

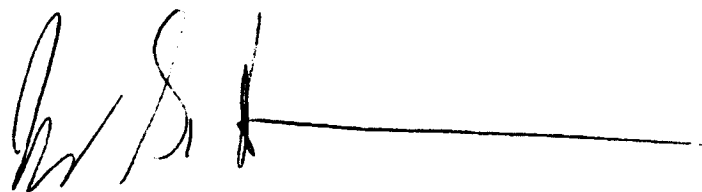
**Where the Goddess and God Walk:  
An Examination of Myth and Ritual in Revivalist Pagan Sabbat Celebrations with  
Particular Reference to the Temple of the Sacred Craft**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the  
University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by**

**JEFFREY STUART KUPPERMAN**

**December 2007**

The work is original and has not been submitted previously in support  
of any degree qualificatin or course.

A handwritten signature, possibly reading 'A. S. H.', is written in black ink. A long, thin horizontal line extends to the right from the end of the signature.

## **Acknowledgements**

It is impossible to thank everyone who has contributed; intellectually, emotionally, morally, materially or otherwise, to the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank, above all, my wife Gretel, for her patience and advice, not to mention superior librarianship, while I engaged in this task. Without her continued support, in all of the above ways and more, this would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my advisors Kenneth Newport and Irving Hexham for their advice and help with the somewhat unusual circumstances that brought an American to work with professors in two other countries.

The members of the Temple of the Sacred Craft must also be thanked for allowing me to spend time with them both in and out of ritual. The members of the online Pagan community *The Village* and the PaganMythRitual too group must be acknowledged for their input on all things Pagan. Finally I would like to thank Arlene Stefanik and the Librarians of Benedictine University, without whom not a single book or article could have been read.

## **Abstract**

This study explores how myths and rituals are conjoined within the practices of the coven of American Eclectic Wiccan Pagans called the Temple of the Sacred Craft. In order to understand how these two apparently distinct areas, myths and rituals, are related this thesis examines the relevant areas of the fields of ritual studies, myth studies and myth-ritual theory. The relatively new field of Pagan studies is also investigated. This leads to an historically and contextually grounded approach to each of these subjects. An emically and etically balanced approach to definition theory is employed, for as is argued here it is only within the context of such a balanced methodological framework that a fuller understanding of how Pagans understand themselves, and not only how others have represented them, can be attained.

The primary methodology of this thesis is that of anthropological participant-observation, which has been the mainstay of American anthropology since Franz Boas. Such fieldwork allows for the direct observation and experience of Pagan seasonal celebrations and their attendant rituals. This in turn leads to a better understanding of those rituals. The thesis is also exploration of how living Pagans understand and experience their own praxes. Thus the thesis focuses on the eight Sabbats, or seasonal holidays, and their accompanying rituals, of the Temple of the Sacred Craft, an Illinois-based coven of Eclectic Wiccans. This fieldwork is combined with an examination and analysis of several relevant and influential texts written by popular Pagan authors that highlight their own approach to their individual Paganisms, typically Wiccan or Wiccan-derived in nature. This allows the practices of the Temple of the Sacred Craft to be placed in the broader area of Wiccan practice and belief.



This thesis hence reveals several challenges to theories of ritual, myth and myth-ritual. It finds that by themselves the major schools of ritual theory fail to understand or to explain the practices and beliefs of the Temple of the Sacred Craft. The thesis further challenges popular contemporary understandings of myth as a reified category. Finally it will show how the classical myth-ritual theories that have so influenced the development of Wiccan ritual practice and theology are now incapable of accounting for those same practices and theologies. As such, this dual methodology of participant-observation and textual analysis explores and develops new approaches to all of these subjects, including the development of a theory of what this thesis calls 'embodied myth-rituals'. Under certain circumstances such a theory collapses the reified categories of myth and ritual to reveal a new and holistic praxis.

One of the ways in which this thesis is an original contribution to learning, is that it applies general methodological insights to this particular Pagan coven. As will be seen, this testing of the method against this specific example of the Temple of the Sacred Craft indicates certain weakness with the theories in question and thus necessitates major modification, if not a complete recasting, of previous myth-ritual studies, at least within the context of this particular Pagan coven.

The very specific new work presented in this thesis clearly needs to be set within a broader context of the study of religious practice, particularly as related to Pagan studies. In order to do this the following topics are closely described and examined: the etymology and history of the term 'pagan' and its differentiation from modern 'Pagan' religions; ways of categorizing modern Paganisms and the history of ritual theory and its two main schools of thought. Pagan usages and understandings of what ritual is and what rituals are also explored, as is the history and etymology of the term 'myth' in academic and philosophical thought. Attention is also given to: Pagan

understandings of what myth is and what myths are; the classical myth and ritual theories of William Robertson Smith, Sir James Frazer and Jane Harrison and the Ritual Dominant School (theories which are significantly questioned here); a full cycle of the Temple of the Sacred Craft's eight Sabbat rituals; and, finally, the Sabbat rituals found in four important and influential Pagan texts. These areas of study gives rise to an analysis of myths within the Temple of the Sacred Craft's seasonal ritual cycle and the Pagan texts consulted, all of which leads to a fundamental critique of the ability of classical myth-ritual theories to understand the Temple of the Sacred Craft's ritual praxis and, finally, the development of a theory of embodied myth-rituals.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapters one through three are largely concerned with theoretical and definitional issues. Chapter one will introduce the Temple of the Sacred Craft, which is at the centre of this thesis. It will also be concerned with the methodological issues surrounding participant-observation. Chapters two and three focus upon definitions of 'Pagan', 'ritual' and 'myth' as well as provide an overview of classical myth-ritual theory. Chapter four begins the ethnological examination of the Temple of the Sacred Craft's Sabbat rituals after providing a wider context of Pagan ritual practice. This chapter is a transition between the general and the specific and allows for chapters five and six to focus on the Temple of the Sacred Craft and its relation, especially, to the concerns of chapters two and three. In these chapters the theory of embodied myth-rituals is developed and connected to communication theory. The final chapter summarizes and offers specific conclusions to the first six.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **I. Thesis Outline**

