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NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN AMERICAN WICCA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a historical sketch and overview of aspects of contemporary American Paganism and Wicca as 'Nature religions'. Wicca's historical roots in Britain are explored as is the cultural milieux surrounding the American environmentalist movement, and its fundamental influences on the development of American Wicca and contemporary Paganism. Themes of nature will be surveyed with respect to their increasing importance within Wicca since its arrival in America in the early 1960s, as well as the rapidly growing segments of these Pagan communities that are explicitly concerned with environmental and ecological issues.

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I – INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a historical sketch and overview of the 'Nature religion' aspects of American Wicca and contemporary Paganism. The historical roots of Wicca in Britain will be surveyed to provide an understanding of the foundation upon which American Wicca and contemporary Paganism operate and expand. Many political, philosophical, literary, and social movements and ideas will be investigated in relation to the important environmental themes that have influenced the development of American Wicca and Paganism. The growth of American Wicca will then be outlined while themes of 'Nature' – as sacred – and the natural world, as well as the ways that they are understood and utilized by Wiccans and contemporary Pagans, are explored. This work examines Wiccan understandings of 'Nature' (as sacred) and 'nature' (the natural world, the environment – as found with and without human intervention, the agricultural realm, the earth as it has evolved presently, the universe, etc. - all as inhabited by living, growing things and organic materials) and 'natural' (the ways the universe works, non-intervention by humans, the patterns and cycles of the universe, produced in or existing in, or with, nature, not artificial, etc.) and the ways that these ideas have developed over the 50-year documented history of the religion. Finally, current trends and issues regarding the development of the American Wiccan views about the natural world will be reviewed.

The essence of this work is a historical summary of a particular religious genre (Wicca and contemporary Paganism in America) regarding a particular theme

(environmentalism and nature). This topic was chosen because of its uniqueness: there is little scholarship about the development of Wicca in America, and even less about Wicca's relationship to America's rich history of environmental thought, even though there is a rapidly growing segment of the Wiccan and contemporary Pagan population that is explicitly concerned with environmental issues. I have studied the relevant topics of Wiccan history, Pagan environmentalism, American environmental history, and other important scholarship about contemporary Paganism and Wicca, and have sought to construct the available evidence in a way that has not previously been accomplished. I have worked to weave together many of the pertinent strands of the American historical complex to provide an explicit contextual linking of the rise of contemporary Paganism and Wicca and its elected affinity with the environmentalist movement; focusing on particular nature-related features of American Wicca and Paganism. These aspects have their roots in the strong and growing environmental focus that America has had since the days of Emerson and Thoreau.

Utilizing my research, interviews fully sanctioned by the University of Tennessee Research Compliance Office, and the knowledge that I have gained through studying American Wicca and contemporary Paganism in its various forms for many years, I will report my findings about what a growing number of Wiccans believe, practice, and aspire to actualize in their lives. Working to create a 'thick description' based on a multi-disciplinary approach, this work will address what have become the central foci in many Pagans' religious and social lives (which are not necessarily separate). The

model of historical exploration that I am emulating is that of Ronald Hutton in *The Triumph of the Moon*, who explores many different cultural phenomena present in Britain that led to the rise of contemporary Paganism and Witchcraft there. The second and third chapters of this work rely heavily on his descriptive work.

I will address a few facets of the Romantic Movement from which Wicca drew some of its ideas, as well as a variety of the social aspects of American environmentalism, conservationism, the counter-culture of the 1960s, and second-wave feminism that initially worked individually to build an ideology wherein environmentalism became the primary agenda for growing numbers of people. An amalgamation of the major thoughts of these movements by particular Pagan and Wiccan individuals and groups led to the development of large new contemporary Wiccan and Pagan factions that emphasize environmental concerns.

It must be noted that neither all Wiccans, nor all contemporary Pagans, believe that environmentalism is, or should be, the central focus of their religion. Furthermore, not all members of these groups hold any, or all, of the beliefs and practices that are explained throughout this thesis as penultimate, or even worthy of discussion. However, I have chosen to address this topic because a large and growing number of Wiccans and Pagans *do* espouse these eco-centric beliefs and *are involved in* environmental activism. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find statistical surveys or demographic studies that connect Wiccans to their beliefs about the natural world.

My assumptions about the relevance of this topic are due, in part, to the large number of Pagan journals and articles that address earth-related themes. *Green Egg*, *PanGaia*, *SageWoman*, *Circle Network News*, and *Nature Spirituality Quarterly* are a few of the many Pagan journals that routinely have articles about getting back to nature, attuning the self to nature, working with nature, the need to heal the earth, opportunities for environmental activism, and related themes. Additionally, many scholars from the Nature Religion Scholars Network have written relevant articles addressing historical, philosophical, and theoretical issues about 'Nature religions' and their usage of the terms 'Nature', 'Pagan', and the like. There has also been some academic work that has surveyed Pagan environmental beliefs, and although numerical results have not been reported, these scholars have reported a strong emphasis on 'Nature' among those Pagans and Wiccans that they interviewed. There are also non-scholarly texts, such as *People of the Earth: The New Pagans Speak Out*, that have interviews with Pagans and Wiccans who do discuss the nature-oriented spirituality of Wicca; and although few 'how-to' beginner books focus on this aspect, most books for novices do provide a discussion of the importance of nature, and occasionally environmentalism, that creates an opportunity for further exploration.

There is much scholarly debate about many of the terms and ideas discussed herein. Since the purpose of this work is historical, I will not take part in these continuous theoretical discussions. I will, however, mention the essential aspects of the deliberations of which I am aware to further contextualize my work. At this point,

clarification of some of the more important terms that will be utilized throughout this work is needed.

CONTEMPORARY PAGANISM

Contemporary Paganism (often referred to as Neo-Paganism in America) is commonly described as having nature-oriented, humanistic, ecologically aware, and creativity-oriented beliefs that are based upon earlier Earth-centered polytheistic religious systems of pre-Christian peoples with the inappropriately cruel and violent aspects edited out. The contemporary Paganism movement, *per se*, is thought to have begun in the 1950s in England with Gardner's writings about Wicca, even though there were other Pagan groups in existence before that time. Historically meaning 'country dweller', the term 'pagan' often refers to non-Christian/Jewish/Muslim people, especially of the ancient religions of Greece and Rome. 'Contemporary Pagan' is the term that will be used to identify twentieth (and twenty-first) century adherents of religious traditions that have either been recreated based on anthropological, historical, literary, and archaeological evidence, or created anew based on contemporary issues with occasional reference to historical evidence. Most scholars now agree that Gerald Gardner's Wicca falls into this later category. Contemporary Paganism is often referred to as a 'Nature religion' (a term to be discussed shortly) that is polytheistic and pantheistic. (c.f. Margot Adler, 1979; Graham Harvey, 1997) Paganism, it should be stressed, is a family of traditions, not a single religion. There are many religious

groups with widely varying beliefs and practices that fall under the contemporary Paganism rubric. Yet, practitioners identify themselves as 'Pagans', so the term can refer to both the family of religious practices, as well as a singular, distinctive religious tradition.

WICCA

Wicca, a part of the whole of the contemporary Paganism movement, is a nature-oriented religion based on life affirmation and perpetuation of personal spiritual growth through understanding both the immanence and transcendence of the Divine, of which Nature is a manifestation – in its male and female aspects – as well as the sacredness of the universe through attunement to its natural rhythms, cycles, and interconnections. There is considerable overlap between contemporary Paganism and Wicca, due to the fact that most contemporary Pagans, as will be noted in a subsequent chapter, base their beliefs and practices on what they know of Gardner's Wicca. Wicca is a 'Nature religion', but as Vivianne Crowley points out, "it is not solely a nature religion. It is also a mystery religion, with an emphasis on personal transformation. For me its sacred center is the cosmos, of which the natural world of our particular planet is one part." (Crowley, personal correspondence, Feb 13, 2001) Joanne Pearson summarizes Wicca's history:

> Wicca emerged in Britain in the 1950s as a highly ritualistic, nature venerating, polytheistic, magical and religious system, operating within a predominantly Western framework. It arose from the cultural impulses of the fin de siecle, in

> particular from the occult revival of the 1880s onwards. Various threads were gradually gathered together and in the 1940s woven into Wicca by Gerald Gardner. By the mid-1950s, Wicca had become relatively popular due to Gardner's love of publicity which drew the religion to the attention of the public, and in the early 1960s it was imported to North America. (Pearson, 2000, Internet article)

As with contemporary Paganism, there are a large number of groups that call themselves Wiccan. Although Wicca has been equated with the term witchcraft, Wicca generally refers to the religion and witchcraft refers to a set of practices not predicated on religious beliefs. In describing Gardner's Wicca and other groups, I will mention only a few of the more high-profile groups and leaders since there are a plethora of active groups in the United States with a variety of beliefs and practices.

NATURE

Perhaps one of the hardest words to define for the purposes of this paper is the term 'nature', which has seen many permutations in its definition throughout history. These classifications range from identification with the material world to agricultural landscapes, from a source of healing and wholeness to a source of unpredictable destruction, and from wilderness that must not be invaded to that which must be overcome for survival. The many associations and definitions of 'nature' are ambiguous, varied, and often contradictory. Each subsequent chapter will provide the relevant definition of the term as it was used during the historical period being discussed.

This paper relies not on theoretical constructs to discuss nature, although theoretical essays abound (c.f., Adrian Ivakhiv; Peter Beyer; Chas Clifton), but upon the ambiguous character of the term to allow Wiccans and Pagans themselves to define it in each use. 'Nature' is a social construct that is shaped by many factors, including ideas about the divine, gender, and power, for instance. (c.f. Beyer, p.11) Contemporary Pagans and Wiccans in America have utilized different definitions of 'nature' to develop an increasing repertoire of correspondences with which they relate to 'nature'. Among Pagans, 'nature' is beginning to become a more localized term referring to specific areas and the life residing in those particular terrains, as well as becoming a term signifying an ambiguous idea whose definition is difficult to articulate. Many people know what they mean by the term, yet are unable to define it adequately. 'Nature' whether localized, referring to the earth, or to the cosmos, is constantly changing, and therefore very difficult to essentialize. Furthermore, as many scholars have noted (c.f., White; Ivakhiv), with atmospheric pollution worsening it is increasingly difficult to find any area not affected by human intervention. In this way, 'nature' as a construct is becoming more of an ideal, than a lived reality.

According to Marion Bowman, 'Nature' is often a defining characteristic of contemporary Pagan beliefs: "Nature is a powerful image and rallying point for pagans and, claims [Graham] Harvey, 'Nature itself is formative of the character of Paganism' (1997:188). For some, nature religion and paganism are synonymous." (Bowman, 2000, Internet article; c.f. Harvey & Hardman, eds, 1995; Harvey, 1997;

Pearson, et al., 1998b) Bowman does, however, question the emphasis that some scholars place on Nature's centrality for all Pagans and Wiccans. This work will discuss many facets of the beliefs about 'Nature' for those groups who do understand 'Nature' as the sacred center of their religion.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 'Nature' AND 'nature'

There are two distinct responses that people have to 'nature': one understands 'nature' as the everyday realm, the other views 'Nature' as sacred. Wiccans and Pagans also have different understandings of 'nature'; yet, for this work, I will be referring to those practitioners who acknowledge 'Nature' as sacred, as the realm of immanent Deity, and as a source of divine inspiration. On the other hand, 'nature' typically refers to the natural world, the environment – as found with and without human intervention, the agricultural realm, the earth as it has evolved presently, the universe, etc. - all as inhabited by living, growing things and organic materials. The term 'natural' refers to the processes of the evolution, the ways the universe works, non-intervention by humans, the patterns and cycles of the universe, produced in or existing in, or with, nature, and not artificial.

NATURE RELIGION

The term 'Nature religion' was popularized by Catherine Albanese in her text *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (1990). The term is analogous to 'earth spirituality' and has narrowed its focus from Albanese's original usage to refer to religions whose sacred center (symbolic or actual) is found in the natural world, whose sacred center is the natural world, or whose sacred center can be found through the natural world. Many facets of contemporary Paganism fall under this aegis of 'Nature religion'. Of course, to effectively utilize the term, a sufficient definition of both 'nature' and 'religion' should be offered. My tentative definition of 'nature' based on practitioners' self-reporting is presented above. For the purpose of this work, the fact that the people who are being studied refer to themselves as adherents of 'Nature religions' will be adequate.

One problem with using the term 'Nature religion' to refer to Pagans is that not all Pagans practice 'Nature religions'. For example, Adrian Ivakhiv asserts, Techno-Paganism seems to "to blur the distinction between natural, social, and technological systems." (Ivakhiv, 1999, Internet article) Nevertheless, 'Nature religion' remains a useful construct to categorize and evaluate religious groups in a way that other classifications do not allow. The term is a very useful tool for discussing contemporary Pagans and Wiccans in America in terms of their beliefs and practices that relate to the natural world.

II – EXPLORING A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PREDECESSORS OF BRITAIN'S CONTEMPORARY PAGANISM MOVEMENT

This chapter will discuss some facets of the Romantic Movement and British secret societies, such as the Freemasons, that together formed a number of important ideals in the minds of some British people – who became significant influences in the rise of the contemporary Paganism Movement. These ideas, many addressing the perceived problems of rapid urbanization, in conjunction with a nostalgia among the general populace for rural areas and wilderness, created the opportunity for the revalorization of pagan deities – Gods and Goddesses of the land – that occurred in many literary works in England and Germany between the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. These aspects of the Romantic Movement, in turn, led to the growth of many groups, such as the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, who sought to re-immerse themselves in the natural world, as well as groups who sought to re-sacralize Nature, such as Gardner's Wicca. Peter Marshall, in *Nature's Web: Rethinking Our Place on Earth*, provides a succinct outline of the essential problems that the Romantics, and later, the environmentalists attempted (and are still trying) to 'correct':

> The assumptions behind the traditional Western world-view are that we are makers of our own destiny; that our history has been a history of progress; that whatever problems we encounter in the future, we will be able to solve them. At the same time, it assumes that humans are fundamentally different from other creatures on earth, unique in the possession of reason, speech, moral conscience and soul. Nature is considered mainly as a collection of resources to be used at will, an unlimited opportunity to exploit. This world-view has been supported by the mainstream Judaeo-Christian tradition which depicts God as giving man dominion over nature in order to subdue it to his own ends.

