence of the interviewer.¹⁶ Interviews occurred in automobiles en route to different communities, in hotel lobbies, at restaurants: wherever the participant felt most "at ease"¹⁷. In other words, where it was convenient, the interviewer jumped at the chance.

The questions were worded in such a way as to avoid leading the participant with inherent assumptions about the Neo-Pagan community and individuals therein. The survey was carefully scrutinized by the writer's academic advisor, Ottawa-area Neo-Pagans, and Halifax-area participants as well. An effort was made to use non-judgmental language, and to break up groups of questions which might appear to be leading towards certain results.

use.

Two potluck receptions were held for the writer: one in Winnipeg, Man., and one in Calgary, Alta. In both cases over a dozen members of the local Neo-Pagan communities attended, and were very hospitable to the researcher. In these group scenarios a microphone was placed in the middle of the room and questions from the survey were thrown into the crowd for response. This achieved two goals: first, to

¹⁶ For example, one interview in Victoria was not recorded as the researcher forgot to bring batteries for the cassette machine, and the discussion occurred over lunch at an outside patio where a power plug was not in evidence. This reminded the writer of the old line from Star Trek : "Dammit Jim, I'm a Doctor, not a [different job here]!" The writer is NOT a technically-minded individual.

¹⁷ In some cases the researcher suspects the interview was orchestrated so that a tape would be impossible to achieve.

introduce the community itself to the researcher and her questions (thereby facilitating subsequent one-on-one interviews), and second, to achieve a level of trust by meeting the participants en masse.

2.1.3 Convenience Sampling

Ultimately, the approximately 130 individuals interviewed across Canada were contacted by personal intermediaries on behalf of the researcher. Participants were asked to contact as many other Witches and Pagans as they were acquainted with, explain the nature of the ongoing research, and ask them to participate as well.

The interviews effectively constitute a convenience sample¹⁸ spread over numerous Canadian cities, towns, and villages. Participants offered to act as go-between between the researcher and their friends once they themselves saw the nature of the questions.

By the end of the field research period, formal and informal interviews had been collected from Neo-Pagans in the following communities across Canada¹⁹: St. John's NFLD.; Halifax, Dartmouth, New Ross, N.S.; Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Smiths Falls, Carleton Place, Maberly, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder

¹⁸ Described by the researcher as, "If they were convenient, I sampled them." The difference between being a participant-observer and an observing participant may appear to be slim but the participant-observer uses observation coupled with other techniques, as this writer has done. For an observing participant, active participation in the social life being studied is the only data gathering method. (Ellen, 1984, pg. 49)

¹⁹ The restraints of the Greyhound and Voyageur bus systems dictated that most cities had to be on the Trans-Canada Highway for access.

Bay, ONT.; Wakefield and Montreal, QUE.; Winnipeg, MAN.; Saskatoon, SASK.; Calgary, Edmonton, Canmore, ALTA.; Vancouver and area, Victoria, Salt Spring Island, B.C. As well, contact was made with Neo-Pagans in Hazelton, Argenta, Sooke, Gabriolla Island, Galliano Island, Denman Island, and Main Island, B.C.; Banff, and Medicine Hat, ALTA.; Regina, SASK.; Brandon, MAN.; numerous towns and cities in Ontario; the Eastern Townships of QUE.; Fredericton, Woodstock, and rural N.B.; and Whitehorse, Yukon.

2.2 Methodological Difficulties

It is important to stress that this thesis is both descriptive and analytic. Convenience sampling is one of the least-random and least-representative forms of gathering information (Ellen, 1984), as one must always question who make themselves available for such interviews. These questions must also come into consideration when the Chapter 6 information on vesting of power within Neo-Pagan groups is evaluated.

This tendency to take volunteers for interviews makes generalizations more suspect in analyzing the results of the interviews. There is no question that the ecopagan²⁰ community is under-represented in this study, as they seem to be the least

²⁰ Religionist, ecopagan, and God/dess celebrant are the three categories this researcher divides Canadian Neo-Pagans into. These will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Religionists are very hierarchical in nature, ecopagans work co-operatively with others on an equal footing, and God/dess celebrants are an offshoot of the consciousness raising groups of the 1960s, working on envisioning the Divine as immanent in all participants rather than transcendent.

linked to other Neo-Pagan groups. Ecopagans "use different webs", to use Neo-Pagan terminology.

It could be argued that the informants interviewed all fell into public and semi-public levels of availability, although some very private individuals were willing to share tea and off-tape discussion. The most secretive Neo-Pagan religionists²¹ are still under-represented in this study no matter who the researcher might be, as these Wiccans prefer to simply live in total anonymity. They saw no purpose in being identified, even anonymously in research.

As well, it is inevitable that many solitary practitioners have been missed in the research (which probably makes the overall Canadian Neo-Pagan population even higher than the writer's estimates). A half-page description of the ongoing research in fall of 1991 printed in Pandora magazine (from Halifax) yielded over a dozen letters from self-identified Neo-Pagans and Witches from very rural Nova Scotia.

The presence of Neo-Pagans in rural areas such as Mabery, Ontario or Argenta, B.C. underlines the fact that any one researcher will find it almost impossible to touch on all Neo-Pagan groups. For these reasons, given the restraints of methodology, funding, and time, this study should be viewed as an initial effort towards identifying the Neo-Pagan presence in Canada.

²¹ Religionists, in this context, refers to very hierarchical and structured forms of Neo-Pagan groups such as the Wiccan Church of Canada or Gardnerian Witches.

2.3 Neo-Pagan Fears

Researching the Neo-Pagan movement across Canada is much like searching for a needle in a haystack with one major addition: this needle has a conscious wish NOT to be found. Neo-Pagans frequently live in fear, gripped with concerns very similar to those of the Gay and Lesbian population in Canada 25 years ago.

Horror stories abound in the oral tradition of Canada's Neo-Pagan communities of the possibility of loss of employment²², children being seized by local Children's Aid Societies (apparently not documentable as having occurred in Canada), ostracism in small communities, physical violence, and so forth.

Many Feminist Witches will not even speak to a man, much less discuss their most intimate religious beliefs with one. This has in the past been a stumbling block for some researchers into the Neo-Pagan movement (Tyrrell, 1992). It was fortunate that contacts in Nova Scotia within the Feminist Witch community had contacts in other cities, and it was this network of friendship which opened many doors.

As well, Ottawa and Toronto Elders²³ vouched for the writer to other communities. Former Toronto Witch Charles Arnold (now residing in Vermont) supplied

²² Some of these concerns are not so apocryphal. Research did turn up a small number of Neo-Pagans, mostly in B.C. and Ontario, who firmly believe they were fired from their jobs when their religious affiliation became known.

²³ A rank which is not formally bestowed, given the extreme decentralized nature of the religion. An elder is one who has served a given community for many years in some leadership role and who is respected by the participants as knowledgeable and trustworthy. Ottawa author and Elder Anahita-Gula was extremely helpful in aiding this researcher with contacts across the country.

a list of personal contacts across Canada and indicated that it was permissible to tell the individuals to phone him if a personal reference was required.

After much mail and telephone contact had ensued, Dianic Elder Branwen Mevlannen Stonecypher of Alberta also decided the writer was trustworthy. In this case a formal letter of introduction was written to open doors for interviews which might have otherwise remained shut. Stonecypher was instrumental in organizing a meeting of numerous Neo-Pagans of various traditions in Calgary. After two hours of discussion on the project at hand, Stonecypher asked how many of the participants in the room would have attended if they had not known the researcher was bound by the same oaths they were: only two hands were raised.

2.4 Other Forms of Information-Gathering

2.4.1 Janet and Stewart Farrar North American Tour

A final chance to meet a large cross-section of the B.C. Neo-Pagan community occurred in Vancouver. Janet and Stewart Farrar, well-known Irish Witches (see bibliography) were touring Canada and the United States to research a new book they planned to write on Neo-Pagans and Witches in North America. Serendipitously, timing was such that the writer was able to attend an invitation only potluck dinner and party celebrating the Farrars' visit to Vancouver.

This party, held at a private residence, was well attended by a cross-section of the Vancouver Neo-Pagan community. Radical Feminist Witches, very conservative

Gardnerians, Pagans for Peace (the sponsors of the event) members and many more were in evidence. The sponsor, Sam Wagar, was congratulated on numerous occasions for his ability to get so many Neo-Pagans from disparate backgrounds to the function. Over 60 individuals popped in during the evening, with a small ritual presided over by the Farrars taking place towards the end of the evening.²⁴

Subsequent to this visit, the Farrars were also involved in a series of workshops and lectures in Toronto approximately one month later (August 1991). Again, the writer was invited to a limited-seating dinner and speech for the Farrars, this time in Toronto at a local Greek restaurant. Although neither as intimate nor as well-attended as the Vancouver reception, the semi-formal dinner was valuable for research purposes. Attendance allowed the author to make some valuable contacts for subsequent discussions, and to see the variety of Neo-Pagans and Witches who were willing to put aside rivalries to attend. In the Toronto case, most of the attendees were in the category of Neo-Pagans referred to in this thesis as religionists, while in Vancouver the attendance included religionists, God/dess celebrants, and ecopagans.

2.4.2 Miscellaneous Sources of Information

A limited amount of feedback was received through other media. Three responses were received from Winnipeg in the mail (one typed, and two on cassettes). Discussion

²⁴ Despite the party, internecine rivalries left certain factions of the Vancouver-area Neo-Pagan community either uninvited to the function, or unwilling to attend.

was ongoing with some Ottawa Neo-Pagans on the topics raised in the survey and much informal information was gathered in this manner.

During the 1991 Wic-Can Fest outside of Toronto, the author ran a semi-informal round-table session to deal with the concept of the Neo-Pagan movement as a "tribal" movement (suggested by a seminar the year before run by Anahita-Gula on being Jewish and Neo-Pagan). What was intriguing was the way the responses to the idea split on national grounds. The Canadians did not feel Neo-Pagans are tribal, whereas the Americans felt the movement was. One researcher suggested this difference is in part due to the heightened Canadian awareness of Amerind belief and identity²⁵.

The writer attended one session of the Ottawa Valley Pagan Discussion Group in the early Fall of 1991 at a private home in Ottawa, where the topic of discussion was nomenclature. At loggerheads were the religionist faction, feeling that the definition of Witch being discussed was too broad, and the God/dess celebrants and Eclectics²⁶, who felt the religionist definitions for Witch were too narrow. The discussion appeared typical of the difficulties with language and labelling evident across the rest of Canada. It is perhaps redundant to state that no satisfactory definitions were achieved.

²⁵ Lucie DuFresne, conversation 1992.

²⁶ Eclectics are the blend of the three types of Neo-Pagans in Canada. It appears that Eclectics are the most populous sub-section of the Canadian Neo-Pagan population. See Chapter 5 for more information.

Given the low level of trust towards outsiders evidenced by the Canadian Neo-Pagan community, the methodology of combining face-to-face interviewing with participant-observation appears to have been the best method for gathering information for this study. Other researchers intending to work with this religious group in Canada will need to use the role of participant-observer to understand these communities and their concerns.

Additional sources of information such as Neo-Pagan parties, discussion groups, periodicals and informal interviews all aided to flesh out the information for analysis. Future research could include additional questionnaires mailed to participants of the first round of interviews, or regional meetings with representatives from various traditions.

Chapter 3

Who are the Canadian Neo-Pagans?

There is a song popular in many Neo-Pagan areas entitled "Who Are the Witches?"²⁷, from which this chapter derives its title. The lyrics indicate that "...maybe your great-great grandmother was one. Witches were wise, wise women they say: there's a little witch in every woman today."²⁸ A study done into the portrayal of Witches in the Ottawa Citizen from 1980 - 1989, using a context analysis methodology, indicates that, by and large, the only people involved in portraying Witchcraft as a religion are the Neo-Pagans themselves (Reid, 1992). The quest of this chapter is to try and discover through first-hand interviews with Canadian Witches and Neo-Pagans who they are and where they come from.

The information in this chapter is primarily based on empirical research in the form of field work interviews from Halifax to Victoria. The results are a blend of emic and etic information insofar as most of this research focuses on the standard demographical information any social scientist would desire, such as age, sex, level of education, and so forth.

This information was gathered in a mix of open and closed interviews, plus informal discussions while driving or at dinner with other informants. This statistical

²⁷ Although this song shows up on the cassette "Echoes of Avalon" produced by Anna Mauveen Moore of Salt Spring Island, B.C. there is no credit to the author of the piece. It has been popular for over ten years, however.

²⁸ From "Echoes of Avalon" (cassette recording, date unknown [probably 1990 or 1991]).

information is descriptive only and is not designed to be a definitive statement on Neo-Pagans. Many of the emic questions arose out of the researcher's own experiences with Neo-Pagans in the past as well as from questions arising after reading the popular literature on Neo-Paganism.

Family of Origin questions covered two groups of concerns. First, how would Neo-Pagans compare to the 'average' Canadian? As a result, questions were formulated after reading other questionnaires, sociology and anthropology literature, psychology literature. Other questions in this section tried to focus on factors in the family of origin which might make an individual prone to accepting Neo-Paganism as a religion and philosophy. The latter group of questions were based on the researcher's observations over the years.

3.1.1 Who Are The Canadian Witches?²⁹

Canadian Neo-Pagans are a very disparate lot. Some are very underground and non-communicative, while others are gregarious and public³⁰. The youngest Witch³¹ interviewed was 20 years old and the eldest was 66. Canadian Witches are quiet, loud, tall, short, old, young, friendly, aloof, and look like anyone in their community.

²⁹ These descriptive statistics are drawn from nearly 100 hours of audio-tape interviews compiled during the summer of 1991 across Canada.

³⁰ Some are proprietors of Occult-type stores, or known to the popular local media as the "expert" on witches.

³¹ For the purposes of this chapter most references will be to Witches, as the participants themselves preferred this descriptive to any other offered during interview sessions.

In other words, the casual observer would probably not be able to pick the Witch out of any randomly selected crowd.

Canadian Witches are involved in their religious and/or spiritual community fairly heavily. Sometimes this 'community' is a local coven, while other times it may be a broader group of loosely-knit covens and solitary practitioners. However, Witches are also active to varying degrees in their communities at large.

Witches indicated that they participate in activities as disparate as the Special Olympics, OXFAM Canada, and the League of Canadian Poets. Some are or have been members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Others have been or are police officers with local or provincial forces.

Witches who also identified themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual indicated high levels of activism with social and/or political activities surrounding those causes, such as AIDS information lines, Lesbian drop-in centres, Women's bookstores, and such. Many Witches indicated their volunteerism was funnelled into humanitarian causes which "served the Goddess" in their daily lives: area zoos, S.P.C.A. and Humane Societies, Greenpeace, local Peace Centres, local Red Cross branches, literacy training programs, and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind³².

³² American Neo-Pagans have put out a concerted effort to have numerous basic Witchcraft and Neo-Pagan texts read into the "Talking Books" program. A few Canadian Witches indicated they were active in this effort.

Of the 67 Witches interviewed on tape, 43 identify themselves as heterosexual, 15 as bisexual³³ (men and women), eight as Lesbian and one as Gay (64% heterosexual, 22% bisexual, 12% lesbian, 2% gay). As well there seemed to be about a two-to-one ratio of married informants over single and/or divorced participants, with a smattering of widow/ers³⁴.

A very high number of participants indicated they had received some level of first aid and/or C.P.R. training. Numerous others have studied naturopathy, herbal remedies, and alternate healing systems such as Reiki or Rolfing. This strong tendency towards healing studies and social aid is viewed by the participants as expressing their religious world-view in their daily lives. Or as one Witch put it:

Wicca is not just a religion that you put on Sunday morning and take off again Sunday evening. It is transformative and experiential. You have to share what you learn with others and work to keep the balance, just as the Lord and the Lady do for us. I view it as putting back in some of what They give to me. (Ariel, Vancouver)

Most Canadian Witches identified themselves as politically to the left of centre³⁵, with some describing themselves as 'creative' or 'modified' anarchists. A great number of the informants indicated a high level of dissatisfaction with the government of the day

³³ Included in this category is the woman who indicated she was "omnivorous", and the woman who coined the term "tri-sexual" during the interview.

³⁴ This question was not asked in all situations so this observation is less precise.

³⁵ There were a few notable exceptions to the left/green political identification, such as DC from Nova Scotia, who indicated he was a card-carrying Conservative "...with the hope that change can be effected from within".

(both provincial and federal), and identified themselves alternately with the Rhino Party or the Lobster Party³⁶.

Very few of the participants could be described as marginal. Nearly all the subjects were employed, with only three job hunting and one on workman's compensation for a back injury³⁷. Some of the participants were underemployed³⁸, and many expressed dissatisfaction with their employment conditions and/or salaries. Witches are employed in Canada as: federal government employees, care givers for mentally handicapped adults, carpenters, mining engineers, computer engineers³⁹, computer systems analysts, geologists, archaeologists, social workers, police officers, and cooks. Canadian Witches hold many positions in the 'hard' sciences, and very few are in blue collar jobs⁴⁰.

Canadian Witches are from predominantly urban backgrounds. Of those asked, 31% were from urban Canadian centres (such as Edmonton, Vancouver, Halifax), while

³⁶ A Nova Scotia variant of the Rhino Party.

³⁷ One participant indicated she had been fired from her job as an administrative assistant the day the interview occurred.

³⁸ E.g. the computer consultant working as a video store clerk, or the food quality control technologist working in retail sales.

³⁹ The number of Witches and Neo-Pagans actively involved in computer-related fields is disproportionately high in Canada compared to other career choices. This trend mirrors those in Britain and the United States (Adler, 1986; Farrar and Farrar, 1984; Luhrmann, 1989).

⁴⁰ The notable exception to this trend is the community in Saskatoon, which is very isolated and has a high percentage of blue collar workers, cigarette smokers, and less formally-schooled members. It appears the problem in Saskatoon is a very poor economy. Many of the Witches also indicated they would like to return to school but finances prohibit the choice. (Returning to school would most likely broaden the job choices available to these Neo-Pagans.)

only 10% were from rural Canada. Thirty-one percent of informants were not raised in Canada during their formative years, although most of these were dependents of Canadian Forces members who grew up on military bases in Italy, Germany or France. Of those raised outside Canada, a strong percentage originate in the United States and the British Isles⁴¹.

3.1.2 Loners

"A bunch of loners banding together - loner behaviour," said one informant in Vancouver. Canadian Witches were overwhelming in their descriptions of themselves as loners when growing up. Of the 67 subjects, one called himself more of a maverick than a loner⁴², and only three others said that they did not think of themselves as loners while growing up. This fits with the portrait of a group of bookish individuals, but the surprising information was that over 30 of the informants **still view themselves as loners now**.

Many of those interviewed felt that although they were not as alone now as when they were young, they were still fairly 'alone'. In response to the query "Are you still a loner?" over three-quarters of the respondents indicated "Yes, less so now but yes". Discussion of the sense of aloneness brought out an interesting fact: Witches did not choose to be alone, but were rather ostracized as children for numerous reasons.

⁴¹ One informant was raised in Holland.

⁴² Shane, Nova Scotia

This fact was elaborated in many ways: "I was sickly as a child" (Halifax informant); "I grew up early and was far more mature than my chronological peers" (Calgary informant); "I was far brainier than my classmates and was stupid enough not to hide it" (Halifax informant); "My family moved over six times to keep me from being beaten up in school" (Winnipeg informant). Due to their intelligence, attitude, or illness, the children who were to grow into Witches and Neo-Pagans were forced out of their peer groups (often violently). Others indicated they simply felt they had had nothing in common with their chronological peers.

3.1.3 Where Do Witches Come From?

Witches in Canada come from predominantly British Isles ancestry. Over 80% of the participants indicated a strong 'Celtic' background, with England and Scotland most predominant. Second-most common were Irish and Welsh ancestry, with a very strong presence of Canadian Amerind in the mix⁴³. Outside of these ethnic heritages, there is a small presence of East European ancestry in the Canadian Witch communities⁴⁴, and a smattering of Scandinavian⁴⁵.