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first introduces the main topic, the Temple of the Sacred Craft (TOSC), which will be discussed more fully below. Ethical and methodological considerations are also discussed. Chapter two examines Paganism itself in an historical context and then offers critical observations as to how the term has come to define a set of new religious movements today. It is demonstrated that previous definitions of Paganism are not without difficulties and that a new definition is required, which this thesis provides. Chapter three explores theories of myth and theories of ritual as well as the classical myth and ritual theories that have influenced Paganisms today. This exploration is necessary since it in the context of these previous myth-ritual theories that the new work presented here is set. Chapter four introduces the reader to the eight Wiccan seasonal celebrations known as the Sabbats, as well as a generalized Pagan ritual outline, as derived from the textual sources that is discussed in chapter one. The second portion of chapter four introduces the general ritual outline of Wicca and Wiccan-derived Paganisms. This section serves as an entry to the actual seasonal rituals of TOSC, not heretofore described or analysed, and necessarily involves further discussion and engages with broad methodological issues raised in this thesis. The third section of chapter four begins the ethnographic examination of TOSC's seasonal celebration rituals. This chapter looks not only at TOSC's seasonal rituals but also what they have in common with the textual sources discussed in the previous sections of that chapter. Thus, these four chapters serve to place the study in general, and TOSC in specific, within the wider areas of several academic fields.

Based on the findings reported in chapter four, chapter five revisits theories of myth and re-examines not only the functions of myths but their contents in the light of modern Pagan praxes as experienced in the field. Chapter six continues the re-examination of the idea of myth when applied to the beliefs and practices of TOSC in specific, and, where possible, extends such a discussion to Wiccan and Wiccan-derived Paganisms in general. This leads to the development of a theory of ‘embodied myth-rituals’ as a particular species of both myth and ritual at once. Building upon the theory of embodied myth-rituals chapter six also places the practices of TOSC in the field of myth and ritual theory, demonstrating both where it does and does not fit into the theories discussed in chapter two. Revisiting the ideas of ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘where’ theories of ritual this chapter also examines contemporary theories of performance and communication to better understand the nature of TOSC’s ritual praxis. It will also be demonstrated how modern forms of communication theory support the theory of embodied myth-rituals. The final chapter summarizes and offers specific conclusions to the first six. This includes not only a discussion of TOSC and its use of embodied myth-rituals but also suggests applications of this theory not only outside of TOSC, but possibly outside of Revivalist Paganisms or Paganisms in general.

## **II. The Temple of the Sacred Craft**

This thesis focuses upon the Temple of the Sacred Craft, a coven of Pagans that was active in the Chicago-area of Illinois between 1998 and 2005 and once again after 2007 with a new High Priestess. Research with TOSC was conducted between 2004 and 2005 and concentrated on the eight Wiccan seasonal holy days as celebrated and understood by the group. In centring on TOSC’s seasonal celebration rituals, this



thesis has further focused on the interactions and interconnections of these celebrations, the rituals that are employed to celebrate them and the myths that are found in and around those rituals. While there has been work done on the use of folklore in Pagan rituals and with the use of myth in the formation of personal identity amongst Pagans,<sup>1</sup> no work has been done concerning the interactions of *myth* and Pagan rituals as they are being considered in this thesis.

The decision to focus on TOSC in particular came through a lengthy process. That there are many different types of Pagans and Paganisms will be discussed in chapter two. In order to proceed with this research the field had to be narrowed considerably, both in the area of what type or types of Paganism to research as well as in the area of which rituals to examine. Initially this research was intended to focus upon Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wiccan practices in America. When the decision to engage in fieldwork was made, however, this intent was modified. One reason for this was that finding a local group would have been quite difficult as such covens are not known to advertise themselves a great deal in the United States. More importantly these are initiatory traditions that do not allow the uninitiated into their circles, and changing religions for the sake of research or acting unethically in order to gain access to the coven were not options.<sup>2</sup> This also assumed that after finding a coven its members could be convinced to accept me as a candidate for initiation and undergo that initiation in a timely enough manner to carry out this research. Thus it was decided to examine a Paganism that has been referenced, even by themselves, as Eclectic Paganism or Eclectic Wicca. The decision to choose this form of Paganism to

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<sup>1</sup> Sabina Magliocco, *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Kenneth Rees, 'The Tangled Skein: The Role of Myth in Paganism', in *Paganism Today*, ed. by Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardmann (London: Thorsons, 1996), pp. 16-31.