> The rationalist tradition from Plato onwards also separated the mind from the body, the observer from the observed, and humanity from nature. The cleavage between humanity and nature was deepened by the mechanical thinking of the Scientific Revolution in the seventeenth century which tried to put nature on the rack in order to force her to reveal her secrets. The instrumental rationality and the... humanism of the Enlightenment further led to the disenchantment of nature. The rise of capitalism and industrialism fundamentally altered our relationship with the natural world and encouraged the dream of achieving the ultimate conquest over nature. (Marshall, p.5)

ROMANTICS

As a reaction to Enlightenment thought, the Romantic Movement began in Germany in the 1770s, in England in the 1790s, and subsequently became important in the United States of America. Whereas the Enlightenment brought a modern scientific approach to understanding human life as separate from the natural world, many Romantics thought that this approach created a false dichotomy, the most important aspect of which was the loss of the wilderness due to increased urbanization and rapid deforestation. Nancy L. Rosenblum writes, "Romanticism championed feeling against analytic reason, imagination and will against calculations of utility and mundane happiness, the concrete against the abstract, flux and plentitude over system and homogeneity." (Rosenblum, p.601)

Through literature and art, three major themes of Romantic thought became clear. The first theme was increased concern with the problems related to industrialization. This took the form of the often-recurring subject of urban decay and dis-ease juxtaposed

with an understanding that the natural world represented beauty and harmony. (c.f Hutton, 1999, p.117)

According to Hutton, this is due to the fact that 75 percent of England's rural population shifted to urban environments between 1810 and 1910. (Hutton, 1999, p.117) The reasons for this shift were primarily due to population growth: the many towns sprouting all over the English countryside were growing at fantastic rates, effectively taking over the rural areas that surrounded them; and since there was less countryside, more people had to move to town to find employment. This left them to lament for by-gone days (whether or not there were actually any) of rural plentitude and happiness. (c.f. Pearson, 2000b) Hutton writes, "[T]his was no simple matter of an intellectual elite imposing its ideas upon the rest of society. The scholars concerned had those ideas, and made such a favourable [sic] impression, because they were so much part of the spirit of their age, and related to so many of its deepest concerns." (Hutton, 1999, p.131) In other words, the expression of grief made vocal by the Romantics was not limited to them or caused by them, but was a widespread popular phenomenon in English culture at that time.

The second major theme of the Romantics was that "the salvation of modern humanity lay in a renewed sense of kinship and unity with Nature." (Hutton, 1999, p.279) Many important authors wrote enthusiastically on this subject beginning with the Germans of the mid-to-late eighteenth century: Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Goethe, and Johann

von Schiller, all of whom sought to unite contemporary social issues with the Romantic emphasis on the importance of "nature, creativity and freedom." (Hutton, 1999, p.21) With the rise of the Romantic Movement, in opposition to many Enlightenment suppositions, there was a growing interest in, and a gradual re-evaluation of ideas about, the natural world. Pearson (2000b, Internet article) posits that this concern for leaving urban areas to enter "once more into communion with 'nature' as 'the countryside' encouraged popular usage of the term 'pagan' as one who dwells in the rustic areas." One early popular image relating to this issue was that of the god of nature, Pan.

The third major theme of the Romantics was the literary idealizing of the Gods and Goddesses of the Greek and Roman world, through which Pan became a symbol of idealized nature. English poets in the early nineteenth century began to formulate their own influential ideas about Pan, nature, and modern society, based on the popular work of German Romantics. Marshall writes, "The Romantic poets were no longer content to be separate from nature, but wished to live within nature." (Marshall, p.273) Many writers focused on critiquing modernity through their use of imagery of the natural world: these included William Wordsworth, William Blake, and Mary Shelley. Other authors such as Samuel Coleridge, Lord Byron, Keats, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Maurice Hewlett, and Kenneth Grahame – in his masterpiece *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) – wrote enduring poems and novels devoted to the image of Pan.

Hutton writes, "The nineteenth-century English made the god the expression of all the aspects with which the Romantics had invested the natural world; sublime, mysterious and awe-inspiring, benevolent, comforting, and redemptive. He was pitted directly against the perceived ugliness, brutality, and unhealthiness of the new industrial and urban environment and the perceived aridity and philistinism of the new science." (Hutton, 1999, p.44)

Together with the 'Horned God' (Pan) another image was being formed by authors such as George Meredith, that of the Goddess. The rise in popularity of the divine feminine mirrors that of the pagan Gods. (c.f. Hutton, 1999, p.43) The Romantics looked towards the Greek and Roman Goddesses (Diana, Artemis, etc.), and understood them to be embodied in nature, as Mother Earth, as the Moon, and as "both a creatrix and redeemer." (Hutton, 1999, p.35; c.f. Harvey, 1997)

By the mid-twentieth century, the many Goddesses became a compound Goddess, "a single universal female divinity of the green earth and night sky." (Hutton, 1999, p.50) Robert Graves in 1948, developed the idea of a counter-cultural Goddess into what would soon become the central feature of the Wiccan Goddess – a three-fold Deity – Maiden, Mother, and Crone, embodied in the Natural world and in the hearts of all who encountered Her, in polar opposition to the modern age. (Hutton, 1999, p.41)

One of the most important texts to emerge from the Romantic period, in the early twentieth century, was Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which popularized the idea that, "ancient peoples had believed in a dying and reviving god, who represented the animating spirit of vegetation." (Hutton, 1999, p.114) Not only providing more information about the Greek and Roman Gods of interest, Frazer also supplies a myriad of other myths of idealized ancient cultures. The popularity of *The Golden Bough* and other Romantic texts and novels went a long way toward providing the cultural milieux that provided the potential for the advent of the contemporary Paganism Movement that began some 30 years later.

THE ORDER OF WOODCRAFT CHIVALRY

The Boy Scouts, the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, and other groups in England were created due to a general concern that the rapid urbanization meant the loss of an important facet of life and learning, the environment of the wilderness. The primary interests of these groups were to teach boys and young men responsibility, respect toward others, and respect toward nature. Robert Baden-Powell formed the Boy Scouts, with help from the ideas of Ernest Thompson Seton (the founder of the Woodcraft Indians in America in 1902 who inspired all other similar groups (Hutton, 1999, p.162)) and Daniel Carter Beard (founder of the Sons of Daniel Boone in America). It was thought that urban education in crowded city schools could not provide the proper types of education that children needed.

Due to this concern, an entire genre of popular boys groups – such as Ernest Westlake's Order of Woodcraft Chivalry (1916) and John Hargrove's Kindred of the Kibbo Kift (1920) which became the Woodcraft Folk (1924) – developed that focused on nature and the outdoors as means of moral education. These 'scout' groups actively taught young men and boys the importance of the natural world and early conservation ideas - seemingly founded on Romantic idealism. Westlake's "ideals of kindness of humanity and kinship with nature" have been important to the development of contemporary Paganism, even though the group changed to a Christian focus after pressure from some concerned parents in the early 1930s. (Hutton, 1999, pp.169-70) Gerald B. Gardner, the founder of contemporary Wicca, was known to be friends with members of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, but it is not known if he was associated with remaining vestiges of the more pagan-oriented Order. They both worked in the same forest (New Forest), although on opposite ends; they were both interested in paganism and, even though the Order was not expressly interested in magic and witchcraft, some members who were friends with Gardner may have decided to further their own personal practices even thought the Order had officially dropped the strong pagan elements. (Hutton, 1999, p.216) If so, what is known of this group would further explain important aspects of Gardner's Wiccan practice and belief. If not, there is still a strong link between Gardner and the Order's reverence for Nature. (Hutton, 1999, p.170)

FREEMASONS

In addition to the Romantics and the woodcraft/scout groups, other important predecessors of the contemporary Paganism Movement were the secret societies that were popular in Britain from the seventeenth century, but more widespread during the eighteenth century. The most well-known secret society was the Freemasons, formed in Scotland in the late-sixteenth century. (Hutton, 1999, p.52) These secret societies, all fashioned after the original Freemasons, were social groups formed for various occupational groups, such as masons, horse-whisperers, and craftsmen. Although not predicated on ideals of the natural world, these groups were the source of many ritual practices that were later utilized for environmentalist agendas.

All of these groups' formal meetings revolved around particular ritualized activities and ceremonies. These groups developed intricate sets of symbols and correspondences to create a private environment marked by its uniqueness and secrecy. The earliest surviving information is comprised of initiation ceremonies, which are very similar to later Gardnerian Wicca initiations. By the mid-seventeenth century, one particular society, the "Mason's Word", began to develop a set of special symbols and marks, one of which was the pentagram – the five-point star, so popular among contemporary Pagans. Additionally, ritual correspondences regarding the cardinal points of the compass became invested with esoteric significance by the early 1800s.

There are many similarities between the Freemasons, the Mason's Word, and contemporary Pagan groups: an emphasis on secrecy, a myth of historical legitimacy, ritual tools, important symbols like the aforementioned pentagram, initiation ceremonies, et cetera. The roots of much of the structure of Gardner's Wicca cannot be disputed to be in these secret societies as well as one other, the Rosicrucian Society in England.

Gardner first met the group, who claimed to be the last remaining witch coven in England, through the local Rosicrucian Theatre. Hutton writes, "The modern British revival of ritual magic began in 1865 or 1866 (the date is disputed), with the foundation of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, the Rosicrucian Society in England." (Hutton, 1999, p.72) Many of the known magical practices of the Rosicrucian Society are quite similar to Gardner's Wiccan practices and ideas. In fact, the New Forest coven, through which Gardner claims initiation, was run by the leading lady ('Dafo') of the Rosicrucian Theatre at Christchurch, Hampshire, who was a theosophist and practiced quasi-Masonic rituals. (Hutton, 1999, pp.212-13) Gardner also claims initiation from 'Old Dorothy' Clutterbuck, who was also associated with the Rosicrucians, as well as being an admirer of other important groups like the Boy Scouts. (Hutton, 1999, p.210)

These two women are mentioned to provide some evidence of the connections between Gardner and these nineteenth and twentieth century British social groups. By

no means does this exhaust the possibilities for discussion about the predecessors of contemporary Paganism in Britain, but the most important aspects of this history – as related to themes of nature – have been discussed.

III – GERALD B. GARDNER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF WICCA

With the advent of Gerald B. Gardner's writings about Wicca in the early 1950s, a new religion began to unfold and gain popularity in England. This chapter will explore Gardner's other main influence, the writings of Dr. Margaret Murray, and will develop into an account of the ideas about the natural world in early Wicca; ranging from Gardner to Doreen Valiente (one of his High Priestesses – co-clergy), from a fertility religion to a 'Nature religion'.

Gardner's personal history is long and varied, from his work as a British Civil Servant in India, to his retirement in southern England. He met many influential people and allied himself with many groups who had an effect on his writings about Wicca. Hutton writes that Gardner's "qualifications were probably unrivalled, given his experience of tribal animism, spiritualism, Freemasonry, Co-Masonry, the Fellowship of Crotona, the OTO [Ordo Templi Orientis], the Folk-Lore Society, the Ancient Druid Order, and the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, not to mention his wide reading and field work in history and archaeology." (Hutton, 1999, p.239) Even with this vast experience, it seems that it was actually one author's vision that accounted for the majority of information present in Gardner's argument for the historical continuity of Wicca with ancient paganism, Dr. Margaret Murray. (Crowley, 1998, p.172)

DR. MARGARET MURRAY, DION FORTUNE, AND THE NEW FOREST COVEN

Dr. Margaret Murray's (1862-1963) influence on Wicca is unquestionable, although she never used the term 'Wicca' to name the religion that she described. Her texts *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology* (1921) and *The God of the Witches* (1931) portrayed the existence of a mostly uniform pagan religion that had existed in Europe from pre-Christian times. Hutton synopsizes Murray's thesis about the existence of pagan witchcraft when he writes:

> In her portrait it was a fertility cult focused upon a horned god who represented the generative powers of nature and was personified at the rites by a human being, usually male. It was organized in covens of thirteen, run by men or women who owed allegiance to a 'Grand Master' controlling several such covens. People entered these either by being dedicated as children or initiated as adults. Covens held meetings known as 'esbats', to transact business, and held 'sabbats' four times a year, at the old quarter days which opened the seasons (Candlemas, May Day, Lammas, and All-Hallows) to provide religious ceremonies for all local believers in the old religion. The rites included feasting, ring and processional dancing (to promote fertility), acts of magic, sacrifice of animals and children, ritualized sexual intercourse to encourage fertility in humans, and (most importantly) the paying of homage to the person representing the god. (Hutton, 1999, p.195)

Although Murray's scholarship is now considered to be controversial, mostly because it bears little resemblance to the complex social realities described by modern anthropologists (Hutton, 1999, p.130), she succeeded in providing an important model for contemporary Paganism. The format she presented is the same that Gardner

claimed was present in the New Forest coven in which he trained. (c.f. Hutton, 1999, p.200; Crowley, 1998, p.172)

Another important author that followed Murray's ideas was Dion Fortune (Violet Firth), whose Society of Inner Light was significant, but whose novels, *Sea Priestess* and *Moon Magic*, utilized prevalent occult themes and reaffirmed "Murray's emphasis upon the joyous and life-affirming character of the witch religion [and, in turn,] developed into a mystical sense of unity with the natural world." (Hutton, 1999, p.225) Fortune's novels became an important influence for many contemporary Pagans, since they syncretized the popular ideas of ancient paganism, the Romantic love of nature, and a familiar ritualized form of expression.

There is debate among scholars about the validity of Gardner's claims of having found one of the few remaining witch covens in England. His anthropological writings show much evidence of having been influenced by Murray. Having no evidence of this group, or any other similar group in England or Europe prior to Gardner's first factual text (c.f. Pearson, 2000b; Hutton, 1999), *Witchcraft Today* published in 1954, it is not clear whether Gardner imposed Murray's structure onto the New Forest coven in his writings, or if the group had already assimilated Murray's thesis prior to Gardner's arrival. (c.f. Hutton, 1999, p.206)

GARDNER'S WICCA

The emotive factors from which the New Forest coven were operating – "a yearning for a reunion with the natural world and one's own imagination, for a spirituality of liberal self-expression and self-actualization, and for a greater parity and partnership between the sexes, especially in religion" (Hutton, 1999, pp.285-6) – were prevalent and strong concerns within British culture at that time. Gender issues (Hutton, 1999, pp.130-31), ancient pagan ideals – especially those of the native Celts, and the previously discussed literary and social movements all were vital parts of the development of Gardner's Wicca.