Of the Witches who claimed some sort of ancestral pagan knowledge, one was from Central America, one from Czechoslovakia, and six from the British Isles. Many

⁴³ Canadian Neo-Pagans do not seem to be trying to practice any form of shamanism, and indicate that to them it is a different spiritual form of expression from what they are doing. However, a large minority of the informants have Amerind ancestors, and some can be described as Metis.

⁴⁴ Polish, Czechoslovakian, Ukrainian, and Romany Gypsy.

⁴⁵ Danish, Finnish, Swedish.

of the Witches indicated that they had also learnt some herbal healing and spirituality from their Amerind family members⁴⁶, or that their teachers had studied with Amerind healers and/or shamans⁴⁷.

Religion of origin was a question of great interest to the interviewer, who wondered if there might be some correlation between religion of origin and choice of Witchcraft/Neo-Paganism as an adult spiritual form of expression. With some individuals being counted under more than one category due to family changes or mixed religious ancestry, the breakdown of religion in family yielded no conclusive results. Twenty-five percent of Canadian Witches came from Anglican families of varying degrees of observance, 27% were from United Church families, 15% were Roman Catholic, 13% indicated that their families were 'militantly' atheist or agnostic, 12% were from evangelical or Pentecostal families (including evangelical Baptists), 6% were from "other" Protestant backgrounds⁴⁸, and 6% were from religions outside of Christianity⁴⁹. Of interest is the fact that 7% of the informants indicated their families contained at least one Freemason (Scottish rite).

American studies have indicated that Neo-Pagan religion of origin statistics seem to break down essentially the same as the census demographics for religious groups in

⁴⁶ Grandmothers, aunts, grandfathers.

⁴⁷ There also appears to be some tentative networking beginning in the Halifax/Dartmouth area between some of the Micmac women and some of the Feminist Witches.

⁴⁸ Such as Pennsylvania Dutch or Lutheran.

⁴⁹ Judaism and traditional hereditary paganism are included here, as is the woman who indicated the religion of her family was "Markonite Monophysite Orthodoxy".

general. For example, if Methodists comprised X percent of the American population, Neo-Pagans from Methodist families would also comprise approximately X percent. The Jewish representation in American Neo-Paganism is approximately double that of any other religious denomination; however in Canada this is not the case.

Of all the interviews conducted across Canada only one participant identified herself as coming from a Jewish background. Although the researcher is acquainted with 4 Jewish Neo-Pagans in Ontario, it appears clear that Canadian Jews are not moving into Neo-Paganism in any large numbers. One possible explanation for this anomalous data could be the fact that in general, the Canadian Jewish community is more conservative than its American counterpart. As Canadian Jews are less secularized and alienated from their religious community, they are less prone to look towards new forms of religion such as Neo-Paganism.

In some parts of Canada, mainstream Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wiccans also fight to retain their acceptance and identities as both Witches and Anglicans, Witches and Jews, or Witches and Quakers. Khaled and Adrienne, High Priest and High Priestess of an Alexandrian-based coven in Ottawa are exemplars of this dual-identity. They were married in an Anglican ceremony with a priest who was fully aware of their Wiccan religious values, and continue to self-identify as both Wiccan and Anglican.

Many Canadian Witches appear to have heard of the religion through other Witches they met in hobbies. A large number of Witches in Canada participate in what might be called "golden-age" type pastimes: the Society for Creative Anachronism⁵⁰,

⁵⁰The S.C.A. works on a romanticized version of the historical past.

Science Fiction fandom (and Conventions), Star Trek fandom, Dr. Who fandom, and Comic Book fandom.

These hobbies can be typified as manifesting a 'future golden age' type of thinking, where Camelot, colonies on other planets, or friendly aliens can exist. Ben-Yehuda (1986) investigates the relationship between occult thinking and the rise in popularity of science-fiction, and Whitehead (in Zaretsky and Leone, 1974) investigates how occult thinking, science fiction and Scientology are linked. It appears that many Witches find Wicca and Neo-Paganism through friends or acquaintances they find in other spheres of interest.

Compared to those who find Witchcraft through hobbies, others find the religion through vegetarian groups, health food stores, and ecological activist groups and periodicals. These individuals find their first links to Witchcraft through their global activism.

Feminist contacts work as the first introduction for many women to Witchcraft. Courses on feminist thought at many universities often discuss Goddess worship and women, with some inviting a Witch to address the class. Although these are other avenues of introduction to Witchcraft some Canadians have used, the number one introduction to the religion still appears to be through books⁵¹.

⁵¹ Many letters from isolated Witches indicated that they found it extremely frustrating not to find others 'of a like mind' in their communities. As a result, they rely heavily on books for their ritual forms and spiritual ideas.

3.1.4 Witches and Literacy

Canadian Witches and Neo-Pagans are some of the most articulate and bright individuals one could hope to meet. The minority of Witches who did not go beyond high school⁵² indicated they were dissuaded because of external forces such as finances or pressures from the family. As an example, Finder of Nova Scotia indicated he would have continued on to university except the pressure from his parents to become an academic was extremely strong. He opted for a trade in the military where he could work with his hands. He indicated a minor twinge of regret but appeared to be content with his choice. A small minority of informants indicated they suffered from learning disabilities such as dyslexia and found the constraints of the classroom stifling.

Canadian Witches are highly literate. The large number of informants with university degrees or technical school diplomas is indicative of their love of books and learning in general. Forty-two percent of the Neo-Pagans interviewed had completed a B.A. or higher, contrasted with the national average for the 1981 census of 8%. An additional 25% of the Neo-Pagans had completed some university (without a degree), compared to the national average of four percent⁵³.

Robin Skelton of Victoria indicated that by the age of five he was endeavouring to read Chaucer. In his words, "I did have some difficulty, but felt it was very important so I continued on." A very high number of Witches and Neo-Pagans are doing

⁵² Virtually none of the informants dropped out before completing at least high school.

⁵³ See Table 1 for a breakdown of educational level by religious affiliation. Based on the interviews the writer conducted, Neo-Pagans are overwhelmingly better educated than the average Canadian.

post-graduate degrees (or have completed them) in fields as disparate as Sociology, Archaeology, Computer Science, Geology, and Journalism/Mass Media⁵⁴. Statistics Canada does not specify the level of university degree obtained or being pursued, but of the Neo-Pagans interviewed, 12 percent were pursuing or had received Masters level degrees, and eight percent had received or were studying for Ph.Ds. (Table 1). Many Witches also teach at the high school or university level.

In the past, studies on American and British Witches have touched on their love of books and noted they comprise a literary culture (Adler, 1986; Luhrmann, 1989). Canadian Witches are no exception to this rule. Luhrmann notes that Neo-Pagans often make their first entry into the magical world through browsing in bookstores and often continue to investigate the religion via books (1989, pgs. 238 - 239).

It could be argued after speaking to Canadian Witches that their perception of how they chose this religion is quite different. Over and over participants indicated that it was very difficult to answer the question "how long have you been in Paganism/Wicca/Witchcraft". The Witches often gave two different times: when they first 'felt magical' and when they first came into formal contact with other Witches - "When we could put a name to this feeling"⁵⁵. To the Witch him/herself, the books merely gave them a name for a way they had always felt.

⁵⁴ Over a dozen on-tape informants indicated they were currently in academia as students, and a small number are sessional lecturers at colleges and universities. This trend is also quite evident in Ontario where over 40 Neo-Pagans and Witches are enrolled in provincial colleges and universities.

⁵⁵ Shadow and Amber, Saskatoon.

As noted by other researchers, Witches are voracious readers (Adler, 1986; Luhrmann, 1989; Sandilands, 1988). The terms most commonly used when the participants were asked, "What sorts of books did you read as you grew up", were: "anything I could put my hands on", "I was an omnivorous reader", "everything that crossed my path", and "if it was printed, I read it: technical manuals, encyclopedias, the back of cereal boxes!"⁵⁶ One informant put it quite succinctly: "I read anything I could put my hands on. I am totally omnivorous... If it was printed in English, German or Czechoslovakian I read it, including encyclopedias!"⁵⁷

Witches read an amazingly broad spectrum of topics. Science fiction and fantasy literature appears to be one of the adult recreational reading of choice, but social and political topics, philosophy, and ecology were also strongly represented. A small group of informants indicated they grew up reading large parts of the Old and New Testaments either due to parental pressure or curiosity. Those who managed to read through the Scriptures⁵⁸ indicate it was a very valuable exercise, if only to be better prepared to debunk those who oppose their religious views.

This researcher was surprised to discover that most of the Witches interviewed indicated they did not read great masses of fairy tales and/or mythology as they grew up. It appears that these topics did not become of interest until the individuals were adults

⁵⁶ These verbatim quotes show up over four times each. The writer did not suggest them in the interviews.

⁵⁷ Jan, Halifax.

⁵⁸ At least three informants indicated they liked some of the Bible but found it hard to read through 'all that begetting'.

researching their religious feelings. Hard science and science-fiction were the subjects most often cited by Witches as the reading of choice as they grew up.

One surprise when asking about childhood reading habits was the extremely high number of Witches who volunteered that they had read a **complete encyclopedia or dictionary** while growing up: methodically, cover to cover. Eighteen informants indicated they had read an encyclopedia or dictionary, and many could cite the exact name and year of the edition!⁵⁹ One informant who indicated she did not fall into this specific reading category paused and asked if the fact she had read a complete encyclopedia of mental illness when young counted. The researcher was astounded by this. Without a doubt, Canadian Witches are amazingly widely read individuals.

3.1.5 Youthful Fad or Religion?

Contrary to many misconceptions, the age range of those interviewed did not show Witchcraft to be a religion of "youth" (Truzzi, 1972; Marron, 1989; various articles in Halpern, 1983). The largest age bracket of those interviewed was the 20 to 30 age range, with 46% falling into this category. Thirty percent of those interviewed were in the 31 to 40 age bracket, 16% were between 41 and 50, and 7% of the participants were over 51 years old. It is possible that some of the older participation in Witchcraft is due to the fact it was quite popular in Britain, as many Canadian practitioners are of British Isles origin.

⁵⁹ E.g., 1978 Encyclopedia Britannica, Collier's Encyclopedia.

Table 2 presents evidence indicating that Neo-Paganism is a growing religion rather than a stagnating one. The 1981 Census showed that the largest numbers of practitioners in both Roman Catholicism and the United Church are in the 45 and over range (Roman Catholic 23%, United Church 33%). By contrast, the largest demographic grouping for Neo-Pagans is in the 25 to 29 age bracket with 33%. The 35 to 44 age range for Neo-Pagans is second at 26%. By contrast, Roman Catholics show only 9% adherence in the 25 to 29 age range, with only 8% of United Church members in the same age category. It appears that Neo-Pagans are drawing membership from the young adult and middle age brackets, whereas the more established churches are barely keeping their membership levels even in most categories. It appears that the church demographics are showing a population which is slowly dropping off as the older adherents are aging.

Although Neo-Paganism is a fairly new religion on the Canadian scene, its adherents are being drawn from all age brackets and it does appear to be growing rapidly. Informal discussions with Statistics Canada representatives before the release of the 1991 religion statistics (due out in the fall of 1992) appear to indicate there has been at least a doubling of the number of individuals indicating themselves as Pagan on Census forms.

3.1.6 Conversion? or Coming Home?

Witches never describe their 'joining' Neo-Paganism as a conversion experience. Rather, they always describe it as a 'coming home' or 'finding a name for something I

had always believed'. "Finding paganism was like coming home..like those movies where a half-alien is taken home by the aliens" (Lise Q, Nova Scotia). This became quite clear when asking how long the informants had been in the religion.

Virtually all Canadian Witches indicated they had felt "pagan" or "magical" from an early age. "I've thought like this since I was a kid", one informant described it. A Winnipeg informant explained that she had been formally initiated into the Craft⁶⁰ at age 10 by her mother at the time of her first period. This initiation entered the informant into a "women's society" of Guatemala. One Calgary woman indicated that her mother was of Scottish Celtic Wicca, and that she chose her mother's religion at age 16. A Victoria Witch indicated that this way of belief had permeated his life one way or another since puberty.

Using a simple numeric breakdown, Canadian Witches view themselves as having been Witches for a long time (whether or not they had a word to describe their feelings). Twenty Witches viewed themselves as having been magical for five years or less, while 26 of the participants had been Witches for five to ten years. Seven of those interviewed said they had been Pagan for ten to twenty years, and a full ten participants indicated their activity in the religion for over twenty years. This stability of participation appears to indicate that Canadian Witches plan to remain identified as Witches.

Whether there is some sort of conversion process going on or not, it is obvious that Canadian Witches can be described as average in many ways and very atypical in

⁶⁰ Originally a term from the Masons, "Craft" is often used when speaking as an alternate to Wicca or Witchcraft.

others. The family of origin issue appears to play a pivotal role for Witches, although it is an issue most Witches do not appear to recognize.

Canadian Witches are unusually bright, well-read, eloquent, and often under-employed⁶¹. They span a broad age range, but seem to be reasonably homogeneous in their ethnic ancestry. The force driving Canadians into the Neo-Pagan religions appears not to be their religion of ancestry⁶².

3.1.7 Neo-Pagan Communication by Region

Neo-Pagans are by nature not prone to large organizations. Along with lending itself to regional identities within the Canadian Neo-Pagan scene, this dislike of organizational structures makes them hard to classify by large corporate bodies such as Statistics Canada. East/West networking is evident in most Canadian Neo-Pagan communities, although across Canada communication is far less common.

Atlantic Canadian Neo-Pagans appeared very cut off from all other forms of contact besides books. Very little interaction appears to occur with the northern United States, and the language barrier in Quebec makes contact with Ontario Neo-Pagans more of a challenge. A few Western Neo-Pagans have emigrated into the East, but even their

⁶¹ In keeping with the research of Thomas Robbins (1988) on adherents of NRMs, where he indicates members of many of these groups are highly educated middle class individuals. For more on Neo-Pagans having a low satisfaction rating on issues such as employment, see Kirkpatrick et al (1986).

⁶² Rebelling against family and/or societal values is a commonly cited reason for religion-hopping (essays in Halpern, 1983; Stark, 1985; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985; Zaretsky, 1974; Robbins, 1988).

contacts with the West do not seem to have a major influence. By comparison, however, most of the Feminist and Dyke Witches in Atlantic Canada appear to be very well networked.

Quebec is one of the anomalies on the Canadian Neo-Pagan map. Very few of the 'standard' texts on the new Witchcraft and Neo-Pagan movements have been translated into French to date, and this in itself creates a problem for a religion which is so heavily literature-oriented⁶³.

Some Quebec area religionist Neo-Pagans are in semi-regular contact with Wiccans in the Ottawa and Tweed areas. There has been some interaction in the past two years, with some Ottawa practitioners sojourning to Montreal to aid in performing open-to-all Neo-Pagan festival celebrations in city parks (reports indicate over 75 attended the last open circle, although there is no information as to how many of those returned for additional contact).

Ontario and British Columbia have the largest population of Neo-Pagans of all categories, ranging from very private and retiring to extremely public. In the northern reaches of Ontario there is a much smaller Neo-Pagan presence: mostly Feminist in Thunder Bay, a smattering of religionist/ceremonial magick in North Bay, some small mix of Feminist and religionist in Sault Ste. Marie (which also reports a large "Satanic" presence in their city and hence a reticence to self-identify to the public), and a very

⁶³ One would be incorrect in assuming there had been NO Neo-Pagan presence before the opening of the two stores mentioned below, however. Isis-Artemis, a Gardnerian-style coven, operated for years in Montreal in English before internal factionalism broke it apart.

small Neo-Pagan presence in the smaller communities such as Petawawa, Deep River, and Pembroke. Solitary ecopagans have also been identified in the far north.

Ottawa's community seems to filter its information through the Toronto channels along with the Montreal connection mentioned above. There is some networking occurring between some Ottawa-area individuals and some upstate New York Neo-Pagans as well.

All three main categories of Neo-Pagans are in large evidence in Toronto, with a very high percentage of underground Alexandrians⁶⁴ still being postulated despite the lack of hard facts to back this up. Toronto's community also holds a week-long Neo-Pagan festival in the Shelbourne, Ontario area every June, called Wic-Can Fest. Over 200 Neo-Pagans from Ontario and parts of the United States attend, with some attendees driving very long distances to attend. Other than a very small Radical Faerie festival held yearly in the Ottawa area, Wic-Can Fest is one of the only two sizeable Neo-Pagan gatherings held in Canada.

As a rule, the Ontario Neo-Pagan community is in communication with Michigan and New York State Neo-Pagans more than any other area. There is a major connection between some of the Canadian Neo-Pagans in southern Ontario and the Buffalo area Neo-Pagan community as well as with the Ann Arbor, Detroit and environs communities. As well, there is some east-west communication between the Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver/Victoria bbs-users, and the Feminist Witch communities are far better networked east-west than the religionists are.

⁶⁴ One particular tradition (sect) of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft.

It appears that the much smaller nature of Winnipeg and its conservative flavour have led to a fairly high percentage of communication between categories of Neo-Pagans. Virtually all participants interviewed identified themselves either as Dianic Witches or Eclectic Neo-Pagans, and contacts from one group volunteered to act as go-betweens for other groups. It may be the eclectic flavour of the Winnipeg community which facilitates communication both within and without the city. Increasing ties between Manitoba Neo-Pagans and those in Wisconsin and Minnesota have become evident in the last two years. Manitoba and Minnesota Neo-Pagans are now trading newsletters, songbooks, and the like.

Saskatoon's Neo-Pagan community is unique insofar as many of the participants indicated there had been some sort of Spiritualist presence in their family history. At first, the language of religious discussion evident in Saskatoon sounded suspiciously 'tea leaf reader' in style until this link became evident. The Saskatoon Neo-Pagan community is perhaps the most isolated of all the large cities in Canada, and their insular nature has bred an interesting variant of Neo-Paganism blended with 1950s style occult activity (astrology, palmistry, crystal-ball gazing).

The province of Alberta appears to have a two-pronged Magical community. Calgary is the home of the Covenant of Gaia: Church of Alberta⁶⁵, and Edmonton boasts the Abbey of Thelema (Ordo Templi Orientis). It is quite unusual across Canada (and the same might be said of the U.S. Neo-Pagan population as well) to see Witches

⁶⁵ Known as COG Alberta, no relation to the Covenant of the Goddess organization in the United States.

and Neo-Pagans practising through an O.T.O. branch⁶⁶. However, it appears that in Edmonton this marriage is an amicable one and serves its community well.

Calgary boasts a large and active Neo-Pagan community. There have been liaison efforts made between COG Alberta, the police force, and Corrections Canada provincially. COG Alberta is a provincially chartered blanket organization which sponsors large periodic worship circles open to the public, publishes two small newsletters⁶⁷, and connects Witches and those interested in the religion. Calgary witches appear to be heavily networked across Canada, with the main flow of communication apparently being west to B.C. (Vancouver primarily). Some eastward communication to Toronto and Ottawa also apparently exists.

The Vancouver area appears to have the largest number of different traditions in Canada. Feminist and Dianic Witches in the Vancouver area unite with those of the Reclaiming tradition to sponsor Witchcamp yearly outside the city. Witchcamp may well be the largest Neo-Pagan festival in Canada, and is heavily attended each summer.

Vancouver features a very healthy community despite some inter-traditional factionalism. Communication with other Neo-Pagans is unquestionably north/south for Vancouverites, although there are some community ties with Alberta and a few with Ontario. The area between the shore of Vancouver and the Pacific Ocean appears to feature more Neo-Pagans per capita than any other geographic area in Canada.

⁶⁶ The O.T.O. is a ceremonial magical type lodge, usually considered anathema to most Wiccans and many Neo-Pagans. In Edmonton and in Montreal the two 'magical' communities appear to interact quite amicably.

⁶⁷ One newsletter for the general public, the other for Neo-Pagans active in COG Alberta.

Victoria has a strong Neo-Pagan community featuring a recently-reconstructed Temple of Our Lady, an umbrella organization in the city aimed at Neo-Pagan communications and worship.