<sup>2</sup> Jo Pearson ('"Going Native in Reverse": The Insider as Researcher in British Wicca', *Nova Religio*, 5 (2001), pp. 52-63) discusses the necessity for the insider as researcher in British Wiccan traditions and some of the difficulties that non-insiders will have to confront in attempting such research.

study was based partially on previous experience with Paganisms in America and partially on convenience, as this is a Paganism that is more common and more easily accessible in the United States. Further, through searching a popular Pagan website known as the Witches Voice<sup>3</sup> a local coven was found: the Temple of the Sacred Craft.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft<sup>4</sup> was founded in 1998 by Nancy and Gene. It was a Wiccan<sup>5</sup> coven whose 'covenstead', or base of operation, was originally located in Mokena, Illinois, and was eventually moved to the Chicago suburb of Lisle, which was more local to the majority of its members. In 2000 Reverend Eric became TOSC's High Priest when the founders of the coven moved out of state. At the time the High Priestess was Candi. In 2001 Rachel, then Eric's wife, became TOSC's High Priestess and in 2002 the covenstead moved from Lisle to the nearby city of Naperville, where it remained until 2005 when TOSC effectively ceased to function.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft was first encountered in February of 2004. For several years the various members of the coven hosted a coffee meet-up<sup>6</sup> at a local Naperville coffee shop. This bi-weekly get together was advertised in a number of places on the internet, including the Witches' Voice, one of the largest and most extensive Pagan-oriented web sites in the world.<sup>7</sup> The coffee meet-ups tended towards the small side, with usually no more than a half dozen people attending, not all of whom were necessarily associated with TOSC. The High Priest was present at the first attended meet-up at which introductions were made, both to him and to a woman

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<sup>3</sup> Also known as WitchVox; <http://www.witchvox.com>.

<sup>4</sup> Much of the following information comes from TOSC's website at <http://www.sacredcraft.org/>, which was updated in 2007 to reflect a change in High Priestess.

<sup>5</sup> TOSC is described as being either Pagan or Wiccan depending on who in the coven one speaks to. For instance the High Priest says that they are not really a Wiccan coven while the High Priestess says that they are. Theologically and ritually they strongly resemble Wicca as described in a number of the texts discussed in section III below.

<sup>6</sup> The group also hosted, and continues to host, a monthly dinner at the same local IHOP.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (NY: Routledge, 2005), pp. 19-20.

called 'Bear' and a woman named Jennifer who were also present and who were formally associated with the coven. My own background in both Paganism and ceremonial magic as well as in academia was discussed, including the current Ph.D. research. The High Priest, as well as a few others who regularly associated with the coven, was himself interested in academic endeavours and research and also saw academic research on Pagans and Paganism as a way to help legitimate Paganisms to the world at large. Thus the coven was quite welcoming because of, rather than in spite of, the research that was being undertaken.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft is the foundation for this thesis; it is their ritual practices that will be examined in the following chapters. In order to accomplish this study ethnological research was necessary. Such research is accompanied by a number of methodological issues. Amongst these, and especially relevant to work amongst New Religious Movements such as the modern Paganisms, is the position of the researcher in relation to those being studied and the attitudes that both have for one another.

### **III: Insiders, Outsiders and on Standing in Between**

Much has been written concerning the position of insiders and outsiders within the academic and anthropological study of religion.<sup>8</sup> The discussion, however, is not always carried out using this language. Wouter Hanegraaff's, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* and J.A.M. Snoek's *Initiations*<sup>9</sup> use of emic and etic language in the Academy parallels McCutcheon's<sup>10</sup> discussion of insider/outsider concerns. Within the emerging field of Pagan Studies both insider and outsider scholars, i.e. scholars

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<sup>8</sup> For instance see Russell T. McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (NY: Cassell, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> NY: SUNY, 1998; Pijnacker: Dutch Efficiency Bureau, 1987.

<sup>10</sup> p. 17.

who practice what they are researching and scholars who are not practitioners of what they are researching, have taken up this issue many times<sup>11</sup> and have also criticized those scholars who have not.<sup>12</sup> The issue is seen as being controversial not only due to ethical considerations but also having implications as to whose voice is heard within the Academy as well as issues surrounding hiring and tenure at American universities. Stepping beyond the politics appears to be nearly impossible as the insider/outsider debate asks whose voice is more authoritative in the realm of the academic study of culture, someone from within that culture or someone from outside. Here it will be demonstrated that insider/outsider or emic/etic polemic, while neither irrelevant nor illusory, is more complex and interrelated than it may appear at first. It will further be shown that an approach that takes into consideration both emic and etic ideologies will better serve the scholar in this genre of research.

## A. Approaching the Circle – Initial Considerations

The above question, who's voice is or should be more authoritative in the realm of scholarly discourse, sets this study in the framework of earlier research

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<sup>11</sup> For example see Douglas Ezzy, 'Religious Ethnography: Practicing the Witch's Craft', in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas S. Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), pp. 113-128), Sabina Magliocco, *Witching Culture*, Jone Salomonsen, 'Methods of Compassion Or Pretension? the Challenges of Conducting Fieldwork in Modern Magical Communities', in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), pp. 43-58, and *Enchanted Feminism: The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Robert J. Wallis, 'Between the Worlds: Autoarchaeology and Neo-Shamans', in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), pp. 191-216, Sian Lee McDonald Reid, 'Disorganized Religion: An Exploration of the Neopagan Craft in Canada' (unpublished Doctor of Philosophy, Carleton University, 2001), Pearson, 'Going Native', Nikki Bado-Fralick, 'Coming to the Edge of the Circle: A Wiccan Initiation Ritual' (unpublished Doctor of Philosophy, Ohio State University, 2000), and Susan Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Much of this criticism has been levelled at Tanya Lurhmann's *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), a study of London occultists and Pagans. See, for example, Melissa Harrington, 'Psychology of Religion and the Study of Paganism', in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas S. Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), pp. 71-84, Jo Pearson 'Going Native', Nikki Bado-Fralick, who criticizes Lurhmann while never once mentioning her by name, and Greenwood (*Magic*). See also Ezzy, 'Religious Ethnography' who critiques both Lurhmann and Greenwood together, showing how Greenwood not only criticizes Lurhmann's methodology but also refutes her theory of interpretive drift due to her, Lurhmann's, outsider-centric approach.