After encountering and becoming an important part of the New Forest coven, Gardner developed the group's ritual cycle, based loosely in the agricultural year in south-central England, as well as his understanding of ancient Celtic fire festivals (Beltaine, Lughnassad, Samhain, and Yule). Additionally, Gardner synthesized Freemason, Rosicrucian, and ceremonial magic (from A. Crowley, M. Mathers, the O.T.O., and the Golden Dawn) ideas in order to create a unique ritual format that utilized the elements of the natural world (earth, air, fire, and water), correspondences to the cardinal directions (north, east, south, and west), and the creation of magical space as a circle/sphere. (cf. Rowan; Hutton) These ideas have become standard Wiccan and contemporary Pagan ritual formats. It is noteworthy that Gardner's greatest divergence from his ceremonial magic and literary influences was in the realm of gender. In

Gardner's Wicca, women held the upper-most positions in his groups (High Priestess) whereas males ran Murray's covens as well as all the secret societies (except for Co-Masonry).

DOREEN VALIENTE

Other than Gardner himself, there is one prominent figure in the formation of Gardner's Wicca, Doreen Valiente. Valiente pioneered the change of Wicca, as presented by Gardner, from a 'fertility religion' to a 'nature religion'. (c.f. Crowley, 1998, p.174) Valiente wrote:

> The answer is that all things, including living religions, evolve; and the Craft of the Wise is a living religion. Over the years, we have begun to see a new concept of the idea of fertility; one that is not only material, but also of the mind and of the soul. The creative forces are not only creative in the physical sense; they can also beget and give birth to art, music, poetry and literature. We speak of people's minds as being 'fertile' or 'barren'. We talk of 'cultivating' ideas as well as fields; of new 'conceptions' of a better way of living. There is a spiritual as well as a material fertility; and human life is a desert without it. (Valiente, p.135)

On an earlier occasion, the 1964 annual dinner of *Pentagram*, an early witchcraft magazine, Valiente expressed her views about Nature and the development of the Wicca of which she was now a part. She said:

> What witches seek for in celebrating these seasonal festivals is a sense of oneness with Nature, and the exhilaration which comes from contact with the One Universal Life. People today need this because they are aware if the tendency of modern life to cut them off from their kinship with the world of living Nature; until their own individuality is processed away, and they begin

> to feel as if they are just another cog in a huge, senseless machine. It is the reaction against this feeling which is attracting people's interest in Witchcraft today. They want to get back to nature, and be human beings again, as She intended them to be. (quoted in Crowley, 1998, p.175)

Valiente transformed the agenda of Gardner's Wicca from a 'fertility religion' that is focused on "stability, the preservation of ancient tradition, and the revival of an 'Old Religion' which [was] in danger of dying out," (Crowley, 1998, pp.173-74) into a 'nature religion' capable of speaking to the prominent concerns that were facing England at that time.

Valiente also played a pivotal role in the construction of major portions of early Wiccan liturgy. Arguably, her best known and most often cited work is "The Charge of the Goddess." (Appendix 1) In traditional Wiccan ceremonies, this poem, which makes explicit links between the Goddess and the Natural world, is read when calling an aspect of the Goddess to the High Priestess in a ritual called 'Drawing Down the Moon'. Graham Harvey writes, "The Charge of the Goddess proclaims that the Goddess is manifest in such aspects of Nature as earth, moon, waters, desires of the heart, the Soul of Nature and death." (Harvey, 1997, p.43) Early Wiccans viewed the God and Goddess in somewhat stereotypically – to present-day sensibilities – sexist ways. For example, God as protector and Goddess as beauty, but Crowley asserts "the Goddess is also described as 'the soul of nature'" and due to Valiente's influence, Wicca became a vehicle for "the exaltation of women, the Goddess and nature." (Crowley, 1998, p.173)

GARDNER'S WICCA WAS A 'NATURE RELIGION', BUT UNCONCERNED WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Gardner's early work, at least as evidenced by his writings, addressed many themes of nature but was not interested with the Romantic ideals of (re)developing individual relationships with the natural world or conservation of the natural world. Gardner's concerns for Nature went only so far as to acknowledge its sacredness in an animistic sense, as alive and imbued with spiritual energy.

Gardner's diary of rites and knowledge ('Ye Bok') provides other clues to his views on nature. Gardner's corpus of rituals, known as the Wheel of the Year, is just that, a cycle of ceremonies related to the agricultural year and the natural cycles of life and death. Gardner used the four Celtic fire festivals as a template, even though they do not correspond to the agricultural year in Britain (c.f. Pearson, 2000b), onto which he added rituals for the yearly solstices and equinoxes.

Gardner neither made explicit links to the natural world nor unequivocal reasons for utilizing particular symbols from the natural world for ritual use. (c.f. Crowley, 1998, p.173) Two important ways that later Wiccans explain their relationship to the natural world – through environmental and psychological terms – were unavailable to Gardner. He made no mention of the conservation of nature, ecological concerns, or an activist environmental agenda, since these themes were not yet prevalent in

England. Additionally, Jungian Psychology was not yet in existence. Vivianne Crowley summarizes the context of Wicca's emergence in Britain:

> Nature is venerated in early (i.e. mid-20th century) Wicca – hence the emphasis on the seasonal cycle and the natural symbolism in Wiccan 'liturgy' – 'I am the beauty of the green earth' [written by Valiente]. There was less emphasis on Wicca combating environmental threat because society generally was less environmentally-aware, but Wicca tended to attract radicals, so there were middle-class anti-nuclear campaigners from the 1950s (a movement called CND – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was very active in Britain, holding protest marches, etc.), vegetarians, naturists (i.e. nudists) and animal welfare activists. (Crowley, personal correspondence, Feb 13, 2001)

It was Valiente who called for contact with the natural world and the non-human environment and who emphasized the Wheel of the Year as a means of interacting with the natural world to gain understanding of and to find harmony with it. (Pearson, 2000b)

Valiente's book *Natural Magic* (1975) clarified her feelings about the importance of the natural world. This text was "a handbook of practical magic, relying heavily on the notion of correspondences within natural phenomenon." (Hutton, 1999, p.338) This theme was meant to aid students in their quest for harmony with nature by creating a usable set of correspondences between the student and Nature. It must be noted that *Natural Magic* contained no ideas about the conservation of or respect for nature. Her text rests solely upon ways of using the power of the natural world for one's benefit.

Even though Valiente's writings did not mention environmentalist themes, it was her ideas that caused an increased interest in Gardner's Wicca that later developed into a much stronger emphasis on Nature as sacred and divine. Crowley attributes this development to the "idea that nature was being exploited, desouled and desacralised... This was a common theme of artists, writers, poets, philosophers, religious thinkers and others from the eighteenth century onwards. However, with the increased pace of industrialization throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, it was a matter of increasing concern." (Crowley, 1998, p.175) Due to their continued and growing importance, these themes will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

IV – THE UNITED STATES' NEXUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT

Moving away from England, this chapter will introduce the topic of environmental thought as the Romantic Movement began to exert influence in the United States of America in the mid-nineteenth century. During this time, the early ecologists and environmentalists were beginning to develop their ideals as well. The American Romantics' philosophies were the first steps of an American ecological awareness. They were emulated and expanded upon by the conservationists and the environmental ethicists, whose thoughts and politics will also be reviewed. These ideas developed into the influential texts that fueled the environmental activism movement that began to flourish in the 1970s. Ultimately, it was part of the environmental activist movement of the 1960s and 1970s that accepted Gardner's Wicca into the United States and modified it into a set of practices emphasizing a more complex understanding of Nature.

ROMANTICS IN THE UNITED STATES

The early Romantic situation in America was similar that of England regarding the desire for connection to the natural world but was also quite different in other areas. American Romantics developed two major themes relevant to this work: an emphasis on the importance of the nature world and the rethinking of assumptions about nature. Nancy L. Rosenblum writes, "The romantic sensibility calls us to acknowledge our

solitude and self-reliance, to cultivate an appetite for introspection and responsiveness to nature." (Rosenblum, p.602)

The Romantic idealism of "a new attitude to the imagination, to nature and to style" (Marshall, p.268) was reflected in the writings of such authors as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. (Rosenblum, p.601) In America, Thoreau (1817-62) called for a re-examination of the simplicity of the natural world as an important means of self-realization and political critique. Thoreau, who is seen as one of the most important figures in the development of environmentalism, "celebrated the wilderness as 'absolute freedom', an oasis in the desert of modern urban civilization." (Marshall, p.262) It was the works of Thoreau and others that expressed the growing disdain for Enlightenment's analytical reason. They believed that the experience of nature was a far greater subjective experience than any objectification could reveal.

One of the most important features of American Romantic thought was the perception of "the universe as an organic whole rather than as a mechanical structure [like Newton and Galileo], subject to an eternal principle of growth and change." (Marshall, p.269) A new comprehension of nature, wherein "nature could not be divorced from moral and aesthetic values" (Marshall, p.269), followed in the wake this understanding and was further spread by the Romantic writers. In replacing the scientific, mechanized view of nature with an organic understanding of the universe, many

Romantics "challenged the artificial conventions of civilization based on the exploitation of humans and animals. [This idea] paved the way for a genuinely ecological sensibility." (Marshall, p.297)

HISTORY AND PIONEERS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ECOLOGY

Marshall explains that the word 'environmentalism', as defined in 1931, "meant the belief that 'physical, biological, psychological or cultural environment' was a crucial factor shaping 'the structure or behavior of animals, including man'." (Marshall, p.209) Only after World War II did other connotations of the term come into being. According to Marshall, the term 'environment' "came to mean the *natural* influences surrounding people, including flora, fauna, climate, water and soil, the biosphere." (Marshall, p.209) With this new conception, humans began to realize their effects on the environment. Donald Worster writes, "at the same time the environment came to seem highly vulnerable to human activity; it was no longer only an influence but an endangered source of sustenance." (Worster, p.209) This vital change in understanding created the opportunity for environmentalism and radical ecology – The term 'ecology' was first used by "the German biologist Ernest Haeckel in 1866 as [meaning] the study of animals and plant systems in relation to their environment." (Marshall, p.3) – as social and cultural movements to develop, even though their power was weak among the general populace until the 1960s. (Marshall, p.337)

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT, AND THE SIERRA CLUB

One of the most important developments of the twentieth century was the establishment of environmental ethics. (c.f. Marshall, p.348) Early advocates of environmental ethics codified the trend to eschew Enlightenment ideals of understanding humanity as fundamentally separate from the ecosystem while developing "a more caring attitude to the natural world and its creatures." (Marshall, p.348) The development of a nature-related ethic led many people to advocate the preservation of the natural world. The most notable among these early ethicists and conservationists were the Americans, John Muir and Aldo Leopold, and the Franco-German Albert Schweitzer, who insisted that ethics should be based in 'reverence for all life' and "should not only deal with relations of man to man but the relations of man to all life" (Marshall, p.351).

The genre of conservationism, founded in part by Gifford Pinchot – the Chief Forester from 1898 to 1910 under the Theodore Roosevelt administration, and John Muir – founder of the Sierra Club, led many Americans to rethink their understanding of the natural world. In opposition to Enlightenment thought, while at the same time critiquing some Romantic idealism, the conservation movement created the opportunity for more ecological concern and the rise of the environmentalism movements: such as deep ecology, social ecology, and eco-feminism. Although the

conservationists "tend to look on nature as a series of discrete places needing defense," (Worster, 1998, p.210) they did provide the first active political action on behalf of the environment that was evaluated and enacted by the United States government. Pinchot was able to institute the national forest system through his advocating for the preservation and protection of national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and minerals. (Worster, 1998, p.210)

On May 28, 1892, John Muir, following Thoreau's "concern for the wilderness" first developed a codified environmental ethic (Marshall, p.348) when he founded the Sierra Club, the first and largest group of its era, to help protect the newly formed Yosemite National Park from greedy businessmen and others who would ruin its natural beauty. (www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/) John Muir sought to increase concern for the natural environment, even though he later "argued that the primary value of nature was not for the benefit of nature itself but for the benefit of the people: for *their* recreation and *their* nourishment." (Marshall, p.349)

Richard White explains the major goal that Muir, and other conservationists, sought was the preservation of wilderness, but only "within quite precise boundaries... Nature, to be sure, had to be tamed, harnessed, and managed (as favorite metaphors had it), but under proper management it would ensure a prosperous human future." (White, 1998, p.484) In other words, the ethic of preservation of nature was couched in terms of beneficence for humans, mirroring Valiente's use of nature. The language

used does not necessarily reflect their personal feelings about the natural world, but it was an effective language that laid the foundation for a more politically oriented environmentalism. Although White questions his motives, Muir has become one of the most influential conservationists, whose ideals were reflected in the spiritual nature of his writings and inspirational talks about wilderness hiking. Muir's work has become the driving force of many of the environmental activists that have followed in his footsteps, as well as deep ecologists who integrate spiritual principles into their activism.

Another important figure in this discussion is Aldo Leopold, whose *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) introduced the public to the importance of 'human ecology' by advocating an interdisciplinary scientific approach to environmental ethics. Leopold, who also appealed "to human self-interest in his campaign to conserve nature," (Marshall, p.355) closed the *Almanac* with a plea for the development of a 'land ethic' that "changes the role of H*omo sapiens* from the conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it [implying] respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such." (Leopold, pp.129-30) Recognizing that humans have physical and moral constraints within which they must live, Leopold problematized his predecessor's ethics of conservation and expanded the possibilities of their ideas for nature conservation practices. Marshall states that Leopold, "extended the so-called natural rights enjoyed by all Americans to the rights of nature

itself. He challenged the great frontier tradition of America, calling for restraint and care in dealings with the environment." (Marshall, p.355)

Even though his writings were largely unknown in England and not popular until the 1960s in America, he garnered a worthy reputation among environmentalists. Leopold's writings and speeches recognized the importance of a new, more holistic view of the environment, and of the culture and nature debate. Worster summarized this view as, "Nature is not a realm set apart from humans, like another country that one visits from time to time, but instead a vast, intrinsic community, a system of connections and interchanges." (Worster, 1998, p.210) Leopold's arguments have become very important for many conservationists and later activists, for example, "Dave Foreman, founding member of the direct-action group EarthFirst!, has called it the most important book ever written." (Marshall, p.352)

BEYOND CONSERVATION – THE 1960'S AND 1970'S

In addition to Leopold's *Almanac*, the other influential text that helped the conservationist movement evolve into the contemporary environmentalist movement was Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), in which she paints an emotional portrait of a springtime that did not bloom due to human interference with the natural world, specifically because of the use of dangerous pesticides. Even though some of her views are controversial, such as the advocation of the extermination of harmful

insects, the majority of her work stands as a testament to the new views of environmentalism. Carson, following in the tracks of her predecessors Schweitzer, Thoreau, and Muir, wrote, "life is a miracle beyond our comprehension, and we should reverence it even when we have to struggle against it." (Carson, p.275) In addition to *Silent Spring*, Carson is remembered for the work and writing that she did as a marine biologist, in which she sought to increase awareness of the diversity of life present in the waters of the world, as well as the human relationships to it.