Neo-Pagans are numerous in many of the larger communities on Vancouver Island, with covens and groups also reported in Sooke and Nanaimo. The surprise for this researcher when talking to Neo-Pagans in B.C. was the extremely dense concentration of Neo-Pagans evidenced in the Gulf Islands between the mainland and Vancouver Island. Witches and other Neo-Pagans have been reported in very high concentrations on the islands of Main, Denman⁶⁸, Gabriolla, Galliano, and Salt Spring. In fact, one prominent Wiccan teacher estimates the population of Neo-Pagans in the Gulf Islands area to be over 1,800 individuals. As well, numerous Neo-Pagans appear to reside outside of southern B.C., sprinkled through small towns such as Argenta⁶⁹ and Hazelton. This researcher believes that B.C. may well have the highest overall concentration of Neo-Pagans in Canada.

Neo-Pagans appear to be fairly isolated except in Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa. Most Neo-Pagan communication between groups (when any is evident) appears to run north/south rather than east/west, with a few notable

⁶⁸ Denman is known by the locals for both its large Witch population and its Lesbian community.

⁶⁹ This fact amused another researcher who pointed out that the town of Argenta B.C. is the home of the largest Quaker publishing house in Canada, again underlining the Quaker/Pagan connection.

exceptions. American Neo-Pagan influences appear to be evident in some Canadian communities, but they too, are regionalized by the north/south flow of information.

3.1.8 Bulletin Board Systems (Electronic Neo-Pagan Communications)

One of the common elements in both the Canadian and American Neo-Pagan population is the high level of computer literacy. Along with being very literate and often well-educated, numerous Neo-Pagans who are either professionally or informally active within the computer sub-culture is very high (Luhrmann, 1989; Kirkpatrick et al, 1986)⁷⁰. To this end, the existence of a Neo-Pagan oriented computer bulletin board network (also called bbs) was advantageous to the research of identity, family background, and other philosophical and ethical issues current within the North American Neo-Pagan movement today.

Ottawa, Toronto, Pembroke, Hamilton, Victoria, and Vancouver are all linked on a Neo-Pagan network called PODS (Pagan and Occult Distribution Network) to other Neo-Pagans across North America (and sporadically with Great Britain and Australia). High levels of interest in joining the bbs network was expressed in most major Canadian cities not already joined onto the PODS system as well. The PODS system was originally created in part by Farrell McGovern, an Ottawa Neo-Pagan who has been extremely active in computer communications.

⁷⁰ An exact percentage was unavailable, but certainly the numbers of Canadians who indicated daily use of a computer either with employment or through hobbies was over 50%.

"Nodes" and "Points" of the PODS system⁷¹ are scattered wherever a volunteer chooses to supply the time and effort to run a bbs throughout North America. Interesting discussions on the emotionally-loaded terms of "Witch" and "Pagan" have cropped up periodically in many of the "echoes". Whether or not this system aids in communication between various Neo-Pagan groups or not is uncertain.

Despite the high level of computer literacy, three factors affect the efficacy of Neo-Pagan participation in bbs communications. Firstly, many of the adherents are of marginal enough income that acquiring a computer and modem with which to bbs is no mean feat. Secondly, many of the Neo-Pagans prefer to either remain "underground" or ignore the "petty" discussions on the bbses, therefore avoiding the complete computer subculture. Thirdly, so many Neo-Pagans are involved in computer-related careers that they show no interest in spending their recreational and/or religious time in such a closely-related activity.

Interesting patterns emerged from the interviewing of Neo-Pagans across Canada. Their interests seem to be optimistic in tone, with a great deal of social and community activism in evidence. Neo-Pagans are voracious readers and have a very high level of education compared to the national average.

The Neo-Pagans sampled appeared to the writer to be quite similar to those with whom she has been in contact over the years in Ontario and the United States. Despite

⁷¹ Terms denoting their ability to upload and/or download "files" and messages into the system.

the variance of religious format or form of expression, the characteristics of who the Witches are seem to be fairly homogeneous across Canada. Variance appears to be primarily attributed to lack of communication between cities and traditions. This variability between groups and individuals will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Neo-Pagan Traditions

Neo-Pagans in Canada describe themselves as either working in a mix of styles of worship, or working from within a "tradition". The term tradition can be read as synonymous with sect in Church discussions, and deals with the format and/or focus of the individual style of Neo-Pagan religious expression. This chapter will describe the major traditions of Canadian Neo-Paganism in order to demonstrate the variance within this religion (or like Christianity, group of religions), and endeavour to categorize Canadian Neo-Pagans by their beliefs and styles of worship.

4.1 "Witch" and "Neo-Pagan" in Canada

To try to classify the diversity that is the Neo-Pagan movement in Canada with a single, over-arching generalization would be to do the religion a great disservice, similar in scope to trying to describe all Christians throughout time and space, with a single brushstroke. For many Christians, the only common basis of worship is Jesus as Saviour (and sometimes the symbol of the cross as emblematic of Christianity).

Similarly, Neo-Pagans in Canada are not one monolithic religious movement. Rather, under the very broad title of Neo-Pagan are Traditions (comparable to sects in Christianity) which are quite varied in their focus of worship and belief. The one

universal attribute to all Neo-Pagan worship⁷² appears to be the creation of sacred space in the form of "drawing" a Magical Circle. However this Circle is "cast" (or formed), it is considered protective, encompassing, and a fit place for worship (Farrar and Farrar, 1984; Guiley, 1989; Crowley, 1989).

The only other symbol which is virtually universal in its acceptance across Tradition boundaries is that of the Pentacle⁷³ (sometimes erroneously referred to as the Pentagram). This familiar five-pointed star, when worn single-point up, denotes a believer in the Goddess and/or the God (however these are defined by the Tradition).

Not all Neo-Pagans wear the Pentacle (as not all Christians wear a cross), and there is sometimes also confusion over the inverted Pentacle as jewellery.⁷⁴ Usually interpreted as symbolizing Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Spirit, the upright Pentacle is described as representing the basics which comprise all life (Farrar and Farrar, 1984; Guiley, 1989).

Witches and Neo-Pagans first began to show up in popular literature as a religious-type of group in Britain in the early 1950s after the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in that country. Prior to the repeal, some articles were printed on folkloric remnants of rural folk-magic, but Neo-Pagans as a religious force

⁷² Viewed as distinct from the Traditional or Hereditary Pagans.

⁷³ Some Feminist Witches wear spider or snake jewellery instead of the pentacle, and some Dianic or Dyke Witches may wear a Labrys (identified with the ancient matriarchal cultures of Minoan and Crete).

⁷⁴ The latter frequently denotes either a Satanist or a fan of Heavy Metal bands. Some British Wiccan traditions also use the inverted pentacle as a symbol of second-degree Initiate status (Farrar and Farrar, 1984).

seemed non-existent.⁷⁵

Prior to the repeal of the Witchcraft Act, Witches were being discussed by a prominent Egyptologist, Dr. Margaret Murray (Murray, 1921; 1933) as having been a real pre-Christian cult which survived very late into British history. Murray was subsequently in contact with an English gentleman, Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884 - 1964), who claimed to have been initiated into a "New Forest" coven of witches in 1939 (Guiley, 1989). There is some evidence that Gardner had read Murray's writings before they were introduced, and it is postulated by many that this back-and-forth information loop created the credence with which Gardner's claims are now treated by many Neo-Pagans⁷⁶.

Most Canadian Neo-Pagan groups are in some way descended from the Murray/Gardner writings. Common elements such as the use of an **athame** (ritual knife), **pentacle**, **magic circle**, **four elements** (see Glossary for definitions of these terms), and so on usually mark a Neo-Pagan form of religious expression descended from the Gardnerian style of Witchcraft.

⁷⁵ This is an issue of much debate within the Wiccan and Neo-Pagan communities, as some people maintain that Witches are the direct descendants of some pre-Christian beliefs. To date no definitive information has been found to prove this theory.

⁷⁶ Murray, for instance, wrote the introductory notes for at least one of Gardner's books, and was a speaker at some of the same conferences as Gardner (e.g. UNESCO conference on religion, April 1955).

In opposition to this viewpoint, Gardnerian Witches (as followers of his Neo-Pagan tradition are called) strongly adhere to Gardner's original claims to admittance into some sort of hereditary religious fellowship.

4.2 Traditions (Sects) of Wicca/Witchcraft in Canada

Much like sects in the Christian churches, Neo-Pagan Witches self-identify into categories of worship style, called traditions. Some Neo-Pagan traditions have been handed down by a similar system to apostolic succession, while others have been made up of whole cloth in recent memory. This section will categorize the traditions of Neo-Paganism most common in Canada.

4.2.1 Gardnerian Witchcraft

Recognized by most pagans as the earliest form of what is now being called Wicca, this tradition was started by former British civil servant Gerald Brosseau Gardner. Originally involved with the Theosophists, Gardner met some Co-Masons in the mid to late 1930s who, he later claimed, introduced him to a group of witches calling themselves the "New Forest Coven" (Guiley, 1989; Marron 1989).

Religion scholar Aidan A. Kelly has used textual analysis techniques on the earliest handwritten Gardnerian text which is referred to as a Book of Shadows, in his book Crafting the Art of Magic, Vol. 1. Kelly has made a good attempt at debunking the Gardnerian claims to any antiquity as a religious system. However, one Toronto witch who claims to have been trained and initiated by Gardner and one of his High Priestesses maintains the book analyzed by Kelly ("Ye Boke of Ye Art Magical", approx.

1939) was the original text used by a Ceremonial Magic group of which Gardner was head.⁷⁷

Whatever its origins, Gardnerian Witchcraft is more akin to a secret society than most other forms of Wicca in Canada. Its adherents as a rule do NOT discuss their rituals or beliefs with outsiders. Some branches have "secret handshakes" or "secret tattoos" as well⁷⁸. In the United States there are newsletters and festivals specifically for Gardnerian Witches, and unless one can prove direct initiated descent from Gardner and/or one of his Priestesses access to these newsletters is denied (e.g. Hidden Paths, out of Wisconsin).

Gardnerian Witches are very hierarchial in nature, usually with three degrees of initiation involved in priesthood training. Gardnerians generally work nude (skyclad) although they are not bound to do so. Gardnerians might be described in many ways as the Wiccan equivalent of High Church Anglicans, utilizing a great number of trappings such as incense, ritual formats, and even a "secret" language (Theban). Belief centres on the Tripartate Goddess (Maiden, Mother, Crone) and Her Son and Consort, the Horned God of the Hunt and of Death (sometimes seasonally referred to as the Oak King and the Holly King). For Gardnerians the Priestess is first among equals in ritual matters, and the Goddess takes precedence over the God in ritual.

⁷⁷ Private conversation with J, summer 1991, Toronto, Ontario.

⁷⁸ Handshake: Information given by Wiccan in Halifax, N.S. and by witch and author Janet Farrar in private conversation during a Canadian tour, Vancouver, 1991. Tattoo: information given by J, private conversation, Toronto, Summer 1991.

In Canada the exact number of practising Gardnerians is virtually impossible to estimate due to their retiring nature and natural aversion to publicity (something Gardner himself did not share). Estimates based on informant interviews seem to indicate about 100 Gardnerians around Toronto, a similar number in the Greater Vancouver area, one practising coven in Newfoundland, and isolated pockets in more rural areas of B.C. and Ontario. It might well be overestimating to say 300 "mainline" Gardnerians self-identify in all of Canada. (This classification deals only with those who can trace direct lineage from Gardner himself, and NOT those who have used his books for "Gardnerian-like" rituals.)

Of interest is the fact that, unlike Gardnerian Witches in the United States of America, it appears that Canadian Gardnerians do NOT trace their descent through Raymond and Rosemary Buckland, who were initiated by Gardner and brought his form of Wicca to the United States in the 1960s. The Bucklands are recognized by most writers on Wicca to be the parents of the U.S. strain of Gardnerian witchcraft (Adler, 1986, Melton, 1978, Marron 1989). However, interviews with informants in Halifax, St. John's, Toronto, and Vancouver indicate that most of the Canadian Gardnerians are descended from various expatriate Britons who moved to Canada, bringing their Wiccan beliefs with them. Small but private covens still appear to be active in these cities.

4.2.2 Alexandrian Witchcraft

Close enough in form and content to be a fraternal, if not identical twin to Gardnerian Witchcraft, this offshoot was created by Alexander Sanders who claimed to

be initiated as a hereditary witch by his mother when he was seven years old (Guiley, 1989). Later research by investigators indicates that Sanders not only assumed the title of "King of the Witches" but also that he plagiarized works by Gardner, Doreen Valiente, and Elphias Levi as his own when creating his "tradition" of witchcraft (Guiley, 1989). Alexandrian Wicca has been heavily documented in print by authors Janet and Stewart Farrar in their numerous books (see Bibliography). Alexandrians use more kaballistic symbology in their rituals, but also adhere to a three-degree system of initiation, with Priestess and Goddess as primary figures in ritual.

There had been some question after Sanders died on April 30, 1988, whether or not his system of Wicca would survive its creator's death, and in England trends are indicating Alexandrian and Gardnerian witchcraft groups are merging into a synthesis. This pattern emerged in the 1970s in the United States in the creation of the "Al-Gard" Wiccan Tradition (from Alexandrian/Gardnerian).

Alexandrian Wicca seems to have been imported into Canada directly from Great Britain by one man, RD from Toronto in the 1960s. Known to Wiccans as "Cock Robin", this practitioner was described in conversation as being responsible for "whole covens of disillusioned suburban housewives"⁷⁹ being created. Cock Robin was highly regarded by Canadian Witches, and when he died in the mid 1980s the funeral held in Toronto became a neutral spot for witches of all traditions to meet (in some cases for the first time in over ten years!). Cock Robin is also viewed as a founding light of

⁷⁹ Conversation with J, summer 1991, Toronto, Ontario.

Alexandrian Wicca by the American Alexandrians, and Canadians are often asked if their "lineage" traces through him.

Numbers of Alexandrian practitioners in Canada are harder to assess than Gardnerians, partially due to the nature of the initiates Cock Robin trained. Again, being very "doctrinal" in form, it is probable there are no more than 200 Alexandrians across Canada, if that many. It is possible that some of the "witches" interviewed in the March 15, 1969, issue of Weekend Magazine were Alexandrians ("There Are Some Weird Things Going On in Toronto", Bill Trent).

4.2.3 Wiccan Church of Canada/Odyssean (Ontario only)

Founded in 1979 in Toronto by Richard James and his wife Tamarra (originally from Victoria), the Wiccan Church of Canada is perhaps the most religio-centric of the Wiccan and Neo-Pagan traditions currently active in Canada. After studying Wicca in Canada and the United States and being disillusioned with much of what they saw occurring, the pair decided to create a public worship-forum for Canadian Neo-Pagans.

Being such a new tradition of Wicca, there is little available in print as to the history of the W.C.C. except that printed in Marron (1979) or various newspaper articles in southern and central Ontario. Odysseans (the name of the tradition: the Church body is treated as a separate entity from the style of worship taught under its auspices) are encouraged to use slightly different symbols than most Gardnerian/Alexandrian styles of Wicca, such as black and white candles to symbolize Goddess and God (compared to two

white candles or a white and a yellow, for instance). As well, those training for Priesthood duties are also heavily encouraged to create new texts for every weekly ritual.

Concurrent with the start of the W.C.C., the Jameses also opened up their first Witchcraft supply shop, the Occult Shop, on Queen Street in Toronto. Offering free classes on basic Neo-Pagan lore and a public ritual for all comers every week, the storefront became a sort of community focus and "drop-in centre". On Dec. 14, 1985 the Jameses opened up the Wiccan Rede in Ottawa (later renamed the Occult Shop), with much the same effect on the Ottawa community at large.

Despite the Church's very public profile in southern Ontario and the founders' friendship with author Margot Adler, the Wiccan Church of Canada is not mentioned in the revised edition of Drawing Down the Moon (1986), and the only Canadian mentioned in The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft (Guiley 1989) is Charles Arnold (an early member of the W.C.C. who subsequently went on to found his own coven and tradition).

Although it is quite probable that hundreds of Ontarians have been introduced to Wicca and Neo-Pagan thought through the W.C.C. and its public functions, Tamarra James is quoted in 1988 as saying the Toronto Temple only had 60 members. (Kitchener Waterloo Record, Sept. 12, 1988.) The Ottawa Temple has considerably fewer members (probably in the neighbourhood of 15 to 20). Although it is approximated that about 1500 people have "gone through its doors in the past 10 years" (Marron, 1989, pgs. 67-68), very few of them have stayed. In Ottawa, the first Priestess moved back to Toronto (Jennifer Holding) where she had originated, and the second Priestess and first Priest

(Chandra and Ash) quit the Church over the lack of support coming from the parent-organization and other political problems. Perhaps 300 worshippers would consider themselves firmly aligned with the W.C.C. in Canada. Due to its six-degree system⁸⁰ (contrasted to the Gardnerian/Alexandrian system of three⁸¹), the length of training usually expected for its adherents between degrees, and the concept of a "priesthood" ministering to a Pagan "laity", the Wiccan Church of Canada appears unusually hierarchical when compared to other personal traditions of Wicca and Neo-Paganism.

The brash public image of the Wiccan Church of Canada coupled with a statement to Corrections Canada in January of 1991 typifies the Church in the minds of many Witches and Neo-Pagans in Canada. Richard James authored a two page letter to the "Federal Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy", claiming

..the Wiccan Church of Canada has for the past ten years been the largest, most visible, and most organized Wiccan organization in Canada. ...Our High Priestess is fully authorized to act on behalf of the following traditions (sects): Odysian [sic] Wicca; Gardnerian Wicca; Alexandrian Wicca; Dianic Wicca; Blue Star Wicca

⁸⁰ Pagan, Dedicant, Neophyte, First, Second, and Third degree. Pagan is a person who merely admits he/she is a believer in the Old Gods, and most ritual attendees are viewed as "Pagans". Dedicants undergo a specific ritual Dedicating themselves to this religious system, while Neophyting [sic] is a second ritual indicating a predilection to study towards Priesthood rank. Neophytes in Ottawa very often run rituals under the watchful eye of a First Degree Priest/ess, whereas in Toronto the much higher population of priesthood make this unusual. First degree is compared to a B.A. by Richard James in the original charter for the W.C.C., but Second Degrees are very rare in their system and since 1979 only one Third degree has been bestowed.

⁸¹ Both Alexandrians and Gardnerians observe First, Second, and Third Degree systems. Semi-apocryphal tales of Alex and Maxine Sanders creating instant First Degrees on attendance of one's first circle abound. It also appears that Gardnerians view the initiation to First Degree as prerequisite to participation in a worship Circle.

(U.S.A.); Neo-Pagan Worship; Isian Wicca; Sumerian Wicca. A consensus exists among Wiccan traditions in Canada that the Wiccan Church of Canada is the organization best equipped to communicate with government on behalf of the Wiccan Faith.⁸²

As there is no organized umbrella organization for any of the traditions cited, a "consensus" could hardly exist. This letter caused a flurry of activity from coast to coast, with letters going both to the Director of Chaplaincy for Corrections Canada and the Jameses themselves.

This attempt to usurp the autonomy of Wiccan and Neo-Pagan traditions when dealing with government authority merely exacerbated the animosity which existed between the Wiccan Church of Canada and other traditions in Canada. Derogatory comments have been heard about the Church in both Nova Scotia ("W.C. Can; "Water Closets of Canada") and British Columbia ("Wiccan Church of Toronto").

4.2.4 Pagans for Peace (Ontario and British Columbia)

A tradition started by Sam Wagar (who self-identifies as a former atheist) while living in Toronto in 1983, P4P (as it is frequently referred to) focuses on overtly political, environmental, and peace issues (Sandilands, 1988). Originating in Toronto, the relocation of Wagar and his spouse to British Columbia had a major effect on opening up the P4P's influence in the Vancouver area. P4P has member covens in both

⁸² Letter from Richard James to the Interfaith Chaplaincy Committee [sic], Corrections Canada, 1991.