methodologies for it assumes that these are the only two choices: that you are either an insider or an outsider. Within the Academy it has classically been the outsider, etic, or non-native position that has been viewed as being authoritative; it is 'scientific' and rational. Alternatively the emic, or insider's, view has been viewed as being subjective and prone to misrecognition.<sup>13</sup> Insiders are even seen as being *fixed* in a misrecognition of what they are actually doing.<sup>14</sup> To help prevent this, neophyte students of anthropology are occasionally advised to study cultures that are either 'long ago or far away [or] preferably both'<sup>15</sup> making it nearly impossible for them to 'go native' and take on an insider's view of the culture they are studying. This approach can also be seen in the development of the myth and ritual theories discussed in chapter four.

Scholarly approaches must, in this view, be from the outside as 'an emic scholarly approach is a contradiction in terms.'<sup>16</sup> The outsider position is seen as being scientific and objective due to its empirical approach, which sets it apart from theological, positivist-reductionist and religionist approaches. This empirical approach, a somewhat precarious thing, is based on a set of unspoken agreements between the anthropologist and anthropology itself.

...a serious student of anthropology must first subscribe to the empirical aim of interpreting ethnographic phenomena horizontally, from the inside out. Second, she must agree with the prohibition against indulging the inside *too much* and promise not to 'go native.' Third, she must recognize that, in terms of religion, the a priori theoretical assumption of her field is that religion is a human projection onto the supernatural of originally social and perfectly natural phenomena.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bado-Fralick, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> Bado-Fralick, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Snoek, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Salomonsen, 'Methods', p. 47.

This position allows the anthropologist to participate in the insider worldview but not too much; they may participate both behaviourally and emotionally but never cognitively.<sup>18</sup>

The '*a priori* theoretical assumption' develops into a practice of 'methodological agnosticism', examining only that which can be directly observed.<sup>19</sup> This is done because meta-empirical aspects of religion, not being observable or verifiable in a scientific manner, cannot be verified or spoken of as objective truths.<sup>20</sup> Because the meta-empirical data is considered to be inaccessible, and thus not analysable, scholars who employ this approach find, much like Catherine Bell, that '[r]eligion is not *also* a symbolization of "spiritual phenomena" but always of something else.'<sup>21</sup> In this view of religion (or in the case of TOSC both religion and magic) those participating in religion simply misrecognize their beliefs and actions; what is understood as referring to the realm of the preternatural and its relation to the world of the profane by practitioners is seen as being merely a social-psychological construct whose real purpose is something altogether different by scholars. Thus the social scientist places their discipline fully in line with modern, Western, scientific thought without necessarily taking into consideration the beliefs and understandings of those whom they are studying.

Tanya Lurhmann faced this very issue in her study of occultists and Pagans in London. Her solution was to approach her study through participant observation, going so far as to take initiation into both Wicca and a magical fraternity. However her classical anthropological training always influenced her methodology; while Lurhmann appeared to 'go native' she in fact did not. She wrote '[t]he anthropologist

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Bado-Fralick, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> ('Emic and Etic Standpoints for the Description of Behavior', in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, ed. by R. T. McCutcheon (NY: Cassell, 1999), pp. 28-36 (p. 29).

<sup>20</sup> Hanegraaff, pp. 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Salomonsen, 'Methods', p. 47.

is meant to become involved, but not native. The very purpose of my involvement – to write an observer’s text – would have been undermined by my assent to the truth of magical ideas.’<sup>22</sup> Further, Lurhmann declares that ‘I am no witch, no wizard, though I have been initiated *as though I were*’.<sup>23</sup>

More recently<sup>24</sup> there has been a movement towards ‘redeeming’ the position of the insider-as-scholar, which has been seen as being tainted and subjective, leading not to scholarly discourse or empirical analysis but to apologetics and is thus useless as a scholarly approach.<sup>25</sup> This move has several issues surrounding it, especially for those who wish to study a culture or religion of which they are not a part of but wish to do so from a native’s perspective due to the stigma surrounding ‘going native.’

Jone Salomonsen<sup>26</sup> when faced with the same situation as Lurhmann in studying the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco also made use of participant observation. Unlike Lurhmann, however, Salomonsen did not simply join Reclaiming while maintaining a stance of methodological agnosticism. Instead she attempted to enter into and understand the beliefs of her subjects from their own point of view, working from a position of a ‘method of compassion,’<sup>27</sup> approaching her subjects with the attitude that they may in fact know something about the world that the researcher may not. Through this approach the meta-empirical aspects of the culture being studied can be accessed that could not otherwise be.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lurhmann, p. 320.

<sup>23</sup> Lurhmann, p. 18, emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> This shift can perhaps be seen in the discussion of emic vs. etic perspectives in recent editions of introductory cultural anthropology textbooks such as the 2007 edition of Serena Nanda and Richard L. Warms’ *Cultural Anthropology* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007), pp. 20, 60.

<sup>25</sup> Bado-Fralick, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Jone Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism: The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco*, ed. by Ursula King and Rita M. Gross, Religion and Gender, (NY: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> ‘Methods’, pp. 49-51.