Due in part to Carson's text of urgency and her political work lobbying for pesticide regulation, many Americans by the 1960s began to change their ideas about the environment, acknowledging a sense of necessity to correct the 'critical' condition of the planet. (Worster, 1998, p.211) According to Peter Morrell, those who were involved in student riots, civil rights marches, and drug campaigning of the 1960s also "took the environmental movement into the hearts and minds of the masses." (Morrell, Internet article) The late 1960's and early 1970s were a time of great turmoil and change in the minds of many Americans. This discussion will now begin to explore some of the concurrent dominant themes in which environmentalism and ecology played a large part: the 1960s counter-cultural movement of the hippies; the first Earth Day; the Gaia Hypothesis; the growing second-wave feminist movement; and the beginning of the contemporary Paganism movement in America.

HIPPIES

The American counter-cultural movement of the late-1960s and early-1970s, of which the hippie movement was a part, was a turbulent time during which latent ideas present in the fabric of America's history came forward to be addressed by many activist groups. The hippies were the primary group that acted on the idealist legacy left by the Romantics. The nostalgia for lost simplicity and wilderness and the rejection of modern ideals and industrialization were some of the ideals that the hippies inherited. The hippie lifestyle also appealed to pacifists, feminists, and environmentalists, who all recognized a spiritual content in their beliefs and lives, although they rejected most forms of orthodox religion. (Morrell)

Both the hippies and the early environmental activists speak of a holistic understanding of the world, of love for the environment, and of naturalness. The word 'natural' became a watch-word in the popular jargon of the American counter-cultural movement by the late 1960s, taking on the varied definitions of pristine, organic, wild, untainted, and unmodified. The application of this word to contemporary problems also modified the term so it came to mean unrefined, unchemicalized, holistic, and wholesome. "By implication it [natural] means harmless, benign and in harmony with nature and living things." (Morrell)

At this time, the first photographs of the earth from space were projected around the country, profoundly affecting those who had environmentally active tendencies. With this in mind, Stewart Brand, of the Point Foundation, published the first *Whole Earth Catalog* in 1968. This ground-breaking text became the unofficial handbook of the 1960s counter-culture espousing a "vision of what's needed to challenge ingrained patterns and stale assumptions." (www.wholeearthmag.com) The *Whole Earth Catalog* and its journal sought to further "social change and new movements by introducing ideas such as the gaia hypothesis [sic], watershed consciousness, whole system thinking,... ecosystems, spirituality,... and voluntary simplicity to readers." (www.wholeearthmag.com)

Another influential text in the environmental / hippie movement that summarizes its major philosophies was *Living On The Earth* by Alicia Bay Laurel. Released in 1970, the text, according to Skip Stone who reviewed the book and interviewed the author on his popular website – hippy.com, is "a paean to the Back-to-Nature movement pioneered by Emerson and Thoreau, and emulated by thousands in the '60s and '70s." (Stone, www.hippy.com) Inspired by Laurel's enchantment with the beauty of the California commune of which she was a part in early 1969, and by "the serene and loving nature of the people and the spiritually appealing nature of voluntary primitivism," (Laurel, www.hippy.com) the text addressed issues such as organic farming, living simply from available objects and basic amenities, living with the

rhythms of the earth, environmental protection, and it became "an invaluable resource for those seeking to live in harmony with Mother Nature." (Stone, www.hippy.com)

EARTH DAY AND THE GAIA HYPOTHESIS

In addition to a growing list of popular publications, more gatherings of activists and environmentalists began to take place. One of the most important of these took place on April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day. Organized by Gaylord Nelson and Denis Hayes, the Earth Day Network was founded for the purpose of promoting "a healthy environment and a peaceful, just, sustainable world by spreading environmental awareness through educational materials and publications." (www.earthday.net/about/) Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, proposed the first nationwide environmental protest "to shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda." (www.earthday...history.stm) Twenty million Americans took part in the demonstrations that were held across the nation and effectively brought people of very divergent backgrounds together for a common cause: working to benefit the environment. In conjunction with Carson's and others' political work, "the first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts." (www.earthday...history.stm)

It was this time, during the 1960s and 1970s, that the contemporary environmentalism movement was initiated. Due to the culmination of the previously mentioned factors, many new laws were passed, such as the Clean Water Act in 1960, the Clean Air Act in 1963, and the federal ban on DDT in 1972. Worster explains the implication of these governmental regulations: Americans had finally come to realize that "the everyday relationship between humans and Nature was more essential than Americans had heretofore understood, and that what happened to one vitally affected the other." (Worster, 1998, p.210) Employing this notion, two men, Otter G'Zell and James Lovelock, individually developed similar theories based on their holistic and organic understanding of nature.

The first modern Western scientist to seriously advocate the idea that the earth was a living organism was the Scotsman James Hutton in 1785. (Marshall, p.391) This idea was resurrected 185 years later during a 'revelation' by the next noteworthy individual relevant to this discussion, Otter (Tim) G'Zell, founder of the Church of All Worlds (CAW), one of the first contemporary Pagan groups in America. G'Zell's vision, first published in 1971, saw the planet earth as a single, living being. 'Terrebia', as he named her, was home to the first living organism, a single cell that lived four billion years ago. Through countless divisions, replications, and evolution, the material present in that first cell now forms all of life on earth. "Terrebia is a single, living organism!" (G'Zell, www.caw.org) While G'Zell provides some scientific data and further explanations to support his theory, he also discusses the life forms on the

planet in a less scientific manner. Through analogy, he relates them to the organs of a mammalian body and in turn the body of 'Terrebia', the 'biosphere', created through sunlight and photosynthesis is understood to be the ultimate source of energy; and the 'noosphere', made of humans, is the planetary consciousness. (G'Zell, www.caw.org)

Eight years later, the Canadian atmospheric chemist James Lovelock published what would become an extremely influential book, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979). Lovelock's idea was very similar to G'Zell's, but Lovelock was able to reach a much larger portion of the population, so his text became the first ground-breaking environmentalist scientific explanation of the living organism of the earth. Environmental and pollution scares in the late 1970s brought about increased public outcry and anxiety about the state of Nature, and in turn created a phenomenal growth of environmentalist movements and activists. This also helped create a change in the understanding of the importance of nature and the natural environment among the general populace of the United States. Lovelock's *Gaia* spoke to these concerns, and, as Marshall writes, the "success of the Gaia hypothesis in environmental circles was no doubt partly due to the way it undermined the prevailing view of nature as a primitive force to master and of the planet as a spaceship for ever traveling around the sun. For many, Gaia offers almost a new pagan religion in a secular age; Gaia has in some circles even become a kind of earth worship." (Marshall, p.394)

Lovelock and his predecessors supplied a framework for the green movement by emphasizing the web-like structure of interconnections of a life on earth. Marshall explains the importance of their work, "Ecology as a science... inspired a new understanding of humanity as one element in an intricate web of nature. It endorses the values of unity in diversity, organic growth and interdependence. It suggests that all organisms have intrinsic value in a non-hierarchical world: humans and animals are different but they are worthy of equal consideration." (Marshall, p.3)

Environmentalism in the 1970s did become a kind of religion and Gaia did become the Earth Mother to many people. According to Seyyed Nasr this movement points "to the need in the souls of human beings for the religious understanding of nature eclipsed in the West by modern science and neglected until quite recently by the mainstream religions" (Nasr, pp.194-5) America was a breeding ground for environmental movements, many of which began to integrate religious aspects into their advocacy, and they in turn affected many religious groups but especially those called 'Nature religions' such as contemporary Paganism and Wicca.

FEMINISTS AND WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY

There was another equally important phenomenon happening in America during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the second-wave feminist movement. Women and feminists, some of whom were active in other aspects of the 1960s counter-culture,

began to explore their own agendas. Two areas they explored were the perceived link between femininity and the natural world and spirituality for women. The relationship between women and nature, for many feminists, was due to men's disdain for both. Marshall explains, "Some feminists have stressed the close link between exploited femininity and exploited nature and argue that the hatred of women and the hatred of nature are mutually reinforcing. Many males, they observe, like to conquer, master and dominate women as they do nature; at the same time, they fear women as they fear the encroachment of nature." (Marshall, p.409) Although these connections were negative, many feminists, like Mary Shelley two centuries previously, have explored the notion that women are somehow 'closer' to nature and more in touch with earth's natural cycles due to their cycles of fertility and birth-giving roles. (Marshall, p.410) It is through these women that the radical eco-feminist movement began.

As eco-feminism developed, many people in the feminist movement began to alter their perceptions of nature and of their place in it. Ivakhiv notes environmentalists, feminists, and "'environmental justice' movements... have questioned earlier concepts of 'nature' as balanced and harmonious in favour [sic] of a new view that sees nature as dynamic and unpredictable." (Ivakhiv, 1999) Redefining their relationship with Nature became a serious concern for these eco-feminists (Marshall, pp.408-9), and many influential women like American feminists Carol Christ and Ynestra King, American historian Carolyn Merchant, and American novelist Ursula K. LeGuin have been

instrumental in developing and discussing the such ideas as eco-feminism, Gaia – the Earth Goddess, politics, and the living cosmos in which we all participate.

In the midst of all of this, new forms of activism arose: The Goddess movement, earth-based spirituality, and feminist Wicca/witchcraft (Dianic Wicca). Marshall argues that these movements have influenced eco-feminism greatly because these groups present radically different understandings of Deity and the Goddess from the Abrahamic, patriarchal traditions with which most of these women were familiar. (Marshall, p.410) Many feminists sought new spiritual teachings that reinterpreted, or were not related to, male-dominated religious traditions. According to Bonewitz, this 'women's spirituality movement' became a strong part of feminist consciousness for many women, some of whom (perhaps inevitably) ran into some Neopagan Witches." (Bonewitz, 2001) Indeed, there had been Wiccans in America since the early 1960s, and many had migrated to California where the Goddess movement was birthed. The discussion of the history of the contemporary Paganism movement in America will begin in the next chapter but it should be mentioned at this time, as James R. Lewis writes, that even though all-women Wiccan (Dianic) covens "came into being in the 1960s, they did not proliferate until the early 1970s, when the women's movement and the Neopagan movement began to interpenetrate." (Lewis, 1999, p.79)

IN CONCLUSION

The history of environmentalism in America leads from the Romantics' rejection of Enlightenment rationale and their reverence for the natural world to the early conservationists who fought to preserve the beauty of nature to those who understand the earth to be a Goddess worthy of worship. For this study, it is this last group, the many women who in the 1970s experienced a pleasant surprise in discovering a set of beliefs and practices, even a religion, based on their thoughts, feelings, political activism, and spiritual experiences regarding the natural world. In conjunction with the ideas that lead to their propagation, this will prove to be one of the more important facets of the growth of the contemporary Paganism movement in America.

V – THE HISTORY OF WICCA AND CONTEMPORARY PAGANISM IN AMERICA

The first documented contemporary Pagan group in America, according to Margot Adler, was established in 1938, pre-dates Gardner's Wicca, and seems to mark an interest in the same themes relating to a Romantic revival of paganism as were happening in England at that time. The Church of Aphrodite, founded on Long Island, New York by the Russian author Glen Botkin was loosely modeled on the Russian Orthodox Church in order to venerate and worship the Goddess Aphrodite, who, according to Botkin, represented an antithesis to the Christian ethic of suppressing one's desires to mature spiritually. (Adler, pp.233-36) Based on the ideals of love and utopian idealism, this non-Wiccan group of modern Pagans was to provide an early model for organization but one that was eclipsed by the development of other contemporary Pagan groups, as well as Gardner's Wicca in the early 1960s.

At the time that Wicca arrived in the United States (1963) with Raymond Buckland, an initiate of Gardner, few people were knowledgeable about, or interested in the religion (Buckland interview), but a growing number of people were becoming involved with another early contemporary Pagan group. Formed in California by Frederick Adams and called Feraferia, which means 'wilderness sacrament', this group was based, much like Botkin, on utopian thought. Adams was greatly influenced by the wilderness authors Muir and Thoreau, as well as others. (c.f. Adler, p.239)

Incorporated in 1967, Feraferia's mission was to stress a spiritual link to the practice of environmentalism through ecology, artistry, mythology, and liturgy. (Adams, finewest.com/feraferia/) Wilderness, for Feraferia, is 'the supreme value of religion and life', and they seem to have been one of the first religious groups to have environmentalism as its central tenet.

It was during the mid-to-late 1960s that the American contemporary Paganism movement really got its start. Buckland's publicity work, as well as other Gardnerians who followed him from Britain, Sybil Leek for example, began writing, training a small number of covens, and popularizing Wicca in the Northeast. Indigenous American Pagan groups, such as the Church of All Worlds (CAW), were gaining notoriety and the beginnings of the larger Pagan community was beginning to form around and communicate through early Pagan periodicals such as CAW's *Green Egg,* and the *Waxing Moon.* Early contemporary Pagan leaders and charismatic figures, such as Tim (later Oberon) Zell, and others, were in the process of developing their own expression of American Paganism, and many adopted Gardner's very useful religious framework.

American Wiccans, from their earliest encounters with other contemporary Pagans, espoused an unambiguous environmental agenda, began to devote much time and energy to writing more explicitly about nature and environmentalism, and put this agenda into practice. Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon* (1979) briefly

documents this trend, but the following discussion will illustrate the ways that early American Wiccan and Pagan groups – such as the Church of All Worlds, the Minneapolis Witches Council of 1974, Selena Fox' Church of Circle Wicca, and the growing number of loosely organized eclectic witches – applied these ideas.

OTTER G'ZELL, THE CHURCH OF ALL WORLDS, AND *GREEN EGG*

The Church of All Worlds was founded in 1962 and chartered in 1968 by Otter (Tim – now Oberon) G'Zell (now Zell) for the purpose of educating, uniting, entertaining, and informing "the Gaian community through an exploration of Pagan culture and the larger social, historical, and ecological contexts." (www.greenegg.com) Early in its history, CAW "came into contact with Feraferia and a number of Witchcraft covens, and began to involve itself in the growing environmental movements." (Adler, p.295) CAW lacked dogma and creed and so relied upon its members' shared vision of the living Goddess, Gaia, their reverence for Her, and their desire for the harmony of human beings to fulfill its mission. CAW also utilized its newsletter turned journal, *Green Egg*, to emphasize "the importance of the shared values of globalism, ecological sustainability, and planetary stewardship seeking to re-balance gender inequalities, build community, and explore healing alternatives for ourselves and the Earth we hold sacred." (www.greenegg.com)

Zell is also important for his formulation of the contemporary Pagans' pantheist agenda. Hutton explains that CAW "established the identity of modern paganism as a response to a planet in crisis, and its spiritual core lay in the concept of the earth as a single, divine, living organism. The mission of Pagans, according to this concept, was to save 'her' by a transformation of the values of Western society." (Hutton, 1999, p.352) By the 1980s, Zell's pantheist notion of Deity became widespread throughout the Pagan community, both in America and abroad, and his ideal of ecology "as the supreme religious activity and study" (Adler, p.288) became a rallying cry for many other Wiccans and Pagans.