Toronto and Vancouver, with many other affiliated members at large (many active in other Neo-Pagan organizations as well).

Pagans for Peace works in a three degree system, but it appears these degrees are granted more for training completed and knowledge attained than for reasons of "power over" within the movement. The organization puts out a newsletter approximately monthly, highlighting world issues with an eclectic/anarchistic flavour. Wagar has been very active in networking activities with other Neo-Pagans and Wiccans across Canada, including through electronic computer bulletin board messaging (e-mail). Those self-identified as aligned with the P4P probably number about 100 actively. However, the more social/global outlook of P4P has caused some friction in the British Columbian Neo-Pagan community since its arrival.

The P4P tradition is small but activist. It does borrow from the more hierarchical systems (such as Gardnerian Wicca) in its use of a three degree system, but it is still growing and adapting to the needs of its adherents. Very little has been written on P4P in the media or popular literature on Witchcraft.

4.2.5 Dianic Witches

One of the factions of Wicca and Neo-Paganism poorly studied in Canada, Dianics are separate but similar to Feminist witches. Dianics, following a tradition formulated by American Witch Morgan McFarland in the late 1960s and augmented by Zusanna Budapest, worship without the presence of men at any level. Early drafts of the Dianic guidelines (as Budapest would not consider her writings to be "gospel" or

"doctrinal") included a prayer thanking the Goddess that the adherents had not been born male⁸³.

Dianic Witches blend feminist thought, Goddess-oriented spirituality, and ritual form with the smattering of Slavic magical thought Budapest includes in her writings. Dianics in Canada appear to be derived from two origins. Some have read Budapest's book on Dianic worship (Holy Book of Women's Mysteries, 1980) and have adapted the beliefs as their own, while others are of direct lineage from Budapest herself through a very small handful of women who worked with and learnt from Budapest directly.

Dianics have been incorrectly stereotyped by mainstream Wiccans as well as by outsiders as without formalized leadership or teachings, and as "lesbians". Although both Feminist Wicca and Dianic Wicca draw a large subculture of lesbian Witches to their bosom, Winnipeg boasts a complete coven of heterosexual, married Dianics in its midst. As well, Dianics do offer formalized degree initiations and rites of passage, although they may be tailored for the needs of the individual woman. Other Dianics, regardless of their sexual orientation, practice in provinces throughout Canada, blending feminist thought and womenspirit with worship forms.

Dianics (as compared to Feminist Witches) probably comprise 500 to 600 practitioners in Canada. Estimating the numbers is difficult as many Dianics also self-identify as Feminist Witches.

⁸³ Perhaps a reaction to the Jewish prayer where adult men thank God that they were *not* born women?

4.2.6 Feminist Wicca (Goddess-Worshippers)

Related to Dianic Wicca and heavily influenced by its beliefs, Feminist Wicca is very strong and active across Canada. This is perhaps the most amorphous group within the country, comprising mostly women (but some men) who identify themselves as worshippers of the Goddess (in various forms: some immanent, some transcendent, some have even expressed the label of being atheist Feminist Witches). Rituals are extremely fluid and follow no formalized body of doctrine or writings.

There is a high percentage of "Dyke Witches" within this movement, identifying themselves both as Lesbians and as Witches. Feminist Witches are extremely non-hierarchical. It is not unusual for the group to move from house to house for worship, and the ritual leader is the woman at whose house the celebration is held. Many Dyke Witches view the dual identity as extremely liberating and empowering, with both titles viewed in direct opposition to the "oppressiveness of patriarchy".

There is a large segment of the Neo-Pagan community in North America and the English speaking world which is trying to reclaim the word "Witch" as a term of power and strength, much like the gay community has striven to reclaim "faggot" or "dyke" as power-words.⁸⁴ To Feminist and Dianic writers, the claiming of witch as a title is part of the effort to empower oneself and to make oneself powerful in the eyes of others (Budapest, 1986). To the more conservative elements within the Neo-Pagan movement,

⁸⁴ One author links gay men and witchcraft together in the history of the word "faggot", showing that the term "to fry a faggot" could show that the victims of the witch hunts themselves were called faggots. (Evans, 1978). The power of labelling for an ethnic and/or religious group identity is discussed in "The Psychologic Determinants of Jewish Identity" by Mortimer Ostow (in Halpern, 1983).

to be a Witch is to be an initiate of the religion known as Wicca, also referred to as The Craft, the Old Religion, or the Craft of the Wise (Adler, 1986).

Feminist Witches are some of the most activist in the social and political fields. They view their beliefs as a mirror of their social and political responsibilities, seeing activism as a religious as well as social imperative.

Many Feminist Witches practice alone (solitary). They can undergo an initiation as simple as standing on their toes three times and saying "I am a witch"⁸⁵, or they may choose to create a ritual as needed for themselves or other women. Use of menstrual blood, symbolic re-birthing scenarios, and other markings of the woman's natural body cycles is also frequently seen.

A large body of Feminist Witches are quite underground, and view their social and/or political activism as expressing their spirituality as well. Many will not even consider discussing their beliefs with men in any forum. Women-only retreats are common both in Canada and the United States.

Across Canada Feminist Witchcraft is a rapidly growing spiritual form of expression. Ontario and British Columbia probably boast over a thousand Feminist Witches, with a very high concentration on most of the Gulf Islands of British Columbia (including Denman, Main, Gabriola, Galiano, and Salt Spring). A Summer Solstice circle held on Salt Spring Island during the summer of 1991 reportedly attracted over 150 people, primarily women. It is probably fair to estimate the Feminist Witchcraft/Goddess worship population in Canada at over 4,000 across the country.

⁸⁵ expressed by one Feminist Dyke/Witch in Vancouver.

4.2.7 Radical Faeries

Although a growing force in the United States, Radical Faeries are very small and poorly organized in Canada. A similar movement to Dianic Wicca, Radical Faeries are primarily gay men blending homosexual political and social concerns with balancing the gender stereotypes inherent in mainstream culture and religion. Radical Faeries are a specific tradition (much like Dianic Witchcraft versus Feminist Witchcraft) originating in Arizona but with very little formal following in Canada.

Radical Faeries hold a small gathering (a mini-festival) in south/central Ontario yearly, which focuses on gay spiritual needs and creating new symbols and ritual forms for its adherents. Although there may be Radical Faeries in other parts of Canada (British Columbia would be a probable target area), only a small representation in Ontario has been located so far. Perhaps 50 Radical Faeries are self-identified in Canada at this time. This researcher suspects that, as the men's spirituality movement gains in popularity in Canada, membership in Radical Faerie groups will also grow.

4.2.8 Reclaiming/Witchcamp

Reclaiming is the American Wiccan tradition started by author/witch Starhawk and many of her co-religionists in California, blending the Celtic-influenced Fairy tradition of Victor Anderson with the feminist Witchcraft of Z. Budapest. It is no surprise that the north-south lines of communication have brought the Reclaiming philosophy of social and political activism blended with a gynocentric religion to British Columbia.

Reclaiming is strongly active in Native Amerind issues, nuclear missile issues, and has some similarities to Pagans for Peace (which see). P.H. of Vancouver brought the Witchcamp concept into British Columbia a number of years ago, and it is through this medium of training Priesthood and interchange of ideas and philosophy that the Reclaiming tradition is showing signs of prominence in the B.C. Neo-Pagan landscape.

Witchcamp is a retreat in rural B.C. held yearly, with Reclaiming Priesthood and Elders featured as teachers. All attendees are "closed into the Camp" for the duration of the week⁸⁶. Approximately 300 attendees participate yearly, and the available openings to attend fill up long before the period of the retreat itself.

Despite the strong presence in parts of B.C. and some of Alberta, Reclaiming is a virtually non-existent presence in the rest of the Canadian Neo-Pagan scene. Indeed, when Starhawk spoke in Ottawa during the late 1980s at the University of Ottawa, strongly disparaging remarks were made after the presentation by many of the more traditionist-type Witches in the crowd. During the discussion during a get-together at one attendee's house afterwards, most of the younger Neo-Pagans ridiculed Starhawk as having her "priorities wrong": that Witches should be concerned with validating their rights as a RELIGION to the government, and should leave politics to politicians.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ This researcher arrived in B.C. during the summer of 1991 just as Witchcamp began. This probably created much of the difficulty encountered in making contacts and interviews with many of the more radical eco-pagan and political Pagan aspects of the B.C. Neo-Pagan community.

⁸⁷ Discussion at JH's apartment, Ottawa, Ontario, 1987 or 1988. Approximately a dozen men and women were in attendance.

Reclaiming initiates and worshippers would probably comprise about 100 people in British Columbia, but negligible presence in the rest of Canada.

4.2.9 Traditional (Family or Hereditary) Pagans

Researchers into Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism in the United States have, like their British counterparts, been searching for any vestiges of "real witches" in the Anglo world. Gypsies appear to have hereditary ancestral "magical traditions", as do the Finns and some Italian families. However, the debate as to whether or not Wicca predates Gerald Gardner and Dr. Margaret Murray continues to rage in both academic and Neo-Pagan circles.

It is quite possible that there are no vestiges of hereditary Witchcraft in the United States outside of murky folk-beliefs. It is even more probable that, with the hunger expressed by both researchers and "modern Witches" to find "real" witches, any family witches would stay as firmly buried as they could to avoid the sudden fame (or notoriety).

However, Canada has experienced vastly different immigration patterns and features different attitudes towards its links to the United Kingdom. It appears that there may indeed be vestiges of non-Christian beliefs in isolated areas of Canada, still alive and profoundly underground.

After having interviewed formally and informally over 130 individuals across Canada and after having observed the Canadian Neo-Pagan landscape since the mid 1970s, it is this researcher's opinion that there is still some presence of pre-Murray

Pagan religion in Canada today. However, not one of the practitioners would agree to the label Witch, and most balk at the term Wiccan or Neo-Pagan.

Six individuals arose out of the interviews conducted from Halifax to Victoria who appear to be following or adapting some sort of vestigial folk-beliefs to modern life. Two were of Welsh descent (interestingly enough, the Welsh presence in the magical community is often ignored by researchers into Neo-Paganism), one was Scots, and the others are of English (or English and French combined) ancestry. Some of the individuals also acknowledge Native Amerind blood and lore in their family training. None of the six are known to be in contact with any of the others.

What arose was varied: some evidence merely highlighted specific practices, while other practitioners refused to be interviewed completely (such as a mother and daughter pair in B.C.). None of the six indicated that the trappings of modern Wicca were in any way part of their religion: they did not use athames, creation of sacred space through a circle, four elements, four cardinal directions, the pentacle as a religious symbol, etc.

Traditional non-Christian⁸⁸ religious practices are apparently still in evidence in Canada, but they are primarily alive in very rural areas. These individuals do NOT practice "Wicca" or Neo-Paganism, but rather, some vestigial folk-practice mixed with folk-lore. They are rural hereditary non-Christian Pagans, and appear to be bound strongly to their communities and/or networks by word of mouth. With two exceptions,

⁸⁸ The researcher uses the term "non-Christian" rather than the more popular "pre-Christian" as there is no proof these vestigial religions predate Christianity in their countries of origin.

these individuals want nothing to do with any of the Wiccans and Neo-Pagans they have met in Canada, nor do they desire any "student_" or "apprentices" to train in their belief systems.

This researcher makes this bold assertion based on her past training as a folklorist as well as her research into the modern Witchcraft traditions. At least one informant cautioned her highly to weigh the negative effects of making this claim: not only would many researchers completely dismiss it as specious, but identifying the hereditary non-Christian Pagan too closely would make that person a target for the curious, the ignorant, and the status seekers (e.g. 'I learnt my skills from a REAL witch' syndrome). The six identified across Canada are without a doubt, the least forthcoming about their backgrounds of any interviewed during the research.

4.2.10 Eclectics

Eclectic is not so much a tradition of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft as a melding of many traditions, and it is for this reason that Eclectics are shown as the overlap point in the classification system of Neo-Pagans illustrated in Chapter 5 (see Appendix 8). As the most numerous single appellation for Neo-Pagans and Wiccans across Canada, all an Eclectic need do is label him/herself as a Pagan and he/she becomes one.

Eclectics are often trained in a more formalized system of practice, frequently Alexandrian/Gardnerian style or through the Wiccan Church of Canada. They then move away from the doctrinal style of belief and adapt and edit what they have learnt. These creative Neo-Pagans tailor their rituals and beliefs to suit individual needs. Eclectics are

often solitary in nature as they have trouble finding others who are interested in the same type of patchwork religious expression.

Some Eclectics have had no formalized training at all. Winnipeg's Neo-Pagan community has virtually no members initiated in any Neo-Pagan tradition. Instead, the attitude is one of high regard for those who self-identify as Eclectic rather than being "bound" by hierarchies and titles. Jokes about "pedigrees" (tracing one's lineage in a traditionalist system of Wicca) and the Canadian Kennel Club were overheard, alluding to the fact that some Eclectics find the need to "prove one's 'pedigree'" as a Neo-Pagan offensive.

Eclectics often practice alone, but at times a small group of Eclectics will band together with similar axiology and cosmology, creating a new 'mini-tradition'⁸⁹. Others practice a mixture of what they may have been taught from other Neo-Pagans with what they have read and how 'the spirit moves them'.

By far and away the bulk of Canada's Neo-Pagans and Wiccans are Eclectics. Their numbers probably range in the thousands across the country; for every practitioner in a recognized system, there appear to be hundreds of eclectics. To identify 6,000 or more eclectics would be conservative.

⁸⁹ A group of Halifax Alexandrians, after relocating in Ottawa and adapting their book-oriented religious practices, began to refer to themselves as "Halexandrians" (Quicksilver coven).

4.2.11 Solitaries

This is not so much a tradition of Neo-Paganism as a style of worship. Solitaries pop up in every system listed heretofore: there are solitary Gardnerians, Feminist Witches, and Eclectics. Some solitaries practice alone because of geographical or tradition isolation (e.g. there are no Gardnerians in a given city), while others choose a solitary path due to dislike of group worship or individuals in a community.

Solitaries often appear in large Neo-Pagan centres as reactions against "monolithic" traditions or due to personality clashes. In small communities solitaries are usually simply too isolated to find others with similar beliefs (e.g. Truro, Nova Scotia, noted for its Bible Hill, is not a place where one might expect to find many Wiccans practising).

Solitaries, like Eclectics, are a major force in Canada's Neo-Pagan landscape and are often loathe to self-identify to something as "official" as a census-taker. Solitaries cannot be numbered specifically here as they are mostly picked up in the approximate figures for other traditions.

4.2.12 Non-Evident American Strains of Wicca

Despite what might appear to be strong communications between Canadian and American Witches, many traditions of Wicca have not crossed the international boundary. There is virtually no evidence of adherents to the Thomas Morton Alliance (a radical eco/socio/political form of Neo-Paganism) in Canada. The Druidic form of worship started by P.E. Isaac Bonewitz goes nearly unnoticed in the Canadian Neo-Pagan

demographics as well. Otter and Morning Glory G'Zell [sic] have created a Church focusing on much of the religio-philosophical thought espoused in Robert A. Heinlein's novel, Stranger in a Strange Land, which they have entitled "the Church of All Worlds". Although strongly represented in the States, very few if any Canadians appear to be involved.

As well, there are two major institutionalized organizations with very minimal representation in Canada: Circle Sanctuary and the Covenant of the Goddess. The former, run by Selene Fox and Circle (a non-profit Pagan organization) has a few Canadians on their contact list but virtually no members (although Circle Sanctuary News, a monthly newspaper, has a high readership when purchased through Occult stores or at Festivals). In the mid to late 1980s an effort was made to create a Canadian branch of the Covenant of the Goddess (an umbrella organization to link Wiccan and Neo-Pagan covens and individuals for networking and protective purposes), but due to disagreements between the individuals making the effort in Canada and the American parent-organization, COG has made very few inroads into Canada⁹⁰.

Despite the many American offshoots of Neo-Pagan and Wiccan thought, Canadians seem to stick quite firmly to the more traditional British forms of Wicca. Perhaps this is attributable to the ethnicity of Canada as a whole; the pull of Celtic

⁹⁰ Another reason COG has had very little effect on the Canadian Neo-Pagan scene is that one of its stated aims is to work towards legitimizing American Neo-Pagan groups in individual States. This, of course, has no bearing on Canadian groups and Canadian law.

heritage keeps the Canadian Neo-Pagan community more 'mainstream' than their American counterparts.

4.3 Canadian Neo-Pagan Periodicals

Cross-tradition communication is not very common: ecumenical Neo-Pagan conferences are an unknown occurrence although one might argue that Festivals serve a similar purpose. As a result, the minimal amount of cross-Canada communications is usually facilitated either by the electronic bulletin boards mentioned in the previous chapter, or through the Neo-Pagan and Wiccan periodicals.

Approximately 17 newsletters and periodicals are published in Canada for the Neo-Pagan audience. Of these, the writer was able to look at sample copies of a dozen titles (some on an on-going basis). The bulk of the newsletters were of a fairly religionist outlook, with a very small minority oriented towards either global or societal change, and did not support the findings of Sandilands (1988).⁹¹

Sandilands analyzed twenty-one newsletters in her thesis, but does not indicate how many of these were of American rather than Canadian origin. Sandilands expressed the opinion that "... there are no particularly obvious differences between Canadian and

⁹¹ "This imbalance seems to reflect in part the fact that radical Pagans tend to publish more in general..." (Sandilands, 1988, pg. 82).

American Pagans..." (Sandilands, 1988, pg. 84). As a result one suspects that there was a mix of both American and Canadian periodicals in her analysis⁹².

Of the Canadian periodicals analyzed, only Hecate's Loom from Victoria is making an effort to broaden its focus across-Canada. Most of the newsletters in this study were fairly local in orientation, and the vast majority were religionist in outlook rather than ecopagan or God/dess celebratory.

Neo-Pagan journals and periodicals assist in developing a sense of the diversity of the communities across Canada. Of interest is the fact that very few of the newsletters originate in the high population centres of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Perhaps the presence of Neo-Pagan journals from Hazelton, B.C. or Kananaskis, Alta. indicates a need for isolated Neo-Pagans to network with their more urban co-religionists.

It is important to note that the Neo-Pagan movement is very disparate, so that in any given city or tradition, generalities regarding the movement or the tradition may not apply. To one group of Witches Goddess and God may be equal and paramount, while for another group of Witches the Goddess may be treated as superior to the God. To one tradition religion and social action may be inseparably linked, while to another tradition social action may be completely up to the individual's choice. It is therefore important

⁹² In her thesis, Sandilands refers to periodicals published by the Thomas Morton Alliance, a radical Neo-Pagan organization in the United States, for instance. This writer's research will note that there is no evidence for any activity by the TMA in Canada. By grouping the Canadian and American publications, Sandilands skewed her view of the activity level of the more radical members of the Neo-Pagan community in Canada.

to remember that the traditions enumerated in this chapter are neither mutually exclusive nor comprehensive.

Chapter 5

Variance and Commonality: Classifying Canadian Neo-Pagans

The Neo-Pagan movement in Canada is extremely diverse, encompassing everything from atheist Witches (those who, when interviewed, denied there was any transcendent Deity but who worship the immanent "god/dess within" every person) to Unitarian Pagans. In order to discuss Neo-Pagans and see relationships between their traditions (the emic categories), some form of classification system is required.

Within the confines of Neo-Paganism in Canada there appear to be three foci for worship. The author has classified Canadian Neo-Pagans into three categories, using these foci as pivots for the definitions. Most Canadian Neo-Pagans seem to use one of three types of transformation as the main thrust of their worship: Personal ("religionist"), Global ("ecopagan"), and Societal ("God/dess celebrants").

These categories are not fully inclusive, and for this reason the writer has also highlighted the tradition of "Eclectic". Eclectics, as noted in Chapter 4, embrace elements from many traditions and view themselves as members of no one specific tradition. The Eclectic may be envisioned as the centre of a Venn diagram⁹³, with religionists, ecopagans, and God/dess celebrants comprising the three intersecting spheres. Eclectics may practice their religion alone, or with others.