<sup>28</sup> C.f. James P. Spradley, ‘Ethnography and Culture’ in *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2006), pp. 7-14 (p. 8), who, looking to Malkinowski, sees ethnography not as a chance to study people but as a chance to learn from people. See also Mada Cesara, *Reflections of a Woman Anthropologist* (NY: Academic Press, 1982), who tells her readers that

There is another, increasingly more common, issue surrounding the native-as-researcher. Unlike the case of Lurhmann, a case of the outsider researcher appearing to go native, or of Salomonsen, a case of the outsider researcher going native and then 'coming back', this surrounds scholars who are already native to the culture or community they are studying. As previously discussed the insider position in academia has been looked upon as being suspect. While the researcher has not violated the 'taboo' of going native there is still the chance that any such work would be seen as 'insider pleading' and 'tainted' with partisanship.<sup>29</sup> Pearson,<sup>30</sup> one such native-who-became-researcher, shows some of the flaws in this thinking, especially when it comes to initiatory religions where it is only possible to study them as either an insider or someone who is posing as one. Further, as has already been suggested, the insider-as-researcher has access to information and understandings that are only available to a member of the group.<sup>31</sup>

The classical critiques on insider perspectives made by the Academy cannot be completely ignored.<sup>32</sup> There are insider scholars who do, whether consciously or not, write as advocates or apologists for their respective cultures. However, as all people are insiders to their own cultures it is possible that any anthropologist may act as an advocate for their cultural beliefs, even when they are researching other cultures.<sup>33</sup>

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'not only [...] our culture and personality affect our research, but also [...] the culture and personality of those being researched affect the researcher' (p. 11).

<sup>29</sup> Bado-Fralick, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> 'Going Native', p. 58.

<sup>31</sup> 'Going Native', p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> Bado-Fralick, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> See Douglas E. Cowan ('Too Narrow and Too Close: Some Problems with Participant Observation in the Study of New Religious Movements', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 10 (1998), pp. 391-406) who shows examples of both of these. This review is especially relevant as one of the books reviewed is *Never Again the Burning Times* by Pagan scholar Loretta Orion, who repeatedly acts as an apologist for Paganism in this text.



Sian Reid, in her doctoral thesis at Carleton University in Ontario, Canada, demonstrates another insider-as-researcher challenge that does not appear in the usual critiques of such a position, though it appears to be related to that position. A practicing Pagan for over two decades, Reid found that one of the most difficult parts of her research was dealing with her own 'taken for granted worldview' as a Pagan.<sup>34</sup> She came to this through Gadamer's epistemology. Gadamer demonstrates that all people approach objects of study with pre-conceived notions that he calls 'fore-meanings.'<sup>35</sup> As an insider this is no less true. However as a Pagan studying Paganisms that are not necessarily their own, Reid shows that it is possible that the terminology employed in the researcher's Paganism may be employed differently in other Paganisms. Reid found that this required of her 'the explicit and ongoing acknowledgment that my own perspective is not only simply one interpretation of the lived universe, but also only one of many possible perspectives that could have been derived from [her] own particular experiences.'<sup>36</sup> As will be discussed below a similar situation existed with TOSC.

While insider-as-researcher criticisms are now well-worn, critiques concerning methodologies that focus primarily on outsider or etic interpretations are a newer phenomenon. One of the heaviest critiques is the outsider-as-researcher's position that they are rational, scientific and objective in their analysis, untainted by an insider's biases. However this position fails to recognize that the scholar is already a native of *their own culture* and these views are heavily influenced by the values of the dominant Western scientific worldview, values to which magical religions especially

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<sup>34</sup> Reid, p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> In Reid, p. 191.

<sup>36</sup> p. 31. C.f. Spradley's (pp. 9-10) 'naïve realism', 'the almost universal belief that all people define the *real* world . . . in pretty much the same way.' Spradley says that ethnography must start with a 'conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance', an admittance that the researcher does not know what others believe about the world and that they are there to discover how they do so

may not always hold.<sup>37</sup> To approach anthropological study as an insider of a magical religion is to question these dominant beliefs and was seen as being largely incompatible with anthropological methodology.<sup>38</sup>

Further, its application to the study of both magic and religion, both of which are the concerns of this study, also presents a number of difficulties, for while magical rituals can be observed and therefore analysed and discussed, magic itself falls into the category of meta-empirical phenomena which cannot even be approached, let alone analysed, from the empiricist's paradigm. This leaves the researcher with only the observable phenomena; physical actions, spoken words, sociological influences, etc., which are then compared to the current social paradigm. These often lead to analyses such as Lurhmann's, which from the start saw the practice of, and belief in, magic as irrational and hence falling outside of the scientific paradigm of which Lurhmann was a native.

## **B. Insider-Outsider Positions as a 'Continuum' not a 'Dichotomy'**

Up until this point insider-outsider perspectives have been treated as a dichotomy; either the researcher functions as an insider or as an outsider, even the insider researcher is just that: and *insider*-researcher. This thesis contends that this is not necessarily the case but that rather as Pike,<sup>39</sup> Bado-Fralick, Magliocco<sup>40</sup> and Salomonsen<sup>41</sup> insist, it is not a matter of dichotomy at all but is instead a continuum.

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<sup>37</sup> Again, this approach epitomizes Lurhmann's methodology that begins her study of Pagans and occultists in London with the view that magic with the view that magic is irrational and works to understand how people make themselves believe in. As Pearson ('Going Native') rightly points out, Lurhmann never questions her *a priori* position that magic is, in fact, irrational.

<sup>38</sup> Salomonsen, 'Methods', p. 48, Pearson, 'Going Native', p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> 'Emic and Etic'.

<sup>40</sup> *Witching*.

<sup>41</sup> 'Methods'.