1974 COUNCIL OF AMERICAN WITCHES

Soon after Zell began the Church of All Worlds, a short-lived but extremely important group of Wiccan community leaders formed in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 1974, the group, calling themselves 'The Council of American Witches' met to codify what they felt to be the 'Principles of Wiccan Belief'. In addition to taking a pluralist stance to ensure religious tolerance, the group articulated a set of fourteen tenets by which they lived and practiced. Among these fourteen principles, eight dealt explicitly with the theme of 'nature'. Attuning themselves to natural rhythms of life, recognizing their unique responsibility toward the environment due to human intelligence, and striving to live in harmony with Nature, these Wiccans, according to Chas Clifton, capitalized on CAW's themes and expanded upon them to include ideas about the naturalness of

the body, sex, the spirit world, and the powers inherent in Nature. (Clifton, 1996b, pp.19-20) The 'Principles' that they published have been reprinted numerous times and are currently being used by many Wiccan and Pagan groups in America.

SELENA FOX AND CIRCLE SANCTUARY

Selena Fox founded the Church of Circle Wicca, also known as Circle Sanctuary, in 1974 to increase public and personal awareness of the spiritual dimensions of Nature, and to provide "environmental education, bluebird restoration, woodlands and wetlands conservation, and other Nature preservation endeavors." (Fox, Circle brochure) Due to her outreach programs and her affiliations with the American Civil Liberties Union, James Lewis asserts that Fox has become "one of the most vocal spokespersons nationally for Neopaganism in general." (Lewis, 1999, p.58) Being a nationally recognized figure, Fox is also able to coordinate and operate the Circle Network, "an international network of Wiccan, Pagan, Goddess Spirituality, Shamanic, and other Nature Spirituality practitioners, groups, and centers." To become a Network affiliate, a person or group must first "have reverence for Nature as a central component of spirituality," and secondly, "have a code of ethics that promotes well being for self, others, and the planet, [that] is consistent with the Wiccan Rede, 'And it harm none, do what you will.'" (Fox, Circle brochure)

In addition to her advocacy work, Fox is also a writer and a certified therapist who has developed a new technique called 'eco-psychology', that corresponds to her beliefs about the interconnections between humans and Nature. (Fox, interviewed in Hopman, p.238) Fox's published writing includes articles relating to her environmentalist work and rituals which integrate an awareness and confession of one's relationships with Nature, the 'Unity of Nature', tolerance, and dedication to practicing love of all living things. (Fox, 1980) As others before her, Fox publishes to help rectify perceived catastrophic ecological problems that only humans can remedy. She is another early Wiccan who campaigns to improve people's understanding of the complexity of Nature, as well as its sacredness. Fox attempts to define her vision of an ideal Paganism in a way that will challenge her readers to reevaluate their own understandings and beliefs and make them more environmentally conscious:

> Attunement to and communion with Nature are central to Paganism today as in the past. Humans are viewed as part of Nature, not as dominators or as owners of Nature as is prevalent in some other cultures. Furthermore, in Paganism, creatures, plants, and other lifeforms in Nature are viewed as allies, not as underlings or subhuman. Nature imagery is prevalent in Pagan households, rituals, and art forms. In addition to connecting with Nature ritually, Pagans care for the environment as part of daily life, and many are active in environmental preservation organizations. Paganism is a strong force in ecospirituality, and ministers and practitioners of other religions often import Pagan symbology, chants, and other practices into their own communities and liturgies in order to make them more ecofriendly. (Fox, 1996)

ECLECTIC WITCHES

The category of eclectic Wiccans, or eclectic witches, pertains to the large and growing group of practitioners of a non-traditional form (i.e.: non-Garderian, non-Alexandrian, non-British) of Wicca. During the 1970s there were a growing number of books available about Wicca and witchcraft, especially from Llewellyn Publications that began in 1901 publishing astrological pamphlets and expanded to include metaphysical and occult titles by the 1960s. (www.llewellyn.com/history.php3) Books by Gerald Gardner, Sybil Leek, Zsuzsanna Budapest, Raymond Buckland, Gavin and Yvonne Frost, and Lady Sheba all became available to those who knew how to find them. These books allowed interested people to teach themselves about the religion without having to find an established, traditional (British-derived) group. Thus many of these self-taught (eclectic) people began entering the Pagan movement under the aegis of the term 'Wicca'.

Another group took on the moniker 'eclectic' as well. These people had traditional training, but found it lacking in any of a number of different ways: too rigid, too political, too Western European, too masculine oriented, too dogmatic, too formal, et cetera. These eclectic Witches chose to supplement their training with other materials from contemporary Paganism, Native American culture, and other sources including poetry, song, music, science fiction novels, mythology, et cetera. When traditional Wiccans felt that their students had diverged too far from accepted Wiccan practices,

the student was made to part company with the original group. The student then would form their own 'tradition' based on the eclectic practices that they had developed.

Orion identifies five innovations that eclectic witches developed in reaction to the limitations placed on them by traditional Wiccans. Two of the five are relevant to environmental themes: the deification of the planet earth as a Goddess, and the emphasis on 'grounding', which is a "symbolic connection with the Earth" (Orion, p.256) formed in the mind of the practitioner through sharing energy with the earth in a ritual setting. The practices of the eclectic Wiccans are similar in both idea and practice to many of the ideas presented by Zell, Fox, and others. The practices and beliefs of the eclectic Wiccans was another step in the development of American Wicca during the 1970s, which was becoming intimately connected to the radicalism of the 'hippies' whose ethics of peace and love attracted an entirely new generation of Wiccans and Pagans. (Crowley, 1998, p.176)

AMERICAN WICCA AND THE HIPPIES

Early contemporary Pagans in America were attracted to many of the same issues that the Hippies were – whether or not they identified themselves as being members of either group. Some of the appealing trends were an earth-centered spirituality, living in touch with the land, 'natural' healing provided by herbalism, 'organic' foods, a rejection of the patriarchal values of modern society, egalitarianism, tolerance, body

liberation, and for many, a socialist ideal of 'commune-ity' living (c.f. Hutton, 1999, p.361; Crowley, 1998, p.176; Orion, p.236). Orion explains, "Witchcraft also served as a vehicle for expressing the social protests and cultural transformation of the 1960s: civil liberties, feminism, ecology, and peace. In the 1970s gay and lesbian rights became important in the Wiccan movement along with a concern with healing. Rituals were modified to express these themes, and American witches adapted the techniques of raising energy, spell working, and trance work to the goal of 'healing society'." (Orion, p.143) Many examples of this phenomenon can be seen in Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon* and in the interviews of contemporary Pagans in Ellen Evert Hofman's *People of the Earth.* These texts explicate the grass roots nature of the American Wiccan scene, which saw the development of a large number of different groups with similar interests in the cultural situation of the 1970s. The unification of many hippies with contemporary Pagans accentuated two important issues that became the agendas of these groups, environmentalist themes and feminism.

GODDESS WORSHIP AND FEMINISM

The United States was the main locus of modern feminist thought and radical feminist activism which first appropriated the image of a 'witch' as a symbol of empowerment and liberation from social roles that limited and demeaned women. (c.f. Cynthia Eller) For example, the authors Mary Daly and Andrea Dworkin used the witch image to criticize patriarchy and affirm the sisterhood of women. (Hutton, 1999, pp.341-42)

A large portion of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s increasingly became drawn towards exploring religious issues related to their activism. Feminist theology was born of this women's spirituality movement, and in turn Goddess worship became more popular. The feminist movement in general, and Goddess spirituality in particular, has had far-reaching positive influence in the contemporary Paganism movement in America and abroad. (Harvey, 1996) Hutton argues that "America's most distinctive single contribution to... witchcraft [was] its assimilation to the women's spirituality movement." (Hutton, 1999, p.341) The image of the Goddess, and even the witch, provided important radical messages to women: they were capable, they could be self-empowered, and they had a special connection with Deity through the earth. Many who turned their attentions to the Goddess because Her image provided a personal avenue to spirituality heard the significance of this message. Harvey explains:

> The particular realities of women's lives are affected by their discovery of the Goddess; their imaging and descriptions of the Goddess are affected by their lives. For example, the Goddess can be portrayed fairly traditionally as young, maternal or elderly. Goddess Spirituality refuses to limit such portrayals to 'fertility' but links the everyday processes of women's growth from infancy through maturity towards death with 'the Goddess'. Aspects of their lives ignored, marginalised [sic] or shunned by patriarchal religions are released and women are enabled to realise [sic] the sacredness of, for example, menstruation, sexuality, maternity. Women's desires, intuitions, moods, thoughts and opinions are significant. They do not have to wait until they are widowed or elderly to be able to celebrate their own religious intimations. They do not, in short, require men's authority or approval. (Harvey, 1996, Internet article)

Whether singular – as Mother Earth – or in Her form of Triple Goddess – as Maiden, Mother, and Crone – the Goddess was understood to be a wholly immanent deity, one who could be "experienced through self, others, and nature. The latter is particularly important to the women's spirituality movement: Showing [sic] strong links to ecofeminism, women's spirituality regards nature as sacred, as 'the body of the Goddess.'" (Lewis, 1999, p.306) This connection to environmentalist ideals formed an important bond between the growing factions of the Wiccan and Pagan movements that were more interested in ecological activism and the strands of Wicca that focused on the Goddess. Two Californian women in particular were instrumental in this development, Zsuzsanna Budapest and Miriam Simos, better known as Starhawk.

During the 1970s, "witchcraft had become a symbol without a practice for most feminists." (Hutton, 1999, p.344) The first major exception to this rule was the Hungarian refugee, Zsuzsanna Budapest, and her Hollywood coven that was created at Yule in 1971, the Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1. Budapest quickly became a leading figure in the Goddess spirituality / feminist / Wiccan conglomerate. Her unique style of belief and ritual caused her tradition to be called Dianic Wicca, named after the Greek Goddess Diana. H. Byron Ballard, a contemporary Dianic Wiccan explains Budapest's agenda, "Because it is difficult for us to separate our spiritual life from our political one, we are active in local politics, especially on any issue which affects freedom of religion as well as the environment. We believe that the Earth is all sacred space and we refer to the cast circle as "ritual" space, being mindful that every space is

sacred." (Ballard, witchvox.com) Relating to the Goddess, Dianic Wicca takes on both a monotheistic form, worshiping the Goddess as singular and supreme, as well as a polytheistic and pantheistic form, recognizing the divine in all living creatures all of whom are understood to be children of the Goddess. (c.f. Ballard; Lewis, 1999, pp.79-80) In the early 1980s, Budapest went on to form the Women's Spirituality Forum, "an organization dedicated to bringing Goddess consciousness into the mainstream of feminism, earth conservation, and peace and justice work in the United States." (Lewis, 1999, p.80)

Influenced by Budapest and fully a part of the same cultural milieux, there emerged a more vocal, more radical, and more influential voice for Wiccan, feminist, Goddess spirituality, and environmentalist movements, Starhawk. All of the environmental themes, pro-active stances, changes, and developments that have been discussed in this chapter became united in the work of Starhawk, beginning with her landmark first book, *The Spiral Dance*, first published on October 31, 1979 – coincidentally, the same day that Margot Adler's ethnography of American Pagans, *Drawing Down the Moon*, was released.

WICCA, FEMINISM, AND ENVIRONMENTALISM COME TOGETHER IN STARHAWK'S RECLAIMING COLLECTIVE

Starhawk, a Gardnerian trained Wiccan, as well as a feminist and activist, recreated Wicca for an American audience. She integrated the nineteenth century pantheist ideas of Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, and Carson with strong religious principles. (Hutton, 1999, pp.350-51) Starhawk places much emphasis on nature as alive, "all things – plants, animals, stones, and stars – are alive, are on some level conscious beings. All things are divine, are manifestations of the Goddess." (Starhawk, 1979, p.20) Working to reverse what she perceives to be faulty presuppositions about the natural world, Starhawk stresses the immanence of Deity, as well as environmental activism to construct communities that are free from the problems of pollution and environmental destruction, and "that can help to heal the wounds of the earth and her peoples." (Starhawk, www.reclaiming...unity.html)

Describing the mandate for action stemming from a religion of ecology, Starhawk argues that when people begin to comprehend the earth as a living being, they can begin to understand the interconnectedness of all of life. At this stage Starhawk argues that an individual's compassion, from the ability to literally 'feel' with all living beings on the earth, should then guide them to political action to preserve and heal the earth. (Starhawk, 1990, p.74) Besides the traditional forms of Wiccan practice and belief, Starhawk's Wicca became a medium for radical environmentalist action. In her

idealized vision for Wicca, she wrote, "Meditation on the balance of nature might be considered a spiritual act in Witchcraft, but not as much as cleaning up garbage left at a campsite or marching to protest an unsafe nuclear plant." (Starhawk, 1979, p.12) These profound accompaniments to traditional Wicca are found most prominently in her non-fiction books, *The Spiral Dance*, *Truth or Dare*, and *Dreaming the Dark*, whose central messages are "a call to resist powers which [are] threatening to destroy the world, and [will] do so unless society [is] converted to a better way of thinking." (Hutton, 1999, p.349) Starhawk's literary charisma, present in the three texts mentioned above, has enabled her to effectively accomplish two objectives: presenting witchcraft as a system of self-discovery and liberation, especially for women, and linking it to a particular brand of activist politics. (c.f. Hutton, 1999, p.350)

The group that Starhawk created, the Reclaiming Collective, was the place where her particular brand of activism became organized into a set of principles for action. The tradition of Reclaiming embodies Starhawk's beliefs about the natural world and the Goddess and is committed to developing a spiritual and physical relationship with the earth through ritual performances and political action "for all forms of justice: environmental, social, political, racial, gender and economic." (www.reclaiming...unity.html) In a Reclaiming document called the "Five Points Agenda", Starhawk summarizes the extent of Reclaiming's environmental beliefs and practices:

> We recognize that the interconnected life-systems of the earth, in all their diversity, have a right to be and an inherent value that goes beyond their usefulness for human ends. We also recognize that human life and culture depends on the health of the ecosystems that sustain all life on earth, and that our understanding of their complex interrelationships is still embryonic. Therefore, our prime concern must be the health of the environment, of the earth, the air, and the waters, and the diverse matrices of biological life... We support laws and programs that further environmental preservation, conservation, habitat restoration and healing... We work for environmental justice and for urban environments that can be safe, healthy and sustainable... We support the absolute right of indigenous people to protect their sacred lands from despoiling and development. We recognize that human beings have a right to live and to draw on the resources of the environment to create our livelihood. We believe that this can and must be done in ways that are compassionate, sustainable and that further the overall quality of life. We favor solution-oriented responses to environmental problems. (Starhawk, 1995, Internet article)

Starhawk's forged link between Gardner's Wicca and American social reform ideas became an important theme in American Wicca and Paganism in the 1980s and 1990s. (c.f. Orion, p.227) Starhawk's idea of "reclaiming the power to heal the self and the Earth" also became a major focus for American Wiccan and Pagan development and will be more fully explicated in the following chapter.