⁹³ See diagram in Appendix 8.

These categories are grouped according to their usage of power. An excellent discussion of the various anthropological theories of power can be found in Schultz (1990). She refers to two differing understandings of power based on cultural practices: coercive versus free will.

In the Neo-Pagan worldview there are three and not two manifestations of power: Power-Over, Power-With, and Power-From-Within (Starhawk, 1987). The Neo-Pagan worldview is different from that of Christianity in its expression of where power is vested. The placement of power in the Neo-Pagan worldview helps explain the differences between these different descriptive categories.

When power is viewed as coercive and internally vested in the individual⁹⁴, powerful individuals can use force, violence and what Starhawk (1987) calls Power-Over to gain control. When power is viewed as external to the individual, however, a different understanding of human nature is evidenced. Because every person (and in some world-views every thing) is so imbued, there can be no threats of violence to gain power-over. Instead, coercion appears unwise as every person has the same amount of power: no more, no less (Schultz, 1990). Neo-Pagans subscribe to the latter theory of power, for whether Immanent or Transcendent, the Gods made all things equal (and by extrapolation, imbued with equal amounts of sacredness and power). This world view allows for the concepts of Power-With and Power-From-Within to exist (Starhawk, 1987).

⁹⁴ e.g. Power which is given to chosen individuals by the Deity when the human follows the Deity's coercive orders, (a framework familiar to Jews and Christians) (Schultz, 1990).

5.1 Personal Transformation: Religionist

The more "traditional" and "ceremonial" systems of Neo-Pagan worship fall under the category of religionist. These include Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, the Wiccan Church of Canada, and a large cross-section of the Eclectics. The main concerns of these practitioners appear to be a form of worship which acknowledges Divinity as male and female, immanent and transcendent.

These are the groups usually self-labelled as Wiccan (as the term Witch straddles the borders of these categories). To the practitioners, their concerns are focused on the Self and the Self's relationship to the Divine (however the practitioner defines Divinity). In the secular sphere, religionist Neo-Pagans are most concerned with legitimization of their belief-systems as a bona fide religion in Canada (e.g., earning the legal right to ritually name, marry and bury its adherents), "proper" forms of worship of the Divine, and embracing Wicca as an alternative to the institutionalized forms of religion current in Canada.

Religionist Neo-Pagans are as a rule, the most hierarchical and codified of the three categories. Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca feature three degrees of Initiation, plus positions such as High Priestess⁹⁵, High Priest, Guardian of the Portal (sometimes called Summoner), and Maiden (sometimes called Handmaiden). Canada's own Wiccan

⁹⁵ "first among equals" as she is termed in most of the popular literature (Farrar and Farrar, 1981, 1984; Adler, 1986)

Church of Canada actually offers six degrees (of which one is non-ritualized, two feature non-initiatory rituals and three include initiatory rituals).

Religionist Neo-Pagans are also those who are most dependent on "props" and/or trappings for worship. The Wiccan Church of Canada spends many public class hours on the proper uses of different Witch's tools, correspondences between colours, directions, astrological signs, fragrances, and so forth. Similarly, Alexandrian and Gardnerian Wiccans also train for some period of time on subjects which cover the symbolic and "magical" uses of various tools and symbols.

Alexandrians and Gardnerians conduct their rites nude, or skyclad, when possible (Canadian weather and urban living conditions are often less than optimal for these practices); as a public tradition, most of the workings of the Wiccan Church of Canada are robed. Certain forms of jewellery and/or colours of clothing (robes, ritual belts called cingula,) along with certain stones (amber and jet in most of these traditions) are also regulated.

Many Wiccan groups in Canada are eclectic blends of the three Traditions mentioned above⁶. With the flood of books on Wicca coming out of the United States and Britain in the last ten years, it is quite simple for interested Neo-Pagan to "cookbook" themselves a coven with strong religionist leanings. As more and more authors espouse the acceptability of self-initiation (including Crowley, 1989;

⁶ Canada is lagging far behind other English-speaking countries in its production of books on Neo-Paganism and Wicca. Victoria, B.C. poet and author Robin Skelton is one of Canada's very few authors writing on Neo-Pagan subjects.

Cunningham, 1988; Farrar and Farrar, 1984; Valiente, 1989), eclectic covens and groves of this type are springing up across Canada with strong religionist Neo-Pagan orientation.

5.2 Global Transformation: Ecopagans

The Trumpeter, a magazine originating out of Victoria, B.C., bills itself as "Voices from the Canadian Ecophilosophy Network". Across the bottom of one issue⁹⁷ the following is exclaimed: "Paradox, Completeness, Utopianism, Paganism, Bioexuberance". The Neo-Pagan presence in the environmental movements in Canada is becoming increasingly evident, as this magazine indicates.

British scientist James Lovelock popularized the concept of the Earth as a living, sentient single organism with his "Gaia Theory" in the mid-1970s. Through anthropomorphizing the Earth many individuals discover a more basic need to actively intercede on Her behalf, as one might help an ailing friend or care-giver. Much of this concept rings true for the Neo-Pagans who have focused their spirituality as Ecopagans.

Canadian Ecopagans are not as easily identified by their religious beliefs. The researcher is far more likely to find this group of Neo-Pagans through magazines such as The Trumpeter, or by making contacts through recycled goods stores and alternative press publications. Some ecopagans are active with organizations such as Greenpeace and local Humane Societies and C.S.P.C.A.s. Others do volunteer work at Peace

⁹⁷ Vol.5, No.1, Winter 1988

Centres in their communities. Some aspects of the Pagans for Peace Movement and the Reclaiming traditions fall into this category.

Ecopagans do not seem to focus on legitimizing their religion to governmental authority. They appear to be the least numerous of the three categories in Canada, although a high proportion of Ecopagans are found in British Columbia and parts of Ontario. As well, some membership is shared between ecopagans and the God/dess celebrants (reflected by the growing number of articles coming out of the American feminist journals on Eco-Feminism and Goddess Ecology).

Ecopagan worship can be both personal and global in its forms. Ecopagans have been known to participate in protests (such as against clear cutting efforts in B.C.'s forests) and hold impromptu rituals when necessary to make a point or reinforce their secular motives with religious/spiritual focus. Most ecopagans are solitary in their worship rather than communal (such as the religionists), and sometimes a pentacle or a crystal around the neck are the only external signs of internal religious belief.

5.3 Societal Transformation: God/dess Celebrants

God/dess celebrants are often set apart from the rest of the Neo-Pagan movement by their extremely eclectic form(s). Radical Faeries and both the Feminist and Dianic forms of Wicca fall into this category, as do thousands of solitary worshippers and independent spirituality groups.

Arising in part out of the women's liberation and consciousness-raising movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the God/dess celebrants are focused on change both within themselves and within the society around them. Many of these Neo-Pagan groups act much like a Quaker meeting for worship, speaking or acting when 'the spirit moves them'.

Rituals arising out of God/dess celebrant groups are often very poetic and creative. They focus on the reclaiming and re-empowerment of certain sectors of society such as the Gay and Lesbian communities, women of colour and so forth. These are perhaps the most creative groups in the modern Neo-Pagan movement in Canada.

Most of the God/dess celebrant groups do not follow set ritual formats, nor do they have specific props and/or clothing. Some groups will use drums and/or rattles for inducing altered states of consciousness, while others will utilize books such as Starhawk's Spiral Dance (Starhawk, 1979, rev. 1989) or the writings of Z. Budapest (1986; 1980) as ritual guidelines.

When the National Film Board of Canada launched the Studio D release by Donna Reed, "Goddess Remembered" at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, a ritual was featured after the early showing. Run by a small core of God/dess celebrants, the ritual had to be rerun after the later screening due to the overwhelming demands of the participants. Over 150 men and women attended each of the two Circles, held behind the Royal Ontario Museum. The unity of such an eclectic religious movement became obvious as participants within the circle from hundreds of miles away would start up a

chant or song which would then be picked up by others around the circle, including the organizers.

God/dess celebrants use what they "feel fits" in their rituals, and toss out what seems awkward or stilted. The efforts are to free the participants, and through them society at large, from patriarchal restraints and assumptions endemic to Canadian culture in the late twentieth century. Many of the Canadian groups are comprised of gay and lesbian participants, but mixed-orientation and heterosexual groups of this type are not unknown. While in Winnipeg, this writer interviewed a coven of nine women, all Dianic Witches, all heterosexual, and all married.

There is a tangible amount of strain between religionist Neo-Pagans and God/dess celebrants in Canada due to differing views of what a Witch should be. Religionists view a Witch as one who has spent years studying the mysteries inherent in the religion, practising rituals, and adhering to the forms and 'trappings' of the religion. They also strongly believe that a Neo-Pagan who does not recognize the Goddess and the God as equals cannot be a Wiccan.

In opposition to this stand, God/dess celebrants view the Goddess as existing in all things and in all places. They feel that the validity of one's beliefs is expressed in actions and in the heart rather than in external manifestations such as colour of candle, of cingulum, or in any form of orthopraxy. For many God/dess celebrants the Goddess incorporates the elements of male divinity as well as female, so they express the male presence through the Goddess rather than having to anthropomorphize a second form of

Deity. Understandably, this is a very basic disagreement between the traditions grouped in these classification categories.

Despite strong opposition from the religionist traditions in the Neo-Pagan movement, God/dess celebrants are firmly located within the Neo-Pagan movement in Canada. These Neo-Pagans are frequently not concerned with hierarchical trappings such as initiations, ranks, and trappings. The statement, "Thou Art Goddess" (or "Thou Art God") is one of the few common denominators among most of these worshippers, and indicates the highly-immanent view of Divinity they express. Some God/dess celebrants (male and female) call themselves Witch, but few use the term Wiccan.

Variation is the lifeblood of Neo-Paganism in Canada. For every category there is an Eclectic using elements from various traditions. Neo-Pagans defy classification, and most shun institutionalization. Some Canadian Neo-Pagans are blending Amerind beliefs into their worship; others are borrowing from gypsy lore or African belief systems. It is the vibrancy and the variance within the Neo-Pagan community which makes it a fascinating family of religions to observe and study.

5.5 Neo-Paganism as Holistic Philosophy

Neo-Pagans frequently describe their religion as one dealing with healing and re-empowerment: of themselves, their communities, and the world as a whole. Neo-Paganism may be difficult to classify under existing definitions of "religion", but perhaps

that is one of the movement's goals (Nelson, 1984; Eliade, 1976). Neo-Pagans are holistic religious practitioners, apparently trying to reunite fragmented aspects of themselves and the world around them in various ways.

In opposition to the dualism expressed by thinkers such as Weber (1946, in Robertson, 1969)⁹⁸ and Durkheim (1912, in Robertson, 1969)⁹⁹, Neo-Pagans are staunch in their efforts to unify the sacred and profane in the religious, social, and personal spheres of influence so that all things are "sacred". This unified world-view makes much of the sociological information on New Religious Movements (and indeed, on the sociology of religion in general) difficult to apply to this religion. Neo-Pagans simply do not fit the organized and/or institutionalized description of modern religions, nor do they fit the descriptions of most cults (Scott, 1980).

5.6 Self-Identification and the Term Witch

When Glinda the Good asks Dorothy in the movie *"The Wizard of Oz"*, "Are you a Good Witch? Or a Bad Witch", the whole world of witches is laid bare before the

⁹⁸ For example, Weber's theory that religion deals with the rational and irrational polarizes the world and all in it.

⁹⁹ Writing on profane and sacred in religions: "This division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought; the beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends are either representations or systems of representations which express the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers which are attributed to them, or their relations with each other and with profane things." Pg. 43.

viewer. Good witches are traditionally referred to as "Fairy Godmothers" in collections such as the Grimms Fairy Tales, and bad witches are "witches" (without modification).

The use of the word "Witch" within Neo-Pagan classifications varies from area to area, depending on various factors. Most religionists view the term "Witch" to denote one who has undergone a formalized initiation within a 'pre-Christian' mystery religion. This attitude is most common in areas where the bulk of the worshippers have not undergone such a formalized rite of passage but are training towards such.

For ecopagans, the term "Witch" rarely arises in their language. For them the label Neo-Pagan, or merely Pagan, is sufficient identification with the pantheistic, nature-oriented beliefs they express.

In God/dess celebrant groups, "Witch" becomes a label for all participants regardless of initiatory status. Both the Gay and Lesbian Neo-Pagan subcultures are adamant in their reclaiming of the term as a word of power. For the Feminist and Dianic Witch, it is often sufficient to say three times into a mirror "I am a Witch" to become one (McFarland, 1975; Budapest, 1986).

No matter which classification they fell into, Neo-Pagans in Halifax, Winnipeg, and Saskatoon were the most loathe to self-identify as "Witches". The title was repeatedly referred to as a specific term for initiates. As well, the level of ignorance among the general population regarding Neo-Paganism as a religion was another reason expressed for avoiding the word. Many informants indicated they did not want to spend hours educating people as to what they meant when they called themselves "Witch", and therefore defaulted to less emotionally-charged words such as "Pagan" or "Wiccan".

The language of self-identification to outsiders differs from that used when discussing religion with insiders. Although there is little East-West contact between covens or groups of practitioners of Neo-Pagan traditions, information is exchanged through personal movement of adherents and by attendance at Festivals throughout North America. Informants falling into all classifications indicated they would tell another Neo-Pagan they were a Witch (whether initiated or not), but they would use one of the more neutral terms in discussion with the general public.

Neo-Pagans appear to be striving towards a unity in their worlds: unity with nature, environment, self and others. To a Neo-Pagan power exists in rocks, trees, other Neo-Pagans and indeed, non Neo-Pagans (who are usually viewed as equally powerful but untrained). Balancing one's relationship with all around and the use of language in healing and empowerment appears to be a major concern in most Neo-Pagan classifications. The next chapter will investigate how the placement of power interacts with the Neo-Pagan individual in Canada.

Chapter 6

Neo-Paganism and Power: Religion and Therapy

Neo-Pagans are people who view their religion as indistinguishable from their daily lives. Like orthodox practitioners of other Western religions (e.g. Pentecostal Christians or Chassidic Jews), they see their religion as inseparable from their identity as individuals.

This thesis has investigated the descriptive statistics on the general characteristics of Canadian Neo-Pagans (etic demographics) as well as having classified Neo-Pagan traditions and practices (emic descriptions derived from interviews across Canada). This chapter will endeavour to discuss Neo-Pagans and their relationship to power, both as magic and as therapeutic action. It is this writer's contention that it is magic as metaphor for power and the focus of Neo-Paganism as a re-empowering religion which draws many practitioners to it. Power appears to be the common factor between the Neo-Pagan's daily activities and the Neo-Pagan's religious practices.

6.1 The Magical Metaphor

Allusions to Will in this chapter will be unfamiliar to the reader who does not practice some form of Witchcraft or Neo-Pagan worship. Will is understood to Neo-Pagans as the focusing of desire and the Immanent Deity to achieve goals. To the outsider, Will is Neo-Pagan magic.

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Virtually all Neo-Pagans utilize some sort of Will in much of their activities, both in ritual and outside of it. However, efforts to define Neo-Pagan use of Will as magic in sociological and anthropological terms becomes as difficult as defining Canadian Neo-Pagan Witches as anthropological witches: what is occurring is different (Luhrmann, 1989).

To the Neo-Pagan practitioner, magic is a metaphor (Adler, 1986; Farrar and Farrar, 1981, 1984; Starhawk, 1987). Very few Neo-Pagans directly believe that sympathetic magic works in a direct one-to-one relationship, as their identity differs from the tribal identity referred to in much of the literature on Magic and magical thinking (Bernard, 1927; Lewis, 1964; Shotwell, 1910; Wax and Wax, 1962).

For Neo-Pagan practitioners, magic is the metaphor for empowerment in their lives. Eliade (1976, pg. 65) attributes the sudden rise in Occult activities as an "optimistic evaluation of the human mode of being", and it is this optimism, this self-empowerment, which is the focus of Neo-Pagan magical pursuits.

Where magic is condoned and encouraged as a metaphor in Neo-Paganism, it is suppressed and/or banned officially in Christianity as "bad science", or sacrilegious (Lewis, 1964). Neo-Paganism is a religious philosophy of **experience** rather than **doctrine**. Many Neo-Pagans rebel against religions institutionalizing the routinization of charisma when they use magic in everyday practice (Luhrmann, 1989). Neo-Pagans appear to be empowering themselves through concepts and ways of thinking alien to Christianity.

Nearly all Neo-Pagan practitioners of magic indicate they do magic (spellworking in the interviews) for others, and usually in some form of beneficent healing. Neo-Pagans heal others with the same tool as they heal themselves: Will. Houseblessings, love spells, job spells, and student spells are all aimed at creating an atmosphere of wholeness. The practitioner is healing self and the world around her/him in this manner. Learning to exercise Will and believe in the Self aids the Neo-Pagan to achieve balance and learn the skills which upbringing did not teach.

It is no accident that the number one type of magic practised by Canadian Neo-Pagans is that of healing: by herbal tisanes, hands-on techniques (such as Reiki or "energy flow" redirection), and peer-counselling. Magical practice to the Canadian Neo-Pagan is not viewed as a direct cause/effect relationship to change and harm the surroundings. In opposition to this view, Neo-Pagan magical practice is to effect change, using the Self (individual) as the medium rather than through an organizationally-sanctioned medium (e.g. priest, prayer).

Neo-Pagan magic takes on many diverse forms but is primarily a personal action, empowering the identity of the individual and his/her sense of being a healthy whole player in the world around him/her¹⁰⁰. The popular literature on Witchcraft and Neo-Pagan belief puts a high level of stress on magic in daily life. Witchcraft and Neo-

¹⁰⁰ This theory is in keeping with Albas and Albas, (1989, pg. 612) where four changes in the practice of magic are highlighted: "...We might expect magic to be transformed from: (1) being publicly performed to being privately and individually performed; (2) being culturally transmitted to being spontaneously generated; (3) being completely shared by the whole community to being utilized privately by individuals; and (4) being unvarying uniform and consistent in its rituals to being highly variable and even contradictory."

Paganism as religious forms use magic (as a form of concentration and positive imagery) in many roles.

6.2 Neo-Pagan Views of Power: "Where There's Power, There's Fear"

The first book recommended to most interested individuals considering Neo-Paganism as a religious form of expression is The Spiral Dance (Starhawk, 1979; rev. ed 1989). This is a combination of how-to book, philosophical expression, and political statement. Of all the Neo-Pagans interviewed across Canada, Spiral Dance was by far the most common first book they encountered when investigating Neo-Pagan and Wiccan thought¹⁰¹.

Although Starhawk is best known for this book within Neo-Pagan circles, it is her most recent book which gives the best framework for analyzing the different forms of Neo-Pagan power (Starhawk, 1987). Truth or Dare¹⁰² postulates three types of Power, which help to analyze both the manner in which the Neo-Pagan categories function.

¹⁰¹ This is slowly changing as a flood of "what is Wicca/Witchcraft/Neo-Paganism" books have been published in the last five years.

¹⁰² NOT to be confused with the movie released in 1991 by singer/actress Madonna by the same name!

6.2.1 Power Over: Religionists and Hierarchy

"Power-over enables one individual or group to make the decisions that affect others, and to enforce control." (Starhawk, 1985, pg. 9)

Traditional organized religions in Canada are as a rule, hierarchical in nature (Bibby, 1987; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985). By comparison, Stark and Bainbridge (1985) indicate that in some types of cults, no hierarchy or leadership exists at all. To the casual observer, the Neo-Pagan movement is the archetypal non-hierarchical religion, but in some Traditions this is not the case.

Cross-Canada interviews seem to indicate that those Neo-Pagans active in heavily religionist Wiccan Traditions are in part seeking to carve a niche for themselves in an existing power-base. Although the participants themselves would not view their studies towards achieving degrees of Initiation as seeking Power-Over, close study of the mechanisms of Initiation granting and the respect resulting seem to indicate otherwise.