Salomonsen<sup>42</sup> shows that both emic and etic perspectives are necessary, that the researcher must move back and forth along this continuum in order to do justice to that which is being studied. On the other hand, as already suggested by Ewing, the researcher must take on the attitude that ‘the subjects of one’s research might actually know something . . . that is personally valid for the anthropologist.’<sup>43</sup> This ‘method of compassion’, as Salomonsen calls it, must also treat its subjects seriously in a cognitive sense and be prepared to come to the conclusion that it does ‘*not* know something that can be personally valid.’<sup>44</sup> This allows the researcher to maintain their personal and ethical integrity while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of the people studied. It stands in opposition to the classical anthropological ‘method of pretension’, as Salomonsen calls it, that allows for exactly the opposite; it is a methodology that allows the researcher to gain privileged access to information by *appearing* to ‘go native’ without actually doing so.<sup>45</sup> The method of compassion is thus also a method of honesty in opposition to the potentially deceiving method of pretension.

Kenneth Pike,<sup>46</sup> who coined the anthropological terms ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ from linguistic terminology and theory, presents a similar ideology. Pike describes how both insider and outsider views, when taken together, form a kind of ‘tridimensional understanding’ that is superior to the one-dimensional view gained through either just an emic or an etic view.<sup>47</sup> Thus he shows that Salomonsen’s ‘method of compassion’

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Methods’, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Katherine P. Ewing, ‘Dreams from a Saint: Anthropological Atheism and the Temptation to Believe’, *American Anthropologist*, 96 (1994), pp. 571-583 (p. 571).

<sup>44</sup> ‘Methods’, p. 50.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> p. 32-3.

<sup>47</sup> It is important to note that Pike (‘Emic and Etic’, p. 33) considered the purely etic view to be the lesser of the three possible views (etic, emic or both at once), seeing it as being ‘flat’. However, it seems clear that in comparison to the tridimensional view he speaks of, both emic and etic views, by themselves, are ultimately flat.

is both ethically and epistemologically necessary; a complete 'tridimensional' approach is only possible in this way.

### C. On Being at Once Inside and Outside

There have been a number of studies of Paganisms performed by insider scholars, be they those who began their research as insiders or those who 'went native' either during the course of their research or in order to carry it out.<sup>48</sup> As a researcher I find myself standing amongst them, almost. Unlike others who have found themselves studying their own Paganisms or other religious traditions, I find myself studying a religious tradition that, while sharing a similar magical world-view and ritual practice, is one that is ultimately not my own. This is not unexpected because as part of Revivalist Paganism<sup>49</sup> TOSC drew heavily from ceremonial magic. Still, while the worldviews of Revivalist Paganisms, such as represented by TOSC, and ceremonial magic, can be similar, they are not identical and at times can differ dramatically.<sup>50</sup> Having several years of previous experience working with other eclectic Revivalist Pagans, Wiccan or otherwise, only complicates this. In these cases I was often seen as the token 'non-Pagan' in the group, and again while worldviews may have been similar they were not necessarily identical.

Thus I found myself being both an insider and an outsider at once in the eyes of those I have studied and in my own mind. I have been considered an insider because even though I do not self-identify as a Pagan my worldview places me outside of the views of mainstream Abrahamic traditions and much more in line with

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<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, Andy Letcher, 'Bardism and the Performance of Paganism: Implications for the Performance of Research', in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas S. Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004) pp. 15-41, Magliocco. *Witching Culture*, Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, Pearson, 'Going Native', Bado-Fralick, and Greenwood, *Magic*.

<sup>49</sup> See chapter two of this thesis.

<sup>50</sup> C.f. Greenwood, *Magic*, pp. 113-4.

many Pagan worldviews. Thus, like Reid, I found myself having to pay special attention to my own 'taken for granted magical worldview,' which included not only the use of esoteric 'technical language' but also magical technique, the meanings of certain holidays and other aspects of Pagan religion that might otherwise be taken as a given.

Like Greenwood and Bado-Fralick I found myself feeling in the place of the outsider due to my standing as a scholar and researcher *and*, almost ironically, from the very same ceremonial magical background that placed me as a 'semi-insider'. From this arose a number of interesting situations. First, it appears to have assisted my acceptance by TOSC's High Priest, who, while not having any academic standing of his own, was interested in academic study in general. He also appeared to see the study of Paganisms by the Academy as a method of legitimation for Pagan religions. Both my ceremonial magical and academic backgrounds gave me the appearance of both expertise and authority in his eyes. Similarly, others who had either an interest in ceremonial magic, academia, or both, were also drawn to me in a type of sympathy over both areas. At the same time both of these backgrounds had the *initial* effect of causing me to appear aloof or even arrogant to some of the members, including those who, after getting to know me better, admitted to a lack of formal education. However, more often than not, my position as researcher did not act as an obstacle in my interactions with TOSC's members or those who attended its rituals.

In fact this researcher position may have at times affected me more strongly than those about me. Like Greenwood and Bado-Fralick<sup>51</sup> I occasionally found myself confronted with a feeling of what I called 'scholarly schizophrenia;' I observed and participated as a Pagan and occultist in magical and religious rituals but at the same

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<sup>51</sup> *Magic*, p. 15; p. 28.

time there was often a part of me that stood back, took notes and made critiques of what was going on around me, never allowing for complete participation. This is because the method of compassion 'demands that we never forget that we are scholars.'<sup>52</sup> Also, like Greenwood<sup>53</sup> I occasionally experienced an almost predatory feeling in attaining information; especially where information was gained through idle chatter rather than formal interviews, even though all present in such situations were made aware of my position both as an occultist and as a researcher. However I continued with the research with the hope that it would better the understanding of, and academic research on, modern Paganisms and related magical beliefs and practices.