THE 1980'S, 1990'S, AND THE RISE OF RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

With the advent of Starhawk's ideas, the 1980s saw drastic evolution of contemporary Wiccan actions to benefit the natural world. There were a number of important social factors that laid the groundwork for this more universal change: a backlash against conservative American politics, the development of modern physics, the continued growth of the environmentalism movement, and the rise of the radical

environmentalists. The conservative American government of the 1980s brought with it a large number of anti-environmentalists, who, according to David Worster, "insisted that the environment was neither indispensable, nor fragile, nor a real constraint on human ambition." (Worster, 1998, p.211) In retaliation, environmentalists began to ally themselves with other activist groups such as the feminists, the ethical radicals – who have tried to extend human rights to all other living beings, and to advocates against Third World environmental exploitation. (Worster, 1998, p.211)

The conservative anti-environmentalists inadvertently caused the environmentalist movement to strengthen and grow due to increased public and scientific attention. One facilitating group was the physicists who had begun to popularize a new view of the universe. No longer understood as being made of discrete molecules, modern physicists offered, according to Marshall, a view of the universe "as a constant flow of transforming energy." (Marshall, p.373) Due to this discovery by modern physicists; factors like the photographs of earth taken from space; as well as the communications revolution that has connected most of the globe via phone, fax, and Internet, the 1980s and 1990s saw a dramatic change in the popular conception of the earth. The earth was being seen in holistic terms stemming from ecology, and a growing portion of the population of America was heeding the environmentalist call for the end of ozone depletion, global warming, and other harmful ecological practices. (c.f. Marshall,

p.373; White, 1998, p.484) It was in this cultural matrix that the radical ecology movement was born.

Originally coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973, the term 'deep ecology' refers to a movement that seeks to radically "change our understanding of ourselves and our place in nature," (Marshall, p.413) as opposed to 'shallow environmentalism' that is concerned with planet-wide pollution control, preservation, and conservation. (Marshall, p.404) Radical ecology, of which deep ecology is a part, also seeks to reorient public thought about the environment. Marshall argues that radical ecologists, "search for a new creative harmony between individuals, communities and the natural world." (Marshall, p.406) These same issues become prominent in much contemporary American Pagan and Wiccan thought.

There are three predominant forms of radical ecology: social ecology, deep ecology, and eco-feminism, which can be seen as an amalgamation of the previous two, and of which Starhawk is a part. Marshall explains that the significant difference between social and deep ecologists is one of focus although they address many of the same issues, "The social ecologists are primarily concerned with changing society [through political and social means] in order to change our relationship to nature, while deep ecologists concentrate on the direct relationship between the individual and nature unmediated by society. One stresses the role of society in creating the ecological crisis, the other the responsibility of each citizen for planet Earth." (Marshall, pp.403-

4; c.f. Adrian Harris, p.150-1) These radical ecologists work to address many issues that are both directly and indirectly related to the environment, for instance hidden energy costs, effects on health, species extinction, and landscape issues.

CONTEMPORARY PAGANS IN THE 1980'S AND 1990'S

Since the deep ecology movement encourages a spiritual basis for action, it is similar to Pagan theology in many ways. Harvey argues that, "Deep Ecology is attractive to many Pagans. It encourages deep thinking about human interrelationships with the rest of Nature and provides a necessary critique of dominant ideologies of the West that permit – perhaps demand – the mastery and exploitation of Nature." (Harvey, 1997, p.136) With the 'Gaia Hypothesis' gaining popularity among American Pagans during the 1980s, the Wiccan and Pagan community membership swelled due to the popularity of religiously motivated responses to the environmental crisis. Crowley explains, "Just as the commune and hippie movement brought an influx of people into Wicca in the 1970s, so environmental activism brought in a new generation in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of today's Wiccans belong to environmental groups, some Wiccan and Pagan groups are created specifically to focus on environmental concerns, and many cite environmental concerns as one of their reasons for becoming Wiccan." (Crowley, 1998, p.177)

During this time the number of traditional and eclectic Wiccan and Pagan groups in America were plentiful. (c.f. Pearson, 2000) Many of these new groups began in response to environmental issues and sought to create unique forms of Paganism. However, Zell's experience has led him to assume that "the fundamental premises remain pretty much the same as in the early '70s. Just fleshed out more through beautiful Pagan liturgy, song, art, literature, etc." (Zell, personal correspondence, Feb. 12, 2001) Examples of the many popular new environmentally pro-active American Wiccan and Pagan groups that arose during the 1980s and 1990s can be found in Appendix 2.

IN CONCLUSION

As can be seen, American Wicca and contemporary Paganism have woven together many threads of thought from the history of environmentalism into a cohesive belief and practice system. The cultural radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s provided Wicca and Paganism with a culturally viable outlet for growth. Fox explains many of the important factors present in American Wicca and Paganism that led to these religions being called 'Nature religions':

> The egalitarianism of the civil rights movement and feminism, the emergence of the new environmentalism, and the paradigm shift involving holistic thinking, human potentials, and postmodern philosophy all are components of Pagan culture today. Paganism not only has been influenced by these social movements, but it also has been a strong influence upon them as they continue to be forces at work in dominant culture. Many of Paganism's most visible

> leaders, teachers, writers, and networkers also have been and are active in one or more of these social change movements." (Fox, 1996)

The most relevant social movement for this work is environmentalism. The following chapter explores many of the 'Nature' aspects that these Wiccan and contemporary Pagan activists and leaders have written about, taught, and otherwise added onto Gardner's original Wiccan foundation.

VI – "A NATURE RELIGION IMPLIES A NATURE TO WORSHIP."

Wicca and contemporary Paganism were evolving from religions of nature veneration to religions of nature preservation due to the encouragement of those who had participated in the 1960s and 1970s counter-cultural movements. It was during the 1970s pollution scare that Wicca allied itself closely to an agenda to benefit the natural world (c.f. Crowley, 1998, p.176) and Otter Zell asserts, "the Nature focus really began to gell [sic] with the first Earth Day, in April of 1970." (Zell, personal correspondence, Feb. 12, 2001) It was also at this time, Harvey argues, "Pagan theology [became] a part of Pagan ecology. The Natural [became] more important than the supernatural." (Harvey, 1997, p.134) Wicca in America was evolving, as Crowley asserts, in a significant way: "Wicca had moved out of the darkness, the occult world of witchery, to occupy the moral highground – environmentalism. To be at one with nature in one's inner self is no longer enough; radical action to preserve nature is now important." (Crowley, 1998, p.177)

This chapter will discuss the types of environmental activism that were becoming a part of American Wicca and Paganism and will also explore many of the ways in which nature was being explained and understood by these groups. The American environmental context of the 1970s to the present has been one marked by concern for the ailing natural world. Due to this perception, Wiccans have increasingly sought to

heal the earth, from which they feel they have been provided tremendous insight, understanding, connection, and a means of spirituality.

Many people have been drawn to the contemporary Paganism movement due to its belief in the sacredness of the earth and of all life. Harvey elucidates: "Pagans are 'at home' in an endangered earth and are trying to find ways (all ways, any ways) to put things right for all of life... The 'spiritual world' of Paganism is the same as the physical world." (Harvey, 1997, p.132) This interaction with the earth has helped to develop Pagan and Wiccan positions on environmentalism.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIONS THAT BENEFIT THE EARTH

Most Wiccans and contemporary Pagans assert their belief in the centrality and sacredness of the earth, and this, according to Sarah Pike, "seems conducive to a sense of stewardship toward land and animals." (Pike, p.45) A problem with this statement is that the contemporary Pagan movement does not have a stringent set of ethics or beliefs, therefore, it must be emphasized that there is a wide range of attitudes towards the issues being discussed; beliefs about Nature and the actions resulting from assumptions about those beliefs. There are three major types of social actions regarding the environment taken by those American Pagans who choose to be publicly active: political activism, protesting, and becoming active members of environmentalist groups on one side; more family-oriented actions such as gardening,

recycling, and composting on another; and the third alternative, which has become the most popular, is indirect involvement through ritual and magical practices. There is a wide range of activism and much debate among the Pagan community as a whole as to the most appropriate courses of action.

The most politically active Pagan environmentalists often follow the model provided by Starhawk, or members of other groups such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, or EarthFirst! whose stated missions are to preserve and protect the environment and its inhabitants, as well as the ideas of the previously mentioned ecologically-oriented authors and earlier environmentalists. Margot Adler noticed that the strongest 'ecological militancy' came from non-Wiccan groups of Pagans, such as Feraferia and the Church of All Worlds. (Adler, p.401) Adler's book was published before Starhawk gained popularity and before the Wiccan answers to the late-1970s environmental scares were fully formulated and enacted. The Church of All Worlds remains a politically active environmental group, but others, with a predominately Wiccan structure, such as Circle and Reclaiming, have arisen along side it.

Many Wiccans, as Harvey has stated, believe that "Ecology demands concerted public action and active changes in society of benefit to the Earth." (Harvey, 1997, p.141) As has been shown throughout this work, Paganism has Green roots that have been encouraging ecological thoughtfulness for decades. Paganism has brought diversity to the number of ways that one can express environmental concerns. Harvey explains,

"Some pagans meditate for the good of the planet, some use the 'energy' raised in ritual drama to benefit the rain forests, some spike threatened trees, some lie in front of bulldozers." (Harvey, 1997, p.126)

Recognizing that their Pagan identity and political activism can have somewhat idyllic aspirations, many still insist upon pursuing their goals and being satisfied with what little headway they can make against the powers of government and 'big business'. On the other side of this equation there are those practitioners who feel that eco-activism is not an integral part of their Pagan religion. Instead of the more overt forms of national and global activism, many Wiccans and Pagans work for local and personal changes to specific situations. (c.f. Harvey, 1997, p.130) Sarah Pike, in her study of contemporary Pagans and Wiccans who attend Pagan festivals and gatherings, has noticed that the participants at these gatherings do "seem to be more environmentally conscious than the general population, but not many of them are environmental activists, preferring to make changes in their individual and community lives such as building a solar house or composting toilets on a festival site, rather than becoming involved with political action." (Pike, p.48)

Although most Pagans probably have never been to an environmental protest, all available evidence gives the impression that most Pagans are aware of, concerned with, and have a specific agenda about the environment. Whether their activities take the form of recycling, buying environmentally friendly products, or picking up

garbage on either a mountain trail or along a highway, their understanding of the importance of the earth drives many to do some form of work to benefit the environment.

One of the most common forms of environmental activism among American Wiccans and contemporary Pagans is ritual practice to enact change. With its roots firmly in the magical traditions of Europe and England, British Wiccan structure, as well as the Gaia awareness movement of twentieth century, American Wiccans today focus their energies, both physical and metaphysical, on environmental issues and the petitioning their Gods to aid in their quest for correcting social and ecological problems. (c.f. Crowley, 1998, p.178) The depth and breadth of Wiccan ideology regarding ecological themes can be quite large, as this chapter will continue to show. Regarding environmental concerns, Orion reveals some of the depth inherent in Wiccan credo when she writes:

> The idea of the Earth as alive – mother or lover – and the symbol of the pentagram, or endless knot that connects humans to the Earth as well as the vast universe, inspire a broad, rather than local, vision. The Neopagans offer a different vision of time and the repercussions of one's actions than does progress. The notion that instead of moving forward, a lifetime moves through a wheel of the year over and over again in a spiral suggests the impossibility of leaving mistakes of waste 'behind.' The threefold law inspires actions whose repercussions a social reformer would not mind revisiting when the spiral comes full circle, and a sense of responsibility to those who lived before and to those who will be here in the future. The notion of the web mobilizes action for the common good by suggesting that one creature's suffering resonates through all others. If health and well-being, for societies – indeed for the planet – as well as for individuals, consist in balance, then inequalities and blockages of the flow of resources will eventually produce pathologies from which none may escape. (Orion, p.238)

Activities ranging from recycling to ritual illustrate the variety of actions that Wiccans and contemporary Pagans utilize to enact their beliefs about the importance of their role in the well-being of the environment and the earth.

EMPHASIS ON HEALING THE EARTH

There does seem to be a greater emphasis on doing magic "to protect natural sites and species under threat," Crowley writes. Also, "in the 1970s there was proportionately more concern on human-focused issues i.e. healing." (Crowley, personal correspondence, Feb 13, 2001) One of the most prevalent pathologies that is perceived to be plaguing the earth is pollution. Understanding the earth as a living and sacred bio-system, many Wiccans see pollution (nuclear waste, toxic dumping, sewage release, et cetera) as harming the earth's immune system, thereby making Mother Nature sick. (c.f. Orion, p.150) The magical and ritual practices of the Wiccans and Pagans are most often directed at combating this sickness in order to heal the earth.

By being active rather than passive participants in life, contemporary Pagans are beginning to more fully understand and articulate the roles they have made for themselves. The most profound of these is usually explained as being a conduit for the healing of an ailing eco-system. The actions that are taken take many forms but most often healing is done in sacred space, in rituals. Orion has noticed that rituals at Pagan festivals are particularly important venues for large groups of people to raise energy

for healing purposes and then release the healing energy to local areas in need. (c.f. Orion, p.150)

As an integral part of the ritual process that is intended to heal the earth, or any Wiccan or Pagan formal ritual, is the creation of sacred space, consecration and honoring the space as sacred, as a place fit for communing with the Gods and Goddesses. Hutton compares modern formal Pagan ritual purpose with the reasons for ritual performance among what Isaac Bonewitz calls 'paleo-Pagans' – those pre-Christian and pre-historical pagans. Hutton writes, "If the informative act of ancient paganism was *propitiation*, the process of appeasing and pleasing superhuman forces, then the equivalent action of modern paganism is *consecration*, the treatment of people, places, and objects in such a way as to make them seem more spiritually powerful, effective, and significant." (Hutton, 1999, p.398) It is this consecration that is the next in the long list of the important Wiccan themes related to their understanding of Nature.