Most Canadian religionists are from the more ceremonial branches of Christianity (e.g. High Anglicans and Roman Catholics). An observer at a Gardnerian Circle would find some aspects of the ritual immediately familiar, such as the burning of incense, the coloured tower candles, the ringing of a bell at certain points in the ritual, and even the text of the consecration of the elements of Water and Salt (Earth).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ "I exorcise thee, O creature of water, that thou cast out from thee all the impurities and uncleanness of the spirits of the world of phantasm; in the name of Cemunnos and Aradia. Blessings be upon this creature of salt; let all malignity and hindrance be cast forth hencefrom, and let all good enter herein; wherefore do I bless thee, that thou mayest aid me, in the names of Cemunnos and Aradia." (Farrar and Farrar, 1981, pg. 37) This is virtually identical to the blessings of salt and water which appears in Roman Catholic missals for baptismal water.

The exercising of Power-Over can be both positive and negative in this situation. In situations where abuse of power is evident, a Wiccan student working towards elevation could be 'put off' or discouraged by the continual denial of the Initiation ceremony when the priest/ess in the position of power decides the student is not 'ready' yet. Some candidates can be victims of power-over thinking by those above him/her in the hierarchy refusing to allow access to "oath-bound"¹⁰⁴ information¹⁰⁵.

Power-Over types of Neo-Pagan expression hold the highest potential for abuse. Complaints about individuals being Initiated "too early", efforts to invalidate the "lineage" of a given Initiate by another more powerful Initiate, or other exercises of power over one participant by another are common in Religionist Wiccan groups. As an example, one Neo-Pagan practitioner formerly studying with the Wiccan Church of Canada claims quite firmly that the Degree of Neophyte in the W.C.C. religious system was created specifically to dissuade him from working towards a First Degree Initiation in that organization.¹⁰⁶

Some of the abuses of Power-Over within the religionist systems can become extremely manipulative if taken to extremes. Frequently difficult or impossible to prove (due to the reticence of the adherent to speak ill of the person who has power over his/her religious achievements), allegations of sexual misconduct and/or emotional

¹⁰⁴ A Wiccan term for secret information. This relates to the Oaths sworn during Initiation ceremonies that the Initiate will not reveal any secrets except to other Initiates.

¹⁰⁵ Schultz (1990) would term this sort of power coercive power.

¹⁰⁶ GP, private conversation, Ottawa, 1989.

manipulation are not uncommon by former members of some religionist groups towards others.

It has been suggested to this writer by other scholars that an in-depth personality study of the men in the Religionist groups of Neo-Paganism would probably turn up much physical, sexual, and emotional manipulation. Certainly it is odd that the main speakers for the religionist traditions in Canada are most frequently men (despite the myth of Neo-Paganism and Wicca as a woman's religion), and that in the 1981 Canadian Census there were nearly half again as many men as women claiming Pagan status.

One might hazard guesses as to why so many individuals are still practising in some variant of the hierarchical, Power-Over styles of religionist Wicca and Neo-Paganism¹⁰⁷. Perhaps it is the familiarity which draws the practitioners: the hierarchy and trappings are familiar from Church symbolism, and the abusive use of Power-Over as postulated above would be familiar to one coming from an abusive family background. Although it may be that the Neo-Pagans in Great Britain are not from abusive families (and consequently the practitioners of religionist Neo-Paganism undergo less abuse), certainly in Canada the interviews conducted indicate this is a very common phenomenon which will be discussed further in this chapter.

¹⁰⁷ Some Religionists are accused of worshipping "God in Skirts" by more Eclectic Neo-Pagans.

6.2.2 Power With: Ecopagans and Cooperation

"[Power-with is]...the power of a strong individual in a group of equals, the power not to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and see it happen." (Starhawk, 1987, pg. 10)

Of the organized religions in Canada, the one closest to a functional use of Power-With appears to be the Society of Friends (Quakers). Perhaps this is one reason why many Canadian Neo-Pagans and Wiccans are active in both religious communities. At least three Ottawa couples were wed in Quaker services, and a small but noticeable minority of the Witches also attend Quaker meetings periodically. However, many of these dual-religion worshippers do not indicate their Witch identity to their Quaker friends. The level of social activism in some Christian Churches appears to be a convenient outlet for some Neo-Pagans to effect change in their world.

Ecopagans appear to be the most Power-With oriented of the three Canadian Neo-Pagan groupings. Often solitary and/or eclectic in religious practices, they often see themselves as worshipping as they do proactive ecological activities. Power-with is similar in its expression to (as an example) a women's co-operative publishing collective¹⁰⁸.

Most ecopagans do not see a need for the formalized hierarchical structures the religionists use for worship. They view themselves as interconnected and interrelated with the world around them and part of one organic wholeness. Ecopagans are the most solitary of the three categories of Neo-Pagans, expressing their religiosity through their activism in environmental groups and often peace centres.

¹⁰⁸ Schultz (1990) would indicate this is a persuasive form of power.

Interviews across Canada did not turn up any ecopagan groups with "degree" structures. Rather, all participants seemed to view themselves as equals and expressed their sense of Divinity as very Immanent.

Some Feminist and Dianic Witches also fall into the Power-With categories. Many active and successful Women's worship circles also shun titles and hierarchical notions (Budapest, 1980), with the nominal title of High Priestess being rotated around the participants (sometimes whoever hosts the circle in her house is the High Priestess for the day).

Power-With Neo-Pagans strive to work and live co-operatively with themselves, their surroundings, and the world around them. Gaia, as an expression of the Earth and all things on it, is popular with many Ecopagans. It is again no surprise that feminist and ecology Pagans are merging in some areas, creating an Ecofeminist movement. Ecopagans seem to come from varied religious upbringings with very little pattern evident¹⁰⁹.

6.2.3 Power-From-Within: God/dess Celebrants and Immanence

"Power-from-within...sees the world itself as a living being, made up of dynamic aspects, a world where one thing shape-shifts into another, where there are no solid separations and no simple causes and effects. In such a world, all things have inherent value." (Starhawk, 1987, pg. 15)

The groups closely affiliated with God/dess celebration are also the least hierarchical of the Canadian traditions of Neo-Paganism. In some groups, the concept

¹⁰⁹ United Church, strict Baptist, and atheist are some of the religions of origin indicated by the Ecopagans.

of Deity as immanent is so strong that one finds political Witches: atheist or agnostic, using Witch as a political term and internalizing the concept of Divine as Self.

The God/dess celebrant is often solitary, and also often eclectic in format of ritual. The God/dess celebrant movement appears to celebrate Power-From-Within and the groups work in very fluid forms. Many women and men who express their religious philosophy through the Power-From-Within technique turn to the title of Witch as a statement of power, while others will shun any title or label at all.

Where ecopagans are expressing co-operative power, and religionist Neo-Pagans are expressing power and belief through hierarchy, God/dess celebrants are expressing the power of the human being when working in tune with itself. Power-From-Within is perhaps the most alien concept to those raised in Christian belief structures, although it is certainly not alien to Christian history¹¹⁰. Gnostic thought and mystical experience are typical of Power-From-Within in a Christian framework¹¹¹.

The structure of Power-From-Within allows the acceptance of a Divine presence in all things, and is conducive to respect for all creatures whether science would judge them "living" or not. Similar in many ways to Reconstructionist Judaism, some God/dess celebrants view the Divine as in-dwelling, while others view Divine as a power or energy alive in all things (whether sentient or not).

¹¹⁰ Christian mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen do appear in Christian texts, but rarely.

¹¹¹ Weber, in Halpern, 1983. The problem is that most institutionalized forms of Christianity are not prepared to deal with personal experience as religious form. It has been argued that the reason monks and nuns were isolated in their own communities was due to the inability of the institution to deal with experiential religious expression.

Philosophically the practice of Power-From-Within is akin to some forms of Buddhist thought. However, unlike many practical manifestations of Buddhism, God/dess celebrants need no temple or place of worship, share no doctrinal writings on their religion, and appear to have no theological need to worship communally¹¹². Many God/dess celebrants DO worship in groups, but they are unstable in their membership and lack any formalized leader(s). God/dess celebrants celebrate the Divine in Self, the Divine as Self, and the Divine as in-dwelling in all things.

The link between Feminist thought and God/dess celebrant worship forms is a logical one. Much of the religious work going on in this form is recognizable as stemming out of the Consciousness-raising groups formed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the U.S.A. and Canada. The participant's relationship to internal and external stresses, and the choices for handling these stresses comprise much of the God/dess celebrant focus. Unlike the consciousness-raising groups, however, these worshippers use magical thinking and sympathetic magic as an aid in much of their Self-improvement.

6.3 Family of Origin and Dysfunctional Episodes

There is a large body of research in both psychology and sociology on conversion factors, and why individuals tend to be drawn to one religion over another. Kirkpatrick

¹¹² Neo-Pagans are like all other human beings, however, and often feel a social need to worship with others.

et al, (1996) investigated Neo-Paganism for certain types of marginality and was surprised when some common patterns did not emerge when investigating Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. Many researchers in various disciplines have speculated as to why some people follow one religion over another (Weber, in Robertson, 1969; Bainbridge and Stark, 1985; Bird and Reimer, 1976).

After observing Canadian Neo-Pagans for many years, there appeared to be some common family histories between many of them. Curious as to possible links between the high stress on holistic beliefs, healing practices, and some sort of deprivation in the practitioner's own past, the final section of the interview was formulated. The intent was to see if any link between family or upbringing might sway these individuals towards Neo-Paganism as an adult religion of choice.

The final page of the interview used during the summer of 1991 was termed "delicate questions". The questions were drawn heavily from psychological literature, dealing with family of origin questions which probed the personal history of the participant. This group of questions dealt with substance abuse among care-givers, along with sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. The results were startling.

6.3.1 Abusive Upbringing

The most surprising information gained from the interviews dealt with families of origin. Although a small minority of Witches grew up in and out of foster homes or

boarding schools¹¹³, most lived in some version of the nuclear family. What was distressing was the abuse to which these individuals were subjected while growing up, both within the family and without. The frequency of abuse was so high and in some cases so violent that the writer had to modify one question in the last section of the survey. Instead of asking, "Would you call your childhood typical", the modifier "as in, Beaver Cleaver 1950s typical" had to be added after numerous women answered, 'yes it was typical - I was physically and sexually abused hundreds of times'.

Of the 40 women interviewed, only 2.5 percent did not undergo some sort of severe trauma as they grew up (one out of 40). Of the 27 men interviewed, only 22 percent did not undergo similar experiences (seven out of 27). The effects of these experiences will be elaborated when dealing with Power within Neo-Paganism.

Two factors were investigated when determining dysfunctional upbringing: firstly, alcoholic parent(s) or drug dependency, and secondly, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (severe) by a family member or an outsider in a position of control¹¹⁴. Of those reporting some form of abuse, 29 indicated one or more of their parents were substance-dependent, 46 reported they had been victims of abuse (either as a child or an adult), and 22 were victims of incest by a blood relative or a step-relative.

When abuse was reported, the researcher was very careful to get the informant to elaborate unless they were too uncomfortable to do so. It was made quite clear that

¹¹³ Approximately 10 out of 67 participants indicated they had lived in boarding schools or foster homes.

¹¹⁴ E.g. a baby sitter, doctor, teacher, friend of the family.

the level of 'spanking' considered 'usual' in the 1950s and 1960s was not considered physical abuse. The stories which emerged were no less than hair-raising. In order to assure the reader that these are not skewed figures, some examples of actual interviews follow:

Both my parents were severely emotionally abusive, ...and at age 12 or 13 I had both oral and anal sex with a much older boy, a friend of our family. The whole incident was denied by my family when I told, and so it occurred for months. ...Since no one believed me and no one told me it was bad or evil, I began to perform sodomy/oral sex on other boys, down to 6 or 7 yrs of age, including a young "cousin" [friend of the family]. ...I have attempted suicide three times in 4 yrs. (male, Nova Scotia)

I had a really emotionally abusive family, and my mother tried to commit suicide many times. ...My sister was a sexual abuser, and my dad was an alcoholic. (female, Nova Scotia)

(laughing) Yeah, I got it all and I'm not afraid to talk about it: physical, emotional, sexual abuse. My mother was addicted to prescription drugs. ...With my father there was touching, and genital sex. He did it frequently between when I was, ah... 6 and about 12. ...I was raped too as an adult, and I was battered by my spouse. (female, Winnipeg)

I underwent physical abuse as I grew up. My stepfather broke my neck when I was 15, he was a schizophrenic alcoholic. ...I suffered through both emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. I was 12 and my mother's third husband was 45 years old, he kept raping me. ...Both my mother and step dad are alcoholic, then my mother got off booze and switched into valium addiction... The abuse I went through gave me the strength to be a Witch. ...I guess I'm tempered steel. (female, Winnipeg)

Yes, my childhood was violent. I was a ward of the province, was sent to boarding schools, and at times was

raised by other relatives. My father raped me numerous times over a few years, ...I underwent a lot of emotional abuse from my mother who tried to convince me I was crazy when I said what my father had done. ...They sent me to a hospital after I told, to see what was wrong with this otherwise lovely child that she would make up such stories. ... My father was an alcoholic, and my mother was hooked on tranquilizers. ...My father firmly believed he was doing the Lord's work. He had a strange view of God. [when he sexually abused the informant]. As an adult I was raped at 26, ...and was not battered but was emotionally abused by a lover... (female, Calgary)

...Well you know, I survived the British boarding school system... My parents were inept, but not emotionally abusive. ...At boarding school I guess I was sexually abused... I was forcibly masturbated by older boys, things like that... (male, Victoria)

I underwent severe physical abuse. Because all the work was left to me because my mother was not well, I was beaten if the house was not up to scratch. ...There was also emotional abuse ...For instance, I was caught reading in bed late... and as punishment my mother took away all the light bulbs from my room for TWO YEARS. ...I was a victim of child sexual abuse from my step-grandfather [molesting, touching around ages from 6 to 9]. (female, Victoria)

It is important to note that the abuse did not necessarily originate in the family itself. As with the adult abused while in a boarding school, the trauma need not have occurred in the family. As an example, Faren Ravenwing of Halifax recounted how a group of locals from one city in Nova Scotia tried her as a witch and decided she should be burned.

In 1972 Ravenwing was lured by a group of six adults to a deserted beach where she was tried "in the name of the Roman Catholic Church." According to Ravenwing, she was accused of "sacrificing infants, blighting crops, interfering with livestock,

casting the evil eye, causing illness and death, ensorcelling men," and so forth. After she was convicted by this "trial", Ravenwing escaped her captors before they were able to tie her to a wooden chair and burn her. When she returned to the city in 1981, she was warned to leave within six months or "someone would be hired to shoot me." (Ravenwing is from a community in Nova Scotia of approximately 8,000 inhabitants. She is now 35 years old.)

Even as adults, Canadian Neo-Pagans perceive that they have no legal protection. They feel they are not protected under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as they do not belong to a "recognized" religion.

It appears these individuals found themselves in what Bateson calls the "double-bind" (Bateson, 1972). On one hand, abuse and alcoholic parenting left the child with a sense that they could never be good enough, or competent enough. Very poor self-esteem is a standard effect of an abusive upbringing. As well, many Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACCAs) find themselves trying to "fix things", either because of parental pressures or because of internal ones. When they find out they cannot fix the unfixable, they internalize the blame and again suffer the feeling of being not good enough.

From the other direction is the message being sent by the 'peer group' as they grew up: that the individual is too good, too brainy, and somehow above the others (therefore worthy somehow of ridicule). Witches and Neo-Pagans appear to have grown up in the double-bind, so that no matter which viewpoint they adopted they lost. Perhaps it is no surprise that these individuals grew up as loners.

6.4 Power: A Religion Grows

As has been illustrated graphically, a very high percentage of those choosing Neo-Pagan religious expression share common experiences as children: physical, sexual and emotional abuse, often coupled with the status of being ACOAs (Adult Children of Alcoholics). As one investigates the structures of various Neo-Pagan traditions one sees where Neo-Pagan individuals may be subconsciously striving to reclaim what they lost in their childhoods: power and control over it, and innocence¹¹⁵.

6.4.1 Power, Neo-Pagan Belief, and Surviving Abuse

Self-help books for adults who have been sexually, physically or severely emotionally abused as children, and/or of growing up with alcoholic parents have flooded the shelves of women's bookstores in the past 10 years¹¹⁶. What is becoming clear is that the adult who lives with such trauma throughout his/her life without resolution suffers from some very clear disabilities. The abused adult finds that his/her self-esteem drops, and the victim perceives s/he is powerless, useless, and unworthy of love in any form (Bass and Davis, 1988). In other words, the adult feels unable to control anything around him/her. Often adults from a dysfunctional family are poorly

¹¹⁵ Giddens, quoted in Schultz (1990) indicates that power can broadly be called "transformative capacity". Neo-Pagans could be interpreted as using magic as a metaphor and religious freedom to transform their feelings of powerlessness into feelings of power.

¹¹⁶ The concept of the "inner child" has surfaced in the world of pop psychology to the point that some journals are now asking if the concept of healing an "inner child" is instead turning adults into children.

socialized, have low self-esteem and are slow to trust others (Op. cit., Engel, 1989; Johnson, 1991; Lew, 1990).

For these individuals, burdened with self-hatred and internalized guilt for what they lived through as children, Christianity and Judaism do not seem to offer adequate options for healing (Brock, Bloomquist, Redmond, and Fortune, in Brown and Bohm, 1989; Capps, 1992). Feminist critiques of Christianity in particular are showing that Christian imagery of suffering as desirable and forgiveness towards others hampers the recovery of the victim.

It appears that Neo-Pagans are survivors of abusive upbringings who are looking for new frameworks in which they can re-empower themselves spiritually and practically. Luhrmann (1989) notes that the magical circle is perceived as a "safe place" where participants in Neo-Pagan rituals feel they can cry without embarrassment, show emotion, and talk. A graphic description of the circle as "safe place" is given by Luhrmann (1989, pg. 225) where she describes one participant having her feelings validated by all members of her coven. It is pointed out in a footnote that the "therapeutic value of this openness" has not been discussed in the secret society literature.

The available literature on surviving dysfunctional families expresses the need of the survivor to find a safe place, along with the need to validate the suppressed feelings of the abused child still living within the adult (Bass and Davis, 1988; Engel, 1989; Johnson, 1991; Lew, 1990). Neo-Pagans are not children, although they often take delight at acting child-like. At one ritual in Ottawa, participants were asked to 'act like

kittens' and play with a huge ball of yarn. The weblike creation formed by the participants pitching the yarn back and forth was then given magical value and meaning. Other rituals have included some sort of play or play-acting. It appears this type of adult play is part of the healing which is being enacted, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The freedom to break down, and the freedom to be healed.
...The magic circle...is curiously like the imaginative
sacrality of childhood, the special spot behind the armchair,
under the desk, out in the woods, the secret place where
fairy tales are almost always true and adults are forbidden
to enter.¹¹⁷

The entry into a "secret" family of Neo-Pagans, linked by belief and child-like wonderment is the start of the journey of re-empowerment by Neo-Pagans. They experience membership in a religion which perceives itself as threatened by the community at large, but which embraces the newcomer as family. Numerous Neo-Pagans across Canada referred to their co-religionists as "my real family", "my family of choice", or "my ONLY family". Along with leaving behind the religion of origin, many Neo-Pagans choose to divest themselves of their dysfunctional families as well.

Wiccans use the phrase "Perfect Love and Perfect Trust" when interacting, particularly when entering the magical circle. The newcomer appears to be learning love (of self and of others) through Neo-Paganism, and finding trust within the boundaries of the Coven or worship group.

¹¹⁷ Luhrmann, 1989, pg. 226.

6.4.2 Reclaiming Power and Neo-Paganism

What does the adherent appear to gain by leaving the Church and its Power-Over for the Neo-Pagan religionist traditions, which also use Power-Over forms in worship and belief? What is being reclaimed by adults from abusive upbringing through Power-With ecopagan religious expression? Does the Power-From-Within expressed through God/dess celebrants adequately serve the needs of the worshipper?