#### **D. Approaching the Circle Revisited – In Perfect Love and Perfect Trust**

All of the discussion thus far relates directly to the methodology of this thesis, and it will be apparent that the theological/anthropological 'method of compassion' outlined by Salomonsen and Ewing comprises this thesis' main approach. This is tempered by an understanding of my own, pre-existing, magical and theological worldviews and the differences they potentially have from both the texts and people studied and consulted. This methodology, especially when it is being applied to TOSC, required certain considerations to be made. Perhaps the most important of these was TOSC's nature as an initiatory coven. As I am not Wiccan, or even a Pagan, I had no wish to take initiation into the group; I saw that doing so would be dishonest both to myself and to the members of TOSC. However this did not prove to be a barrier to accessing most of TOSC's rituals; the only 'initiate-only' rituals were held on the new moon, and even then held somewhat irregularly. Also, while I could not

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<sup>52</sup> Salomonsen, 'Methods', pp. 52-3.

<sup>53</sup> *Magic*, p. 15.

attend or participate in the new moon rituals, members were under no prohibition to share with me the new moon rituals that they had written, as each member was in charge of providing a ritual for each new moon.

The primary approach within the TOSC ritual context was participant-observation, which is the primary approach of cultural anthropology. Semi-structured interviews with some of the regular attendants of TOSC rituals, including its High Priest, were also conducted. Additionally, many of the coffee meet-ups and 'Pagan dinners' hosted by the coven were attended. Here conversations ranged from the occult and Paganism to new cell phones and relationship problems. There was also much conversation, before and after, as well as occasionally during, the various rituals in which I was able to participate or to which I was able simply to listen. In all I spent over a year's time attending the celebrations, rituals and social gatherings of TOSC members.

The research embodied in this thesis also employs the textual hermeneutics and analysis normative of religious studies, as well as the theological/anthropological approach already discussed. Thus this study purposefully examines not only the praxes of a living Pagan coven, but also several texts produced by Pagan authors that other Pagans have found to be influential in their beliefs and practices. The purpose of this is to compare Pagan practice on the folk level, in the form of TOSC, with the apparently authoritative texts from which these practices have drawn in order to gain a wider view of American Eclectic Pagan magico-religious practice.

#### **IV: Paganism in the Popular Press**

Part of this study focuses upon a comparison of the practices of TOSC with how popular Pagan authors present their own views on their religions and its

practices. By comparing both living Pagans and popular sources, such as the books that will be discussed below, it becomes possible to see how much influence these textual sources have upon at least one segment of the Pagan community. Indeed, the focus of this thesis is concerned with the relationship between the particular and the general. Not only does this allow for an examination of the ways a contemporary coven actually employs the information within those books, but it also permits the researcher to observe better both the similarities and differences between practiced religion and textual religion. This is an important point detailed here specifically but applicable generally.

The choice to study TOSC was in many ways one of convenience, as they are local to me. However, it is also important to note that members of TOSC have been influenced by some, if not all, of the books examined below. This includes the High Priest, who not only claims a Gardnerian Wiccan background, but has also spoken specifically of some of the texts. As such, this group suited this research well. Where specific texts not on this list were cited by members as being influential, such as Paul V. Beyerl's *A Wiccan Bardo*,<sup>54</sup> these have also been sought out and examined to further access the relation between religion as text and religion as practice. It is important to note, however, that while reading these texts does provide a general background and understanding of Wiccan-derived Paganisms and their practice, they do not necessarily provide their reader with insight into how any specific coven may function. This tension between text and practice clearly shows here and is important: one cannot always understand a group by studying either what they write or what they read.

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<sup>54</sup> *A Wiccan Bardo: Initiation and Self-Transformation*, (Dorset: Prism Press, 1989).



The textual sources examined in the course of this research consist of books written by Pagans for Pagans. Essentially, they are 'how-to' books on various aspects of modern Paganism, largely within a Wiccan paradigm, but representing an eclectic blend of British and American variations of Wicca, as well as American Feminist Witchcraft. The purpose in consulting both living and textual sources is to allow a comparison between these textual sources and both other textual sources from similar and different traditions and to the practices and beliefs of living practitioners. This allowed for an examination of the textual sources that have influenced Pagan practice and also to study how Pagans have actually employed those sources.

The six texts presented below were derived from sixty-two<sup>55</sup> online recommended reading lists from groups, covens or individual American Pagans who describe or present themselves as being Eclectic Pagans. Combined, these lists recommended over seven hundred different books on subjects ranging from Wicca to Druidry, mythology and folklore, ceremonial magic, astrology, herbalism and ancient history. From these lists the five most recommended books that were about being Pagan and practicing Paganism were chosen. These books received a total of nineteen or more recommendations; the next closest text, which is a companion to one of those on this list, received sixteen recommendations. These five books were derived from a list of the six that were, overall, recommended the most. The one book not included was Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon*, which was recommended on twenty-seven of the sixty-two lists. *Drawing Down the Moon* is not included in this research due to its ethnographic rather than practical content. Thus despite its popularity it falls

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<sup>55</sup> This number is, in some manner, an approximation as a number of the lists contain multiple lists divided in a number of different ways. This made it difficult to devise a specific method of determining what constitutes a separate list and what is simply a division of a single list. To overcome this issue a general rule was devised to count as a separate list each distinct heading found on a given URL. This appeared to be the best approach as frequently these separate headings would suggest the same books but for reasons specific to the heading in question. See Appendix I for a complete listing of the URLs of these lists

outside of the two-fold criteria for inclusion in the study; that it must be both popular and a 'how-to' book. Table one lists the six books and the number of times they were recommended.