HONORING THE EARTH AND NATURE

Wicca has two major facets: the Mystery religion that is focused on the personal development of the practitioner, and the Nature religion in which honoring the earth is the prominent feature and central tenet. "In fact," Harvey argues, "there is no clear demarcation separating personal growth from celebrating Nature" (Harvey, 1997,

p.35) since the person is part of the Natural world as inhabited by Deity. Crowley asserts, "veneration of nature was part of the constitutions/aims and objectives of most [Pagan] organizations [since the late 1960s]. This is not the same thing as environmental activism, but represents a conscious focusing on the environment, which lead to increasing activism." (Crowley, personal correspondence, Feb 13, 2001) More recently, honoring nature has been one of the more attractive forces in the growth of Wicca and Paganism.

The honoring of nature seems to imply, to a certain extent, the honoring of locale. Placement becomes very important for Wiccans and Pagans who often idealize their concept of wilderness while revisiting the Romantic rejection of urbanization. Pearson elaborates, "The veneration of nature in Wicca, the concern for the earth as deity, and the pantheism of seeing the divine in all of nature has led Wiccans to maintain an attitude of reverence for the wild, untamed countryside on the one hand, and of sadness or revulsion at human estrangement from this ideal, living in towns and cities away from the land, on the other." (Pearson, 2000b) In this way, particular 'natural' and 'wild' areas, sacred sites, and accessible countryside have become favored Pagan and Wiccan locales for daydreaming, visualizations, idealizing, ritual practices, and attuning themselves to Nature, even though many "hold most of their celebrations in the comfort of their own homes." (Harvey, 1997, p.51)

LOCATION AND SACRED SITES

Contemporary Paganism does not focus on a transcendent notion of divinity or a distant place that one is striving to reach. Paganism is a religion related to the earth and to an immanent concept of the Divine. These ideas have evolved from nature veneration into a religion of the 'here and now'. Harvey wrote, "It is a spiritual ecology." (Harvey, 1996) Not only found in the places created by man (churches, stone circles, burial mounds, et cetera), sacred sites are found in many places in the natural world (beaches, forests, mountain tops, rivers, et cetera) that are least affected by human manipulation. It is these types of places that Pagans try to visit in order to connect themselves physically and mentally to Nature. By physically experiencing these places, the contemporary Pagan and Wiccan hopes to become aware of, and establish contact with, the myriad life forms present in each diverse eco-system including other-than-human life (spirits of the land and life, Deity). (Harvey, 1996)

Through being in nature and working to become aware of the many aspects of the natural world, the typical Pagan or Wiccan is ultimately working to integrate the ideas of 'spirit' and 'matter' in order to more fully realize and appreciate the sacredness of all places and of all of life. This is done so their mundane life can be experienced as sacred as 'natural' places are perceived to be, since ultimately all places, even the more human-centered environments, are a part of the earth and of Nature. (Harvey, 1996) An important aspect to understanding Wicca and contemporary Paganism as

'Nature religions' is that practitioners are diligently working to remain at all times in a state of awareness of the sacredness of life and earth. Furthermore, this practice also helps the student to become more aware of the interconnectedness of all of life and the place of humans in it.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND THE 'WEB' OF LIFE

Due to the development of intimacy with the natural environment, Pagans begin to realize that all parts of the natural world are fundamentally related to each other. Dennis Carpenter, one of the founders of Circle Sanctuary, argues, "Such perceptions of the Earth and all of Nature as alive and interconnected constitutes a fundamental tenet of Paganism that fosters a sense of compassion and an obligation to save the environment." (Carpenter, p.55) Before images of the cloud-covered blue and green earth spinning in the darkness of space were projected onto most television screens and news magazine covers in the late 1960s, contemporary Pagans understood the planet to be alive with diverse, but interconnected, living beings. This awareness, according to Harvey, was "grounded in the celebration of the land." (Harvey, 1996)

A common symbol that represents the interconnectedness of life is the 'web of life' often portrayed as a spider's web or a net of energy lines (ley-lines) that covers the earth. (Carpenter, p.50) This imagery is used to help the practitioner visualize and realize the relationships that they have with life on the planet and also the

consequences of their actions on these relationships. When one strand of the net is pulled, the rest of the net is also affected. In this way, the earth's ecological problems are removed from the realms of abstraction, philosophy, economy, and technology. The web image helps Pagans to more fully understand that problems are not just caused by business, science, and politicians. They realize, as Harvey asserts, "such problems are largely caused by everyday life (the cars we drive, the trucks which deliver our foods, the forests destroyed to make way for our fields, etc.) so the responses must involve everyday life. They are problems of relationships." (Harvey, 1997, p.138)

Not only in rituals, but also in everyday life, Pagans learn to respect the earth by discovering, as Harvey explains, "that human living is part (neither an insignificant nor an irreplaceable part) of the web of relationships which is Life on Earth. They see that eating, drinking, traveling, work, leisure, love, sex, procreation, death, anger, joy, peacefulness and many other activities and attitudes are significant, perhaps sacred." (Harvey, 1996) Pagans work to reject the dualistic notion of the 'ordinary' and 'mundane' as being separate from 'sacred' and 'spiritual' that is prevalent in the cultures in which Wiccans and Pagans live. For contemporary Pagans, "the divine is met within matter and the ordinary manifests the sacred." (Harvey, 1996)

All acts of life are understood to relate to the theme of interconnectedness, yet not all Pagans develop their practices or beliefs to the same extremes. One example is the

debate about appropriate food for Pagans. Many Pagans and Wiccans confess that the symbol of the 'web of life' has led them to stop eating meat because they do not want the direct responsibility for the terrible circumstances that animals often have to endure in order to be food for humans. Others are aware of this argument but eat meat, often offering thanks to the animal that died for human nourishment. (c.f. Marion Bowman, 2000) This argument is heard within the Pagan community and draws attention to one of the many disagreements and differences among Wiccans and Pagans as to the acceptable degrees of action related to beliefs. Harvey explains why these arguments do not destroy the Pagan community, "Having observed life, including death, the Pagan is not given authority to imitate anything or anyone else. They might accept that something is part of life or nature but they cannot therefore say, 'and I can (or should) do the same'. Pagan ethics are not derived from theology (or thealogy) but from [personal choices and] relationships with 'all our relations'." (Harvey, 1996)

The interconnected nature of life and the environment is further taken outside of the realm of abstraction when the place of the human and the human body in the 'web' is determined and emphasized. The ideas of an immanent deity of the earth and the Goddess as mother of all of life, lead Pagans to the awareness of themselves and their own bodies as being sacred and important. There are many Pagan ideas that relate to this anti-dualistic thought, such as the admonition to become aware of Hermes Trismegistus' axiom 'As above, so below', and of the symbol of the pentacle

representing the microcosm of the human reflected within the macrocosm of the universe. The physical body in the physical world becomes authoritative for Pagans and Wiccans who strive to embody and actualize otherwise purely cerebral philosophical exercises.

EMBODIED REALITY

Many Pagan practices are geared toward learning to be 'at home' on earth, as well as in the ecology of the natural world and in their own bodies. The physical body, Wicca and Paganism teach, is one place of manifestation of Deity. Far from being separate from the rest of the natural world, because of their relationships to the Gods, contemporary Pagans celebrate their embodiment as an opportunity to learn more about themselves, their Gods, as well as their relationships to animals, plants, and the other inhabitants of the earth. (c.f. Harvey, 1997, p.45) Ultimately, Paganism is most concerned with life, especially everyday life on earth, as their means of spiritual fulfillment.

PANTHEISM AND DIVINE IMMANENCE

The key to Pagan spiritual understanding of embodied existence in the natural world is their view about the Gods and Goddesses and their divine immanence as manifested in the sacred Nature. According to Harvey, "In Craft writings (poetry, prose, ceremonies,

invocations) every conceivable aspect of Nature manifests the divine. Bodily functions, psychological moods, weather, geology, flora, fauna, astronomical and terrestrial phenomena, earth, air, fire and water – the divine is immanent in all things." (Harvey, 1997, p.43) This pantheist view became a prevalent theme in Wicca when Valiente's writings evolved the religion away from its fertility emphasis toward the veneration of Nature. At this time, Deity became the 'energy' and 'force' that manifested itself in the myriad life forms on earth, effectively 'ensouling' them. (c.f. Pearson, 2000b)

There are different and sometimes conflicting views related to the immanence of Deity. A large proportion of Wiccans and Pagans explain that Deity, for them, is a wholly amorphous phenomenon that manifests itself in the known physical world in masculine and feminine elements. Mike Marra of the Coven of Minerva discussed in *People of the Earth* that his Wiccan tradition emphasizes the powers of nature in this way, "We recognize that those powers of nature have names and that they have become Gods and Goddesses." (Marra quoted in Hopman, p.48) There are other ideas, one of which disavows the dual notion of Deity in favor of a feminine view of the natural world and its energies. Ballard explained the Dianic Wiccan viewpoint when she wrote, "Some Pagan friends want to convert me to their 'balance of duality'. 'Look at nature!' they say. 'Everything in nature is male and female!' I look at the stars and mountains, sea and clouds. In them is the pulsing music of that force that is and also runs the Universe. I name it Divine and I honour [sic] it as feminine. The

Goddess is love, honour, power. Strength, nurture and chaos are hers. She turns the Wheel and is turned by it." (Ballard, witchvox.com)

No matter how Wiccans and Pagans understand Divine manifestation(s) in Nature, they all agree on particular important practices that help them become more aware of Deity. These rituals and celebrations are determined by the Pagans' intimacy with the earth. As human life reflects the macrocosm of Nature's life, Pagan celebrations are based upon certain parts of the year that are understood to be key points repeated in each year and each cycle. Not only the earth, but also the sun, the moon, and the stars provide important markers that are observed and celebrated by Wiccans and Pagans alike. The observations of these events in Nature are due to the knowledge of Nature that has been the discussion of this chapter.

RITUAL CYCLES AND THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

Learning about and exploring the interrelationship with Nature is accentuated at particular times of the year in Wiccan and Pagan practices. The most readily recognizable and most often performed rituals are those associated with the Wheel of the Year, a name given to the cyclical nature of the four seasons of the agricultural and solar year of Northern Europe. There are numerous overlapping cycles that happen in nature in each year and in each lifetime. The rituals of the Wheel of the Year attempt to introduce the practitioner to the interconnectedness of these cycles with human life.

In addition to the agricultural year consisting of planting (conception and birth), growth, maturation, and harvest (death), there is a solar year that traces the path of the Sun from rebirth at Yule – the Winter Solstice - through spring growth to the height of power at the Summer Solstice and eventual waning to death and immediate rebirth the following Yule. The themes of life and death, both in the natural world and by extension in the lives of humankind, are prevalent in these rituals. Other important cyclical motifs are observed in both the Zodiacal year and the Lunar cycle – which lasts only 28 days but is the second most important aspect of the Wheel of the Year due to its metaphorical associations with the three major phases of the Goddess: the waxing moon symbolizing the Maiden, the full moon symbolizing the Mother, and the waning moon representing the Crone.

The purpose of these rituals is many-fold, but for the purposes of this discussion about Wiccan understandings of Nature and the environment, the most important aspect of these rituals is the opportunities they provide the practitioner to attune themselves with the mechanics of the natural world. According to Harvey, "the celebrant enacts and experiences [the] cycle from birth, through growth, sexuality, decline and death and into rebirth," (Harvey, 1997, p.43) in order to become familiar with, and therefore better understand, the cycles of Nature. Carpenter adds to this idea, "By attuning themselves through ritual and meditation with the cycles of Nature, Pagans gain greater understanding of the cyclical processes operating in their own lives."

(Carpenter, p.62) Summarizing the depth of interconnection between ritual and understanding, Harvey explains:

> The [rituals] are sources of revelation to those willing to listen, willing to watch, willing to feel, think, try, become intimate. They reveal the nature of time: not linear but cyclical. A tree may grow from seed to maturity and then fall and rot. This linearity is only part of its story, however. In its falling it makes room for other trees (perhaps its own seedlings) to flourish; its rotting occasions the vigorous growth of further life: insects, woodpeckers, fungi, mushroom eaters. The seasonal festivals reveal the facts of life: change, growth, maturity, breeding, decline, decay. They provide the context for explorations of the joys and sadness of embodied life (eating and being eaten, for example). Any rituals which take place at seasonal festivals distil the broader experience of observing and participating in Nature. (Harvey, 1996)

Although these ideas are central to most Wiccan and Pagan practices and beliefs, there is some debate about the formation of the Wheel of the Year. As Harvey explains, for new Pagans, "They dictate regular occasions on which Pagans celebrate and/or contemplate life: that of their environment, of the whole Earth and of themselves in relation to it. The emotive aspect comes before the intellectual: the celebration before the contemplation, the ceremony before the meaning." (Harvey, 1996) However, the codification of the eight Sabbats (rituals of the Wheel of the Year), which reflect the turning cycle of nature to a degree, is a human construct not rooted in actual lived reality where "the Wheel [turns] the seasons instead of the seasons turning the Wheel." (Pearson, 2000b) One of the reasons for this is the social logistic of working and celebrating with a coven or group of people, in which ritual times can be very difficult to arrange and are planned months in advance. According to Pearson, many groups' ritual cycles take "precedence over nature's timing of the seasons, and in order

to facilitate Wicca a grid of external references-the eight-spoked Wheel of the Year-is dropped onto nature. Thus, Wicca imposes correspondences rather than allowing correspondences to emerge from living nature and then reading them back into it." (Pearson, 2000b) This shows the dichotomy of spending much time and energy attuning oneself to nature, while remaining bound to the artificial construct of the Julian calendar.

CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN WICCA AND NATURE

One central tenet of Wicca, for the major authors and traditions including those mentioned above, is to free people from the limitations of the artificial, 'unnatural' world that takes Nature and all that it offers for granted. Being a 'Green' religion in philosophy and practice, Wicca's main source of authority is Nature. Harvey emphasizes that, "Paganism is not a revealed, scriptural, priestly, supernatural or dogmatic religion. Its sources of authority are in Nature: the observable cycles of the planet and the experienced cycles of the body. Paganism is formed by Pagans observing and experiencing these things and then evolving forms in which they can be celebrated." (Harvey, 1996)

According to popular literature aimed at the Wiccan and contemporary Pagan audience, the amount and variety of what can be observed through nature and then applied directly to one's life and spiritual growth, is immense. Anodea Judith believes

that Nature is "something that is alive, that does respond, that has intelligence... It expresses organization, intelligence, beauty, harmony, completion, totality, essence, in the most profound sense." (Anodea Judith, quoted in Hopman, p.226)

All aspects of the Wiccan worldview regarding Nature, including all of those listed above, are reflected and emphasized in Wiccan and Pagan practices, chants, songs, rituals, poetry, art, books, and journals. (One example is the popular Pagan journal *PanGaia – Earthwise Spirituality* that just released its Issue #27 for April 2001 (Point Area, CA) which is titled "Honoring Gaia". The articles explore many different ways to 'honor Gaia', ranging from art to ritual to political action.) Beginning with Valiente's "Charge of the Goddess", Wiccan Deity has been related to the natural world in many ways. Many later Wiccan and Pagan groups became interested in developing extensive correspondence lists related to their beliefs about the natural world and all its interactions with other aspects of Wiccan life: the ritual structure, the four elements, healing and herbs, tarot cards, astrology, and human life cycles, just to name a few. To provide a more specific example of this, a portion of the ritual structure will be briefly explained.

The typical Pagan or Wiccan ritual space is called a 'Circle', referring to its shape (actually it is a globe – like the earth) where it is bisected by the ground. This circle is seen as an egalitarian structure and space where all inside are equal and in balance. To create this ritual area – 'sacred' space – the practitioner will envision the sphere being

'carved' into mundane, everyday space. The person will then clear out the mundane 'energies' of the place, leaving only sacred energy – since all of nature is understood to be sacred, it just takes a little work to focus on ridding the ritual spot of unwanted energies. The creation of the sacred space takes place within each practitioner as they prepare themselves to commune with Deity. If the ritual is being performed outside, in the natural world, as opposed to indoors, this process is hastened by the usual lack of mundane energies and the relative ease of attaining the desired state of reverence. The next step is to recognize the four quarters by calling on the idealized energies of the four cardinal directions (north, east, south, and west) as they are seen to relate to the four Aristotilian elements (usually earth, air, fire, and water respectively). The tools that are used (altar, wand, pentacle, water, incense, athame, et cetera) in the ritual also have their connections to the natural world, the elements, and directions. Each aspect of the ritual and its tools have lengthy correspondences that are recognized in their proper time in each ritual, or during the Wheel of the Year celebration cycle.

It must be stressed that although not all Wiccans or Pagans adhere to all of the previously mentioned beliefs, most do profess belief in many of them. This work has focused on a few of the major traditions in the American Wiccan and contemporary Pagan movements because it is these traditions that guide large portions of the beliefs of its members. Another point that deserves to be mentioned is that even though the ideal place to practice is outdoors in the wilderness, that is not always possible, especially for urban dwellers. Harvey explains, "Pagans do not spend all their lives, or

all the significant moments of their lives, out of doors. Many Pagan activities take place indoors. Not all elements of the celebration of Nature require contact with the mud and matter of the other-than-human environment. The inspirations and validating experiences of Pagans are not solely 'natural', nor do they consist exclusively of encounters with the Greenwood and its inhabitants or immersion in woodlands and wilderness." (Harvey, 2000, p.164)

There are many ways of experiencing Nature and attuning oneself to aspects of the natural world without going to the woods or the beach. As was noted, much of contemporary Pagan belief has come from reading the texts of environmentalists, historians, and anthropologists. Harvey also mentions folklore, herbalism, philosophy, and archaeology as other avenues of exploration that have profoundly shaped contemporary Paganism. An excellent example of the range of resources that Pagans use to learn and practice their religion is technology. Many, according to Adler and others, work in technological fields. (Adler, 1986) Even though many contemporary Pagans idealize the ancient past and seek to recreate it in temporary forms, such as during camping festivals, and many agree with the Romantic rejection of urbanization and rapid population expansion, a growing number are also quick to utilize the new technology of the Internet in order to explore resources not immediately available to them in other ways. Additionally, the Internet is becoming home to many 'virtual' groups who perform ritual in the realm of cyberspace as others would utilize sacred space.

VII – THE MATURATION PROCESS: PRESENT DIFFICULTIES AND VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Wiccan and contemporary Pagan community as a whole is being forced to face a number of important issues regarding their beliefs about the environment and Nature. For instance, many Wiccans and Pagans are in the process of re-evaluating their identity with respect to each other, the rest of the world, and the importance of locality. Additionally, there are an increasing number of scholars and practitioners who are refuting the notion of an idyllic ancient past. In doing so, they are calling on Pagans and Wiccans to reassess their views about the ancient world, its value to the contemporary practitioner, and modern ecological issues.

Many scholars have done their best to show that there has been little in the way of peace and harmony under a matriarchal culture in the distant, but knowable, past. Margaret Murray and Robert Grave's Eden-like portrayals of the ancient world where Goddess worshippers were the norm and with the advent of Christianity were killed or went underground, have been shown to be inaccurate. With the refutation of a foundation myth, many Wiccans and Pagans are re-evaluating their roots and are striving to ground their beliefs and practices in different way, through increased attention to Nature.

As Crowley has argued, "Wicca is changing and developing from a closed, secretive occult tradition, into a more open, public movement that has environmentalism at the

top of its agenda." (Crowley, 1998, p.179) The Pagan community has felt the need to unify its public voice, even though there is much disagreement among its various members, regarding environmentalism. (c.f. Bowman) Many Wiccans and Pagans do regard Nature as sacred and of utmost importance, however few actually know very much about their local 'nature'. As Clifton has posited, contemporary Pagans "owe more to scholarship than lived experience." (Clifton, 1998, Internet article) This is not always the case, but people are usually drawn to the contemporary Paganism Movement either through books from authors like Starhawk (c.f. Orion, p.261), mythology such as *The Golden Bough*, or through their feelings about the environment.

Additionally, contemporary Pagans in the day and age of the Internet, fast technology, and an overabundance of available material goods, have shown a habit of striving for immediate gratification. Rowan, Clifton, Pearson, Bowman, Harvey, and others advise that this idealism be stopped, and for Pagans to more intimately learn about the places where they live. Clifton admonishes: "To be Pagan is to be particular." (Clifton, 1998) No one lives in Neolithic Europe; Stonehenge is no longer active in the ways that it once was. Instead of trying to recreate the past, these authors argue that Pagans should strive to be in the present, to learn the songs of the earth where they live, and to learn about from where the local water comes, for example. The 1981 quiz republished by Chas Clifton (1998) called "Where You At?" asks questions about one's local 'bioregion', and has been gaining popularity among some Wiccan and Pagan groups

because the questions and the subsequent search for answers helps them to get in touch with the earth as it directly relates to their locality.

For many, attuning to and connecting with the earth is their primary reason for becoming Pagan. A large percentage of Pagans were introduced to, or became interested in, Paganism because of its emphasis on the sacredness of the Natural world. (c.f. Harvey, 1997; Bowman, 2000; Rhiannon, quoted in Hopman, p.54; Judith Anodea as quoted in Hopman, p.225) Many others have expressed the same sentiments that Judy Harrow of Proteus Coven and former First Officer of the Covenant of the Goddess has regarding the factors that piqued her interest in 'Nature religion', "The nature orientation primarily... When I began to learn about the threats to the environment, that all the things that I loved were being threatened, my feelings became more intense. To find people who based their worship around the natural cycles and the budding and leafing and changing of the trees was a very meaningful thing." (Harrow, quoted in Hopman, p.250)

The interest that people have regarding particular locations and special places is another reason for the call to focus on local issues since, as Pearson writes, "Wiccan use of nature imagery appears to be on a cosmological scale rather than located in a particular environment." (Pearson, 2000b) Many writers and groups are working to correct this deficiency by emphasizing ideals relating to environmentalism, feminism, activism, and the importance of one's particular physical location.

Among a growing number of Wiccan and contemporary Pagans groups, an emphasis on more healthy environmental practices is taking place and the concerted efforts of many writers and community leaders are providing voices that are being heard in the greater Pagan community that urge Pagans to take a stronger environmental stance against unwarranted pollution and for the healing of the earth. However, Pearson (2000b) and Hanegraaff (1998) wonder how deep Wiccan activism really goes and if Wiccan beliefs actually manifest in Wiccan practices. They argue that if the two – belief and practice – do not balance, then the religion needs to re-evaluate its structure. On the other hand, many other authors have noticed the growth of environmental activism on the part of Wiccans and contemporary Pagans in the United States. Adler writes that, even though it is true only among a portion of the Pagan community, "it is still fair to say there has been an amazing growth of political activity, *most* of it in support of alternative, feminist, ecological, 'green,' or peace objectives." (Adler, p.413) As has been shown, this activity takes many forms, including direct action and magic through ritual. Adrian Harris argues that Paganism, "not only holds a solution to our environmental crisis, but can bring about a revolution in the way our culture makes sense of reality." (Harris, p.149) Maybe this is true since it is a commonly expressed concern among Wiccans and Pagans, but the most important aspect of Paganism's ecological agenda is, according to Harvey, the "*celebration* of being at home in our bodies and in Nature." (Harvey, 1997, p.141) The body is, after all, the tool for action, and Nature is the place to be.

Despite coming from roots that were not based on the importance of the natural world, Wicca and contemporary Paganism, as they have developed in the United States, have made use of many Romantic ideals by combining them with the existing Wiccan structure to produce a religion that both venerates and strives to protect the earth and its environment. The American environmentalist, feminist, and 1960s counter-culture movements created the context in which the flexible Wiccan framework was utilized to express and spiritualize environmentalist agendas. As those ideologies were integrated into the Wiccan worldview, the depth of understanding of 'nature' evolved from the use of natural resources for personal benefit to address a multiplicity of nature-related themes, all of which expands and reinforces the notion of Nature's sacredness as central to most Wiccan practice and belief.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – THE CHARGE OF THE GODDESS – by Doreen Valiente

Hear the words of the Great Mother, she who of old was called among men Artemis, Astarte, Athene, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Cerridwen, Dana, Arianrhod, Isis, Bride, and by many other names.

Whenever ye have need of any thing, once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full, then shall ye assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of me, who am Queen of all witches. There shall ye assemble, ye who are fain to learn all sorcery, yet have not won its deepest secrets; to these will I teach things that are yet unknown.

And ye shall be free from slavery; and as a sign that ye be truly free, ye shall be naked in your rites; and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music and love, all in my praise. For mine is the ecstasy of the Spirit; and mine is the joy on earth; for my law is love unto all beings.

Keep pure your highest ideal, strive ever towards it; let naught stop you or turn you aside.
For mine is the secret door which opens upon the Land of Youth, and mine is the cup of the wine of life, and the Cauldron of Cerridwen, which is the Holy Grail of immortality. I am the gracious Goddess, who gives the gift of joy unto the heart of man. Upon earth, I give the knowledge of the spirit eternal, and beyond death I give peace and freedom, and reunion with those who have gone before. Nor do I demand sacrifice; for behold, I am the Mother of all living, and my love is poured out upon the earth.

Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess; she in the dust of whose feet are the host of heaven, and whose body encircles the universe.

I who am the beauty of the green earth, and the white Moon among the stars, and the mystery of the waters, and the desire of the heart of man, call unto thy soul. Arise, come unto me. For I am the soul of Nature, who gives life to the universe.

From me all things proceed, and unto me all things must return; and before my face, beloved of the Gods and of men, let thine innermost divine self be enfolded in the rapture of the infinite. Let my worship be within the heart that rejoiceth; for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals. And therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you.

And thou who thinkest to seek for me, know thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not unless thou knowest the mystery; that if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee, then thou wilt never find it without thee. For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

APPENDIX 2

EARTH SPIRIT

The EarthSpirit community of New England was formed in 1980, "with the goal of helping to create an active Pagan community in New England... and to help educate the general public concerning Earth-centered spirituality." (www.EarthSpirit.com/info.html) This group recognizes that the environmental crisis has provided a nexus for the growth of Contemporary Paganism because "many thousands of people have sought a spiritual context through which to address the current" perceived ecological situation. As a group of Pagans and Wiccans, they strive to "experience ourselves and everything that exists as vital parts of the whole of Nature, understanding that all things in the universe interact in both physical and spiritual relationship." (www.EarthSpirit.com/info.html)

PROTEUS AND JUDY HARROW

Proteus Coven was born at Midsummer of 1980, founded by Judy Harrow, to practice nature spirituality, in a way that finds "primary religious meaning and value within this life, in these bodies, on this Earth, here and now." (Harrow, wicca.drak...mission.htm) Believing that Deity is immanent in the form of the Mother Earth, they refer to their form of Wicca as 'geocentric', meaning that they study nature and direct their primary worship "toward our beautiful and endangered Mother Earth," (Harrow, wicca.drak...history2.htm) and because "She is now wounded and threatened, we dedicate our energies to defending and healing Her." (Harrow, wicca.drak...mission.htm)

CUUPS

The Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) was formed in the 1990s to promote Pagan and Christian dialogue, as well as encourage "the development of theo/alogical and liturgical materials based on earth and nature centered religious and spiritual perspectives." (www.cuups.org) To the traditional five sources of Unitarian Universalism, a sixth source that was petitioned for and added by CUUPS activists that asserts the legitimacy of religious teachings found in the "spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature." (www.cuups.org) CUUPS does not limit its membership to Wiccans and Contemporary Pagans but recognizes Humanists, Native Americans, and other practitioners of 'Nature religions'.

LAURIE CABOT

Laurie Cabot, author of *Celebrate the Earth* and *Power of the Witch*, is another advocate of nature-centered spiritual practices in conjunction with outward activism for the health of the environment. Her text, *Celebrate the Earth*, focuses on celebrating the Wiccan holidays in ways that also venerate the Earth. She writes in a letter on her website, "As Witches, we respect, honor, and heal the earth, which is our temple, with our magicks and with our action. Please visit the National Arbor Day Foundation Web site, which supports a cause dear to my heart, the preservation and further growth of our nation's trees, which are sacred to Witches and to many other spiritual groups. We have a responsibility, as caretakers for all of Mother Nature's work, to reforest the Earth." (Cabot, www.lauriecabot.com) She promotes social and political activity through "promoting the reforestation of America," and working with the politically-oriented Witches League for Public Awareness. (Cabot)

VITA

Shawn Arthur was born in Poughkeepsie, New York in June of 1971. He moved to Knoxville, Tennessee at a young age and attended public schools there, eventually graduating from Central High School in May of 1989. He began his university career in January of 1989 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. After taking a short reprieve, he returned to receive his Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from UTK in December of 1996. He returned once again to the University of Tennessee in August of 1997 to begin graduate work, and received a Master's degree in May of 2001.