It appears that most individuals entering Neo-Paganism are often unaware of their childhood background, due to conscious or unconscious avoidance techniques (such as blocking memories). It appears then, that finding others with similar family backgrounds is an unconscious choice. Many Neo-Pagans do not realize for years (if ever) that they may share common family histories with other believers.

Individuals seeking to regain control over things around them primarily in the external sphere appear to first enter Neo-Paganism through religionist groups. If any abuse of power is evident, it is probably 'familiar' to the newcomer at a subconscious level¹¹⁸; if it is not, the trappings of the rituals and the hierarchical nature of the system would be familiar from Church-type frameworks. One Neo-Pagan woman who finally exited her cycle of physical abuse after three abusive lovers in a row, indicated Better the devil you know than the devil you don't. I thought I could at least cope with a man who had a violent temper¹¹⁹."

¹¹⁸ Much of the literature on battered spouses and date-rape victims indicates that subconsciously the victim is attracted to the abuser because it is a familiar pattern.

¹¹⁹ Informant, Ottawa, 1991.

Religionist groups practice a great deal of magic as a Power-Over expression of the practitioner's Will. Children from dysfunctional families usually perceive themselves as having no say in their lives, and spend the rest of their lives seeking control of themselves and all around them (Bass and Davis, 1988; Engel, 1989; Johnson, 1991; Lew, 1990). For a person with this sort of lack of self-esteem, joining a religion which claims to show him/her how to control things through sheer Will is attractive.

Because of the childhood imbalance within the family of origin and the blurring of boundaries and roles (Johnson, 1991; Friel and Friel, 1990; Sanford and Donovan, 1984), many adults have difficulties interacting with their peer-groups in what might be considered "proper" terms. These individuals are often unable to relate to others as adults, or will act childish for attention. Many Neo-Pagans refer to themselves laughingly as having been "ill-socialized" or "maladjusted" before coming to Neo-Paganism as a religion. It is quite common to hear long-standing members of a community discuss others as 'not bad now: you should have seen him/her BEFORE', when discussing social gaffs or personality quirks.

For this group of Neo-Pagans, groups with external foci such as ecopagans are attractive. The individual is plunged into an amorphous group of people with similar concerns about the environment, justice, and/or nuclear armament. The ability to work with others in a manner which gives the individual a sense of purpose and worth helps to re-empower them, and so they appear to be seeking re-empowerment in an interactive form.

Ecopagans are very broad in their forms of worship, and Power-With can take the form of a worship circle or a weekend cleaning up the side of a highway. The adult who seeks to validate him/herself as equal to a peer group (or in some cases, even to find a peer group) is able to work on an equal footing with others who are tolerant of personality quirks. The newcomer to the ecopagan community finds a friendly group of activity-minded individuals willing to increase the newcomer's perception of self-worth and teach him/her how to interact with others as an equal.

For the individual who lacks self-esteem or self-respect, the God/dess celebrant form of worship and empowerment serves a purpose. The old trappings of the term 'religion' are discarded, and a completely different description of Divinity is offered. Here the image of divine as the white-haired guy on the big chair 'up there' changes radically, and through it, the image of the worshipper.

God/dess celebrants are least like the familiar Church format in form or manifestation. Divinity is acknowledged in all things, whether that is described as straight or lesbian, bi or gay, animal or mineral. The broadest level of tolerance for "otherness" is manifested in Power-From-Within, as it is ultimately the value of the individual which has the most value. "Thou art God/dess" is the encapsulation of God/dess celebrants: change in the internal sphere.

Increasing self-esteem appears to be unavoidable given this form of worship. Learning how to use Power-From-Within and sharing its results could be as simple as sharing cookies one baked before a Ritual, to the complexities of creating a special ritual to celebrate a special event. For the individual who feels worthless due to the lessons

of abusive or alcoholic families of origin, Power-From-Within would appear to be the optimal format for learning to trust and value one's own worth.

6.4.3 Eclectics: Making Survivors Out of Victims

Despite the clear cut differences between the three major forms of Neo-Paganism in Canada and the needs these forms fulfil for their worshippers, the largest corpus of Neo-Pagans in Canada remains the Eclectics. Having analyzed the three forms of Power expressed in Neo-Pagan worship it is perhaps no surprise that Eclectics comprise the bulk of the population.

Eclectics are self-admitted religious thieves, as it were. Across Canada, Eclectics indicate they "keep what works" for ritual and "throw away the rest". They blend whatever 'rings true' for their needs at any given time, and owe allegiance to no particular Wiccan or Neo-Pagan traditions.

Most adults who come from dysfunctional families are not looking for one simple answer to all their personal turmoil. The description of Neo-Pagans joining one category or another of the religion to fulfil a single need is inadequate. The religious and social expression of Eclectic seems to better meet the varied religious and personal needs of the adult abused as a child.

Eclectic forms of Neo-Pagan worship allow the individual to experiment with roles. Power-With, Power-Over, and Power-From-Within are all real issues for the

abuse victim or ACOA. To focus on one form of Power without the others would be a religiously inadequate 'treatment'.

Eclectics often start allied with one form of Neo-Paganism, and often "shop around" for other forms of expression before settling on a more Eclectic framework. It appears that the need to interact with other Neo-Pagans becomes less of a spiritual necessity and more of a social choice as the individual spends more time in a tradition. Small groups of Eclectics form as social contact finds others who share common viewpoints on the origin of the Divine and how Divinity should be worshipped.

The Eclectic is most likely to integrate the three types of Power into a single form of worship (and by extrapolation, therapeutic re-empowerment). Most Neo-Pagans in Canada who identify themselves as Eclectic are either in communities where there are no Initiates of formal traditions, or have left a tradition to experiment after a number of years.

It appears that the process of forsaking a tradition or category of Neo-Paganism to follow a more Eclectic expression of belief is also a sign of increasing psychological wholeness. As the individual becomes well-enough acquainted to see the good and bad aspects of a certain tradition, they often tailor that tradition's beliefs to suit his/her own.

This tailoring seems to mirror the process of integration and improvement psychologically. As the individual begins to trust his/her own judgment about what is best spiritually and religiously s/he moves from the formatted forms of religious expression to a more personal form. The Eclectic eschews titles and ranks, and most do not even adhere to Initiate systems of Neo-Paganism at all. The Eclectic is secure

enough and re-empowered enough to trust his/her religious expression as right and proper for him/herself, and is no longer afraid of worshipping in an "unacceptable" form¹²⁰.

6.4.4 Dysfunctional "Chickens", or Religio-Philosophical "Eggs"?

It is important when investigating where power is vested within this community and how use of magic works as metaphor for the re-empowerment of the individual, that the researcher not try to presuppose which came first. It would be a faulty assumption to state that Neo-Pagans are driven to this religion solely or even primarily, to heal inner wounds.

The Neo-Pagan appears to seek out "like" individuals. Most Neo-Pagans and Wiccans repeatedly assert that they never went through any form of "conversion" or "coercion" into this religion. Rather, they describe the phenomenon more like coming home. This was the number one most common description of the experience shared by most Canadian Neo-Pagans upon first meeting other Neo-Pagans, or reading the descriptions in books such as The Spiral Dance. As many of the individuals had no conscious memory of their familial abusive backgrounds when entering Neo-Paganism, it is something else that attracted them in the first place.

In "Group Processes in Cult Affiliation and Recruitment" (Halpern in Halpern, 1983) it is affirmed that an individual's affiliation in a cult may be the expression of individual psychopathology and/or familial dysfunction. Halpern then goes on to show

¹²⁰ Indeed, the forms of Neo-Paganism are so diverse that it is virtually certain that what one person believes will make another Neo-Pagan's teeth grind. The tension between the Wiccan Church of Canada and many Eclectics and God/dess Celebrants is indicative of this.

how destructive cults can cause regression in such individuals. Neo-Paganism appears to do just the opposite: allow the believer a completely non-leader oriented religion for creative religious expression, self empowerment, and emotional/social maturation.

Neo-Pagans share one thing in common which cuts through categories and tradition allegiances. They all agree that they are celebrating the sacredness of all living things: Nature, humans, and life wherever present (Eliade, 1976). Perhaps it is this sacrality of all existence which draws the individual to Neo-Paganism, for it underlines at the subconscious level the sacrality of the worshipper his/herself. A worldview which extends the sacred to all things including the self is very powerful for individuals who have been repeatedly socialized to doubt their self-esteem and accept as natural their position as powerless.

It appears that there is a relationship between the way in which power is vested and manifested within Neo-Pagan worship and that religion's ability to draw large numbers of adherents to it. The therapeutic value of how magic is used within Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism along with the concept of the religion as a family unit of choice appears to appeal to individuals from deprived or abusive upbringings.

It is perhaps not a surprise that many psychologists and social workers are increasingly using Neo-Pagan imagery and forms of meditation when working with abuse survivors in their practices¹²¹. Although most Neo-Pagans would not recognize

¹²¹ Various practitioners in Nova Scotia, B.C., Ontario and Quebec have indicated they are drawing on Goddess worship imagery for healing and self-empowerment models.

childhood dysfunction as a driving force in their choice of this religious system, they do admit that it is the sense of Will and magic which attracts many of them.

6.4.5 Portrait of a Canadian Neo-Pagan

Combining the information on loner status while growing up with abuse as a child and bookish tendencies, the portrait of a Canadian Neo-Pagan becomes clear. S/he is an adult who grew up marginalized from his/her family and/or peer group. Often sickly or with sickly parents, s/he retreated heavily into fantasy and reading as an escape and coping mechanism.

Growing up alienated from family and/or peer group, these individuals immerse themselves in literature of all kinds. As they reach their teens they finally find others with similar interests and discover hobbies which focus on their love of books (e.g. Science Fiction conventions) or their vibrant imaginations (e.g. Society for Creative Anachronism). They may also become involved in social activism (e.g. Peace Centres) or ecological activism (e.g. Greenpeace). Still others, growing into adulthood and feeling the pressures of sexual drives, find themselves 'coming out' as non-heterosexual and seeking peer groups through these sub-cultures. They participate with these new-found friends, and it is either through their copious readings or through these "golden age" activities that they discover Neo-Paganism as a religion.

The researcher, after having written this 'portrait', read it to four different Neo-Pagans who are not academics: two in Ottawa, one in Calgary, and one in New Brunswick. In all cases, the reaction was interesting. After finishing there would be a

long pause on the other end of the telephone, followed by an expression of surprise and incredulity. Each individual wanted to know how the researcher knew her 'whole life story'. Although not an empirical test of the validity of this 'portrait', these reactions of shock and wonderment appear to underline the precision of the description formulated by the author.

It is the Neo-Pagan belief that all things are equally sacred, coupled with the firm belief that magic is a manifestation of the individual's Will and can affect **anything**, which captivates the new participant. Unlike cults which often force adherents to act in ways specified by the charismatic leader (various articles in Halpern, 1983), Neo-Paganism vests all responsibility on the individual with the simple credo "An ye harm none, do what ye will"¹²². For perhaps the first time, the individual has control over external forces and is encouraged to continue exercising this control via Will and magical practice.

Neo-Paganism defies the traditional boundaries of what 'religion' is. It does not fit into the traditional cult/sect typology, and is far too non-institutionalized to be evaluated with most traditional scholarly tools. Neo-Paganism appears to be the melding of a new cosmology and axiology coupled with a vesting of power in the Self instead of in external religious institutions.

¹²² The Wiccan Rede.

Conclusion

This thesis has endeavoured to describe the Canadian Neo-Pagans as real people who are part of a viable religion in Canada, with sects and internal feuds similar to any other form of religion in the country. Neo-Paganism is extremely decentralized and non-institutionalized, which makes contacting and categorizing its adherents a difficult exercise.

Neo-Paganism does not fit well into the existing literature dealing with New Religious Movements as its various individual constituent covens and groups are not generally charisma cultic in form (Goldman, in Halpern, 1983). Similarly as these interviews indicated, the age bracket involved in Neo-Paganism is not limited to adolescents (numerous articles in Halpern, 1983). Unlike the results of many cults, Neo-Pagans appear to find increased self-esteem and creative thought processes emerging (Halpern, Olsson, in Halpern, 1983). New Religious Movement and cult/sect literature is valuable when investigating Neo-Paganism in Canada by the way in which Neo-Pagans do not fit into these frameworks.

Neo-Pagans are not identifiable by their colour, language, or other external features. They are active in their communities and often identify themselves as holding dual, non-conflicting religious identities (e.g. Anglican Witches, Jewish Witches). They work in all spheres of employment, with a high proportion in hard sciences such as geology and the computer related fields.

Canadian Neo-Pagans are highly literate and quite eloquent about their beliefs. For numerous reasons they grew up ostracized from their peer groups and self-identify heavily as having been loners through their childhood. Many of them still refer to themselves as loners and prefer this religious expression as one which does not demand dogmatic obedience to rules or a single Deity.

There appears to be a startling correlation between abuse during childhood and the choice of Neo-Paganism as an adult form of religious expression. Those Neo-Pagans who discussed the writer's theories with her indicated that their disempowered childhoods made them feel that Neo-Paganism the only logical choice for their religious expression. Where Christian values such as suffering, turning the other cheek, and passivity may serve the needs of Christian believers, they were seen to be in direct opposition to the forms of healing Neo-Pagans perceive they need in their lives.

Neo-Paganism is a religion of self-empowerment. For Neo-Pagans in Canada magic is a metaphor for change rather than a specific group of actions performed to achieve specific goals¹²³. Communities of Witches and Neo-Pagans in Canada practice hands on healing methods and peer-counselling to grow beyond their heritages into individuals concerned with the well-being of themselves, those around them, and the world in general.

¹²³ Gmelsch, in Lehmann and Myers (1989) shows how baseball players practice superstitious types of magic in modern society. Some Neo-Pagans use this same cause and effect rationale to practice sympathetic magic such as candle spells or cord magic, but most use magic as a metaphoric language which enables them to trust their own decisions on certain issues.

In a discussion of this research, the author tentatively suggested that there are at least 10,000 Neo-Pagans in Canada. Professor Naomi Goldenberg of the University of Ottawa expressed the opinion that this figure is probably still too low, and the author agrees. Having outlined many of the trust and fear factors at play in contacting Neo-Pagans in Canada, it is probably accurate to extrapolate the presence of close to 15,000 Neo-Pagans of various traditions across Canada.

7.1 Issues for Further Study

Neo-Pagan belief and structure appears to challenge many of the traditional notions on what a religion is, or must contain. This religion where all initiates are equally priesthood and congregation flies in the face of most Western religious structure. The use of magic as metaphor and as religious practice is familiar in some venues (e.g. the priest in a Catholic mass blessing a candle), yet it is radical in its no-nonsense, demystified treatment of magical practice.

The broad scope of Neo-Pagan practice and its non-exclusive worldview is unique when compared to most world religions. The Neo-Pagan opposition to religion as standing for hierarchy and institutionalized forms of belief keeps it forever striving to stay different from the organized Western religions. And its view of itself as being an alternative to Western beliefs and values underscores a growing disillusionment with Church and Synagogue becoming increasingly obvious in the public at large.

Neo-Paganism is a vibrant growing family of religions in Canada. Its stress on empowering the individual over the hierarchy, vesting power in all things equally, and accepting variants and anomalies as equally valid are attributes of this religion which are unique in Western religions.

Scholars looking at future patterns in religious growth have been expressing trends which appear in Neo-Paganism and deserve further study. Without question, Neo-Pagans are solitary individuals, often religiously and personally. This individual worship question is being highlighted by many researchers as a future trend in religions (Albas and Albas, 1989; Bibby, 1987; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985).

As well, the Neo-Pagan trend towards self-identifying with more than one religion deserves further study (Bird and Reimer, 1976). Neo-Pagans indicate they try to be tolerant of other individuals' beliefs even if they themselves do not approve of them, and Neo-Pagans are quite adamant that they do not hold "The One Right and True Path" in religion. They merely state that Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft is the best path for them. It is this non exclusivist nature which makes Neo-Pagans reticent about proselytizing.

The worldview of Neo-Pagans vests Divine power in all things (Schultz and Lavenda, 1990), thereby making all things sacred. This tendency to see soul in animals and a nebulous life-force in trees, rocks, and such, lends itself to viewing all aspects of the world as sacred and equally valuable (Eliade, 1976; Ben-Yehuda, 1986). Investigations into the differences between the Christian view of Divine and sacred versus the Neo-Pagan view could lead to some valuable research.

The Neo-Pagan use of magic as a therapeutic metaphor rather than as actual causal relationship could lead to extremely valuable work on techniques for healing abuse survivors and others. Magical thinking articles often deal with cultures outside of North America or adhere to the Evans-Pritchard theory of magic (Jarvie and Agassi, 1967; Shotwell, 1910), and investigation into North Americans practising magic as a religious form of expression as well as a metaphor would be valuable (Gmelsch, in Lehmann and Myers, 1989; Lewis, 1963; Luhrmann, 1989).

Neo-Pagans have appeared to be on the vanguard of many social changes, something newer literature is highlighting as a feature of many New Religious Movements (Ben-Yehuda, 1985; Cooper, 1971; Hannigan, 1990; Nelson, 1984; Tiryakian in Klausner, 1967). As values such as viewing all life as sacred are formulated and codified within Neo-Pagan thought, it would be interesting to see whether or not the cultural trends begin to seep into the community at large.

Finally there is a need for more investigation into Neo-Pagan symbology. The internalization of concepts such as God and Goddess, Divinity as Immanent, and magic as metaphor would be interesting areas of study. Luhrmann (1989) investigates the British form of magical thought in what she calls "magician" groups, and remarks that there has been little work done on the therapeutic value of magic¹²⁴. It appears that both religion and psychology could spend some time investigating how Neo-Pagans

¹²⁴ Therapy seems to work when someone externalizes, or labels, some internal feeling and then is able to transform it, though how and why that happens seems quite unclear. (Luhrmann, 1989, pg. 249)

transform their fears, angers, and strong emotions into self-empowerment through magic as metaphor and religious practice.

It is the hope of this author that this body of research represents a start and not a finish: a start to the recognition of a group of religions in Canada as valid, and a demystifying of Canadian Witches and Neo-Pagans so that they may eventually worship in their chosen form without living in constant fear.

Appendix 1

TABLE 1

Highest Level of Schooling (Derived from 1981 Canadian Census)

(identified group)	NATIONAL	NP	A	RC	UC	J
NO H.S. DIPLOMA	27%	2%	51%	45%	54%	30%
SOME TECH/COLLEGE	6%	8%	7%	11%	7%	8%
TECH/COLLEGE DIPLOMA	14%	18%	6%	8%	6%	5%
SOME UNIV NO DEGREE	4%	25%	12%	7%	12%	19%
B.A. OR HIGHER	8%	42%	6%	5%	6%	21%

NOTES:

1) NP - Neo-Pagan; A - Anglican; RC - Roman Catholic; UC - United Church of Canada; J - Jewish. NP - Neo-Pagan; Neo-Pagan figures are extrapolated from the results of the field interviews.

2) Neo-Pagans working on graduate level degrees, either completed or in progress (these figures are included in the B.A. or Higher category): Masters = 12%, Ph.D = 8%.

3) SASKATCHEWAN Neo-Pagan Statistics: 6 of 7 completed H.S.; 3 took some sort of post high school education. One completed B.A. This shows the lower than average incidence of post-high school schooling in the Saskatchewan Neo-Pagan community. Participants blame this on the very poor financial condition of the province.

Appendix 2

TABLE 2

Religion/Age Correlation (Derived from 1981 Census)

(AGE)	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45+
NEO-PAGAN	13%	33%	16%	26%	10%
RC	9%	9%	8%	12%	23%
UNITED	7%	8%	8%	12%	33%

NOTES:

1) RC = Roman Catholic; United = United Church of Canada

2) Figures for Neo-Pagans extrapolated from 1991 field interviews.