Table 1: Popular Pagan Texts

Author(s)	Title	Frequency
Adler, Margot	<i>Drawing Down the Moon</i>	27/62 – 43.5%
Buckland, Raymond	<i>Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft</i>	20/62 – 32.2%
Cunningham, Scott	<i>Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner</i>	30/62 – 48.4%
Farrar, Janet and Stewart	<i>A Witches' Bible</i>	29/62 – 46.75
RavenWolf, Silver	<i>To Ride a Silver Broomstick</i>	19/62 – 30.6%
Starhawk	<i>The Spiral Dance</i>	31/62 – 50%

As explained above, these texts were included in the study for two primary reasons. First, they represent the most frequently recommended books to American Pagans by American Pagans to learn about being a Pagan and about Paganism in general and so represent books that are highly influential upon Pagan practice in America. Second, unlike Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon*, these books were written with the goal of transmitting the author's understanding of the practice and beliefs of a particular type of Paganism, *their* Paganism, to the reader. Their goal is not simply to explain what various Pagans believe but also to instruct the reader on how to be a Pagan. This is especially important when attempting to interpret the rituals presented in these texts in relation to the author's intent and understanding of those rituals. Without this understanding, which according to Catherine Bell is neither inherent nor present in the ritual itself, any interpretation of their rituals would represent at best a '... theoretical construction [that] becomes a reflection of the theorist's method and the

motor of a discourse in which the concerns of theorist take centre stage.’<sup>56</sup> However in such books where their explicit purpose is to convey the author’s understandings and outlooks on the subject the researcher can gain some level of such understandings, often as much as the Pagans who also read them. At the same time the Pagans who read, absorb and otherwise utilize such books are under no obligation to interpret or employ the teachings of such texts with the author’s understandings in mind. This is, in fact, not an uncommon approach in American Paganisms, for whom, as Cowan<sup>57</sup> aptly demonstrates, personal experience becomes the chief hermeneutical approach; i.e. the writings of other Pagans are interpreted to support the already existing paradigms of the reader, presenting a hermeneutical methodology similar to that of Paul Ricoeur.<sup>58</sup>

The five texts described below are examined in relation to their presentation and understanding of ritual and myth both individually and collectively. The goal of this examination is two-fold: first it will look at how popular sources present and understand the nature and use of myths and rituals, both together and separately; second it will provide for a comparison between ‘religion as written about’ and ‘religion as practiced,’ in this instance by a coven of American Pagans; the Temple of the Sacred Craft.

It is important to note that while the texts below are frequently recommended by some, they are also frequently criticized by others. For instance Cunningham’s attitude towards what Wicca is and how it should be practiced has been criticized by some Pagans for it having been influential in the ‘Disneyfication’ of Wicca in the

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<sup>56</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory*, p. 54.

<sup>57</sup> *Cyberhenge*.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Ricoeur, ‘The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text’ in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, (London: Northwestern University Press, 1991), pp. 144-167. Paul Ricoeur ‘What is Text?’ in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II* trans. by John B. Thompson (London: Northwestern University Press), pp. 105-124. 1991 Ricoeur’s views will be discussed in chapters three and five.

United States<sup>59</sup> and the turning of American Wicca into a 'make up your own religion as you go along' phenomenon.<sup>60</sup> Silver RavenWolf's books are perhaps the most heavily criticized, with critics citing poor and inaccurate histories written after the point that much of Wicca's history has been published by figures such as Ronald Hutton.<sup>61</sup> They are also criticized for presenting oversimplifications of theory, vehement attacks on Christianity and unethical suggestions to teenagers.<sup>62</sup> Thus, while any text may be popular amongst a percentage of Pagans, no text is seen as being so exemplary as to be universally hailed; every book has something that may be considered a problem in part of the Pagan community.<sup>63</sup> Finally, it must be stressed that all of the authors examined here have written numerous books. While some of them have kept in line with their previous publications, others, notably Janet Farrar and Starhawk, have drastically diverged from their original works,<sup>64</sup> which further highlights the danger of text-based descriptions of religion when applied to contemporary Paganisms. This could potentially pose a difficulty for this study as well. To circumvent any such difficulties this thesis approaches the following books *as though* they still represented the beliefs of their authors. Due to the hermeneutical approach Pagans take, as briefly discussed above and which is discussed more fully in chapter five of this thesis, this methodology poses few problems as a reader of only

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<sup>59</sup> Lynna Landstreet, *Why I Don't Like Scott Cunningham*, <http://www.wildideas.net/temple/library/letters/cunningham1.html> (Wild Ideas, Last Updated: 1999, Last Viewed: 2005).

<sup>60</sup> See Cowan (*Cyberhenge*) for more about this phenomenon and what he refers to as 'open source' religion.

<sup>61</sup> Inaccurate histories, both of Wicca and of the Neolithic and other historical periods, are not uncommon to books on Wicca and can be found in all of the above texts.

<sup>62</sup> Catherine N. Beyer, Catherine, *Why we Despise Silver RavenWolf*, <http://wicca.timerift.net/ravenwolf.html> (Wicca: For the Rest of Us, Last Update: Unknown, Last Viewed: 2005).

<sup>63</sup> TOSC's views on these texts vary. Some books, such as those written by the Farrars, are viewed quite favourably and have large portions of them transcribed directly into TOSC's own rituals. Others, such as Starhawk's book, are seen in a more ambivalent light. However, individual members of TOSC tend to have quite differing opinions of these books, with little constancy being demonstrated between coveners