Appendix 3

Pagan and Wiccan Canadian Newsletters

Aladrisa's Cauldron, Breslau, Ontario
All My Relations, Hazelton, B.C.
Bard's Circle, (c/o prison chaplan) Campbellford, Ontario
Dawn Wind Circle, Calgary, Alberta
Deosil, Calgary, Alberta
Hecate's Loom, Victoria, B.C.
HexAPA, Calgary, Alberta
Merry Meet, Windsor, Ontario
Messenger, Ottawa, Ontario
Minstrel, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Open Circle, Ottawa, Ontario (Defunct)
Pagans For Peace Newsletter, N. Vancouver, B.C.
The Rag, Ganges, B.C. (rumoured to be defunct as of 1992)
Rags to Witches, Toronto, Ont. (Defunct)
Songs of the Dayshift Foreman: Journal of a Rainforest Witch, Kananaskis, Alberta
Trumpeter, Vancouver B.C. (some Ecopagan articles)
Wiccan Candle, Toronto, Ontario
Wiccan Information Newsletter, Vancouver, B.C.

N.B. One informant who publishes a newsletter has indicated there are in fact approximately ten additional newsletters available in Canada. The researcher was unable to obtain copies to peruse for this thesis.

Appendix 4

Public and Semi-Public Pagan Organizations in Canada**British Columbia:**

Temple of the Lady (Victoria)
 Holly and Oak Pagan Discussion Group (Univ. of Victoria)
 Witchcamp/Reclaiming (Vancouver)
 Pagans for Peace (Vancouver area)
 Circle of Amergin/Aquarian Tabernacle Church (Vancouver)

Alberta:

Covenant of Gaia: Church of Alberta (Calgary)
 Abbey of Thelema (Edmonton)

Saskatchewan:

none known of

Manitoba:

Prairie Pagan People's Community (Winnipeg)

Ontario:

Wiccan Church of Canada (Toronto, Ontario, Hamilton, Waterloo)
 Pagans for Peace (Toronto branch)
 Toronto Temple of the Wiccan Grove (Toronto)
 Goddess Discussion Group (York University, Toronto)
 Meet and Greet (Ottawa)
 Ottawa Valley Pagan Discussion Group (Ottawa)

Quebec:

Contacts may be made through Metamorphosis Bookstore or Melange Magique Store in Montreal

Atlantic Canada:

A discussion group exists in the Halifax/Dartmouth area, but specific details are unclear as to public access; a Post Office Box is available.

For other provinces in Atlantic Canada, radical bookstores and women's bookstores have been pointed to as local contact spots.

Appendix 5

A Comparison Between Christianity and Wicca

<u>Christianity</u>	<u>Wicca</u>
Monotheistic (one God)	Duotheistic (Goddess/God)
Patriarchal/Paternalistic	Ranges from equality between sexes to matriarchal/maternalistic
Tendency towards exclusivism: "Only one true faith"	Recognizes pluralism: all faiths recognized
Congregational: clergy and congregation separate	Initiatory: all are a part of the priesthood
No size restrictions on congregations	Small groups (covens) -- usually 3 - 13 people, though may be larger
Dualistic: Divinity separate from everyday world	Monistic: Divinity inseparable from everyday world
Belief in Resurrection	Belief in Reincarnation most common
Heaven: destination of Christian souls	Summerland: resting place between incarnations
Baptism	Initiation
Hell	no equivalent
Satan	no equivalent
Original Sin	no equivalent
Evangelism	no equivalent
Redemption/Atonement/Confession	Karma/3-Fold Law (all actions, for good or ill, are returned threefold)

Christening	Wiccanning
Hierarchical/Authoritarian	No hierarchy/autonomous
Bible (scripture)	no equivalent
no equivalent	Book of Shadows
Sabbaths based on Biblical and Christian historical events	Seasonal Sabbaths and Lunar Esbats
Marriage	Handfasting
Prophets/Saints/Messiah	no equivalent
Generally daylight worship	Generally nocturnal worship (esbats)
Churches/Temples - no size	Circles cast where convenient, usually no formal temple
Ten Commandments	Wiccan Rede: "An it harm none, do what thou wilt", plus the Ordains.
Psychic phenomenon generally discouraged except for "miracles" and transubstantiation	Psychic abilities encouraged (magick)

Kerr Cuhulain, Law Enforcement Guide to Wicca. Vancouver: Wiccan Information Network, 1991. (Revised and reprinted 1992, Horned Owl Publications, Victoria, B.C.)

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Appendix 6

Glossary of Neo-Pagan Terms

ATHAME: Considered the one basic tool of every Witch, regardless of Tradition. It can be anything from a plain kitchen-knife to an ornate dagger of wood, steel, crystal, whatever the owner feels akin to. It is used for CEREMONIAL purposes only (such as outlining the perimeter of the Circle) and is usually never used to cut anything. Usually has a black handle, often with 'secret' symbols etched on the blade.

BOOK (OR DISK) OF SHADOWS: The sum total of secret lore and Rituals from a Tradition, which is to be passed down from Initiate to Initiate by hand-copying. The term was coined by Gerald Gardiner (who claimed a long lineage for the term), according to Doreen Valiente. These days the photocopier seems to be taking over from the pen and ink, and computer 'disks' of shadows have outmoded many paper books completely. A Witch keeps his/her personal records, recipes, etc. in a Grimoire (like a Science student's lab book).

CIRCLE: 1) a magically delineated space which creates a psychological change in the worshipper from the daily flow of thought to the spiritual, usually outlined either by gesture with the Athame or else with a marking such as chalk dust, on the floor of the area to be used. 2) synonym for Coven, or larger gathering of Wiccans 3) as a verb: to actively do magic within a Circle (1) e.g. "We Circled with Edwina and Paul last night".

DEGREE(S): Levels of Initiation, knowledge, and or watermarks of experience. Most British-style Traditions have some sort of Degree system. Gerald Gardiner seems to have modelled much of his Degree system on that of the Rosicrucians and the Masons. Non-hierarchical groups have criticized the degree-system as perpetuating the patriarchal goal-oriented mentality of organized religion within Wicca. Most Traditions will only allow an Initiate of some Degree to act as Priest/ess in a Circle.

ESBAT: Similar to Sabbats, these are the Full Moon evenings. These are usually celebrated either solo, or within one's own Circle or Coven. More localized, and less thematically-related work is done on these. Based on (a) the promise of God that women would have the Rosh Chodesh as their own (Full Moon) for many feminist groups, and (b) a statement in The Gospel of Aradia (a gypsy tale of the Goddess Aradia used as a basis of modern Wicca) from the Goddess saying that all those who wished her help should meet once a month, "And better it be if the Moon were full...".

FOUR ELEMENTS: Usually the four cardinal points of the compass, these are also considered powers of nature and part of the composition of all living things. Sometimes referred to anthropomorphically as "the Guardians of the Watchtowers of the (direction)".

HIGH PRIEST: Comparable to High Priestess for a male, except that in most Wiccan and Neo-Pagan Traditions, the High Priestess has the final say in all matters. Being a Goddess-worship Religion, the female is vested with final power over disagreements.

HIGH PRIESTESS: Specifically, the female Initiate running a given ritual for a Coven or Circle. More generally, whoever is running a ritual, whether Initiated or not. Dianic Covens rotate the position of High Priestess through their membership: most British Traditions have only one High Priestess until she moves on and/or resigns, or dies. Considered a position of honour, and one of Elder of the group.

INITIATION: The Rite of Passage for a Witch. In some Traditions this is merely a 'hello - glad you're one of us', while for others, it is some sort of passage into the Select Few (a gain in power and status within the group). In most British-oriented Neo-Pagan groups, Initiation allows the individual to work as his/her own Priest/ess. Most British-oriented Traditions which have Initiatory experiences offer three degrees. No non-Initiate is allowed to participate in any level of Initiation - this seems to be a virtually-universal rule.

MORALS, ETHICS (IN A WICCAN CONTEXT): "An'ye harm none, do what ye wilt." Adage of indeterminate age (partially traceable to Aleister Crowley who stated "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law") used by virtually all Wiccans and Neo-Pagans. Wicca does not deal in black and white (as in "black magic" and "white magic"), but rather, in shades of grey. It is believed that all Initiates are responsible to themselves and their Gods, and as such need little or no guidance on what is "right". This runs strongly contrary to the tenets of Christianity and Judaism, both based on strong foundations of justice and law.

NEO-PAGAN: those people who self-identify with some sort of new or re-created form of Witchcraft and/or Polytheism. Neo-Pagans do NOT consider Buddhists, Hindus, Native American Traditions, to be Neo-Pagans. Pagan comes from the Greek and means, "country-dweller" (with the connotations of uncouth and uncivilized).

PENTACLE: A five-pointed, interlaced star. Numerous meanings have been ascribed to this symbol, and there seems to be no fixed start-date as to when it became identified with Witches and/or Satanists. Some people maintain the one-point up Pentacle is a "good witch" and the two-point up (inverted pentacle) is a Satanist. In actuality, until recently the 'inverted pentacle' was used to designate a certain level of Wiccan Initiation. It is still used as such in Britain, where Satanism fever is not as rampant as in Canada and the U.S.A. The pentacle is used for many things: it is scribed on the athame, it is worn as jewellery (ring, necklace), it is etched on a plate upon which ritual cakes may be placed...etc. It is the symbol of Spirit or Ether, (the 'fifth' element of Witches, after Earth, Air, Fire, and Water).

PRIESTHOOD: In most British-Traditions, all Initiates. Most Wiccans believe that there is no need for the difference between Priesthood and Laity -- all Wiccans are their own Priesthood.

SABBAT: One of eight holy days of the Wiccan year: corresponding to the Solstices, Equinoxes, and four mid-point holidays (Beltain, or May Day, and Samhain, or Hallowe'en, are the two best-known to non-Wiccans). They are Holy Days and not Holidays, and many Wiccans are incensed at the difficulty they encounter getting paid religious time for observance of their religious days. The Sabbats are close to universal to all neo-pagans and Wiccans.

SATAN: In Wiccan terms, a non-entity. Wiccans and Neo-Pagans strongly hold that Satan is the opposite of Christ, and that a religion which does not believe in Christ as supreme cannot therefore believe in Satan as the supreme evil. Wiccans are NOT Satanists.

SKYCLAD: A quaint euphemism for naked. Most of the very-closed or secretive British-Traditional groups usually work skyclad, citing the freer flow of energies, and again, a statement from the Gospel of Aradia indicating that to show that her adherents are truly free they would work unencumbered in any way - naked.

TRADITION: Similar to a sect, these are communities of Wiccans who adhere to a certain dogma (or lack thereof in some cases). The major Traditions from Britain are Gardnerian and Alexandrian. In the U.S.A. new Traditions have emerged, such as Reclaiming (based on the writings of Witch/Activist Starhawk) and Dianic. This is similar to the differences between different Protestant branches in Christianity.

WARLOCK: NOT a male Witch: warlock meant something akin to quisling' did in the Second World War. It is NOT used by Neo-Pagans and Wiccans. "Warlock is derived from the Saxon 'waer loga' which means 'traitor' or 'oath breaker'." (Cuhulain, 1992)

WICCAN: A gentler, and less-threatening to outsiders, term for Witch. It is said to either come from the anglo-saxon word "wic", as in to bend, or "wicce", meaning wisdom or wise. Wiccans use this word often to delineate the difference to them between a Witch (practitioner of the religion) and a religious adherent to the system (Wiccan). A Wiccan need not be an Initiate of any Tradition.

WITCH: Loosely, anyone who self-identifies as one. Used within the feminist movement as part of the reclaiming of the power of women, used within the Wiccan system as the specific title of an Initiate (Gerald Gardiner used the phrase, "Priestess and Witch", or "Priestess and Witch-Queen" in his rituals). Some Witches are Wiccan, others are not; some Witches are male, some are not.

Appendix 7

SURVEY: WICCANS, GODDESS WORSHIPPERS, AND NEO-PAGANS IN CANADA

Shelley Rabinovitch, Carleton University

PLEASE NOTE: THESE QUESTIONS ARE OPTIONAL. THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT FOR YOU TO ANSWER THEM, BUT THEY ARE STRUCTURED TO ASCERTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT WICCANS AND NEO-PAGANS IN CANADA. YOU MAY USE YOUR "CRAFT NAME" OR A PSEUDONYM INSTEAD OF YOUR MUNDANE NAME. ALL ANSWERS WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. SKIP ANY QUESTIONS WHICH ARE NOT APPLICABLE TO YOU, AND SUBSTITUTE "PAGAN" FOR "WICCAN" IF THIS IS A BETTER DESCRIPTION OF YOUR BELIEFS.

You and Your Family of Origin:

Name (as you prefer to use here)

Age

Sex

Sexual Orientation

Marital History

If applicable: does your spouse or Significant Other know of your religious beliefs? (If not, why?)

Your occupation

How many children in your family, and where are you placed?

What level formal of formal education have you finished?

Years self-identified in Wicca/Paganism/Craft

Did you grow up urban? Rural?

Did you grow up in Canada? If not, where?

Did your family move frequently when you were younger?

Do you discuss your religion with others?

What sorts of books did you read when you were growing up?

Did you ever read through a complete dictionary or encyclopedia while growing up (cover to cover)?

Current domicile (e.g. alone, with parents, with spouse...)

Ethnicity of your family?

Religion of Origin?

Your parents: Living? Dead? Married? Separated? (etc.)

What was their level of formal education?

What were their occupations?

Spiritual/Religious Questions:

- Do you call yourself a witch?
- Do you call yourself Wiccan?
- Do you call yourself Pagan or Neo-Pagan?
- Do you "work" with the Goddess? With the God?
- What do Goddess and God mean to you?
- Do you have a Patron/ess? A specific Pantheon you work in? Who or what are they?
- Consider the terms "religion", "path", and "spirituality". In the light of these words, is W/P a religion to you? Why or why not?
- Do you do spellworkings: For yourself? For others? What would prompt you to do a spell?
- Do you use these techniques in spellwork: cord; candle; poppets; visualizations; mirror box; crystals; oils; stones; others (how)?
- Do you feel the word "witch" has negative connotations?
- IN YOUR OWN WORDS, please give me short definitions of these terms:
Witch; Wiccan; Pagan; Magician; New Age; Gardnerian; Alexandrian; Dianic; Faerie; Eclectic; Shaman
- Do you feel secrecy is integral to W/P? Why or why not?
- What sort of relationship do you have with the Goddess and/or God? Please try to give a description (such as lover of, friend of, student of...etc.)
- Have you ever experienced a clinical death, or near-death, experience?

Tradition/Group Information:

- Tradition you follow (if any)?
- Initiated to ____ level (if any) in which Tradition(s)?
- Do you primarily work solitary?
- How many people in the group(s) you work with?
- IF initiated: Self ____ Group ____
- Did you experience an immediate change after initiation? If so, can you describe it?
- Did you experience a profound change in yourself some time AFTER the initiation which you attribute to the initiation?
- How did you view W/P when you first joined? And now?
- Do you have strong feelings about the religion of your birth? If so, why?
- Does your group have things considered "oath bound"? Of what GENERAL type (do not betray Oath) are these? Ritual forms? Initiatory information? Recipes for oils, etc.? Other?
- Does your coven share "oathbound" information between Covens/Groups but NOT to outsiders (Cowans)?
- Does your group proselytise or recruit new members?
- Does your group encourage new members? Do they make it hard to join?

Terminology Definitions:

Which of these do you use: sacred space; special robes; circle; skyclad; visualization; craft name; special jewellery; anointing oil(s); standard ritual text/format; serious attitude; dancing; music; chanting; instruments (incl. drums); cone of power; improvisation/spontaneity; mirth and joy; smudging; guided meditations; athame (ritual knife); ritual tools (specify); feasting; wine blessings; elemental representations; four quarters; ANY OTHERS WHICH SHOULD BE IN THIS LIST?

Group Identification:

Are you, or have you ever been, active in any of these groups (not necessarily a PAID member):

Society for Creative Anachronism; Star Trek fandom; Science Fiction fandom; Wargaming; Gun Club; Computer hobbyist; Electronic Bulletin Boards; Feminism; 12-step Program (e.g. A.A.); Gay/Lesbian Community; Bikers; Ecologist/Environmental Activism; Comic Book Fandom; Dr. Who fandom; Fantasy Role Playing Games; Live-Action Playing Games; Splat-gun Club; Mensa; Academia (as student or professor); Volunteer (specify such as Red Cross, Peace Centre, etc.); Other organized clubs (Lions, Kiwanis, Masons, etc.); Political affiliation (describe).

Values:

Please rate these from very important to you to not important at all:

Religion/Spiritual Path; Career; Hobbies; Family; Friends; Community; Ecology.

Is there something very important to you which is not on this list?

Do you feel W/P should be politically, socially, ecologically active? (Or should religion and community be kept separate?

Do you follow a tenet related to the Three Fold Law?

What does, "An ye harm none, do what ye will" mean to you?

Do you believe in karma?

Is reincarnation part of your beliefs?

In a W/P context, does a teacher have a responsibility to her/his student? Define.

If yes, in what form(s)?

Can a person learn W/P via correspondence? From a book? Only in person? Some blend of these?

Would you share your beliefs with: lover(s); parent(s); child(ren); best friend(s); classmates; office co-workers; general public.

Would you attend (and if not, why not):

A public ritual; a ritual between two groups; a one-coven ritual; a P/W Festival; same sex ritual; mixed sex ritual

Do you need a Priest/ess to serve as "middle man" between yourself and the Deities? Do you have a relationship with the Gods that you would call direct?

Do you feel W/P should be looking for broader legal acceptance in the general community? Should it be seeking external legitimacy as a religion (e.g. the right to marry and bury adherents, tax exempt status, visitational rights in prison, etc.)?

Do you feel moved to defend your beliefs to outsiders when challenged?

Do you find the W/P community also the circle of acquaintance from which you obtain relationships (e.g. lovers)?

What do you feel YOU are doing in YOUR personal spiritual path?

What does the term "validity" evoke in you, such as in the statement: "My tradition (or lineage) is more valid than yours"? Elaborate.

Books:

Please indicate whether you own any of these books or would wish to buy them.

Drawing Down the Moon; Spiral Dance; Witches Bible; Witchcraft for Today (Gardner); Meaning of Witchcraft (Gardner); Holy Book of Women's Mysteries; Aradia: Or the Gospel of the Witches; ABC's of Witchcraft (Valiente); Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner (Cunningham); Mastering Witchcraft (Huson); Positive Magic (Weinstein)

Delicate Question Department: Please do not feel obligated to answer these questions. Your help if you choose to do so, will aid my research greatly.

Would you describe your childhood as "typical" (as in 1950's Beaver Cleaver type)? Why or why not?

Were you at any time: a ward of the province/state; in a group home; sent to boarding school; raised in foster homes; in a juvenile detention centre; raised by relatives other than your biological parents?

Was either of your parents (or guardians) abusive:

Physically?

Emotionally?

Sexually?

Was either parent or guardian an alcoholic? Drug addict (incl. prescriptions)?

Were you ever a victim of child sexual abuse? Please relate incidents if you feel comfortable talking about them. For this discussion, this includes touching genitals, sodomy, oral sex, an adult exposing themselves to you, vaginal sex -

whether done "as a game" or not, and whether or not you feel it had any effect on you as an adult.

Were you ever a victim of incest? (Herein defined as including either parent, grandparents, aunts or uncles, cousins or siblings.)

Did this occur: once, occasionally, frequently? How old were you?

How did the pattern finally get halted (I moved, the perpetrator was caught, died, etc.)?

As an adult, were you ever sexually assaulted? An attempted assault victim? Battered by a spouse or lover? Had your life threatened in a manner which you believed was ABSOLUTELY serious?

Have you sought, or received, any counselling at all for the effects of these experiences? (e.g. rape crisis centre, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, counsellor).

Do you feel your parents had a profound effect on "who you are"? Please elaborate.

Did you consider yourself to be a loner while growing up? And now?

Did you explore or try other religious groups, sects, or cults before choosing the Path you now follow?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP AND PARTICIPATION!!

Queries and replies may be sent to:

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Appendix 8

Diagram of Neo-Pagan Categories in Canada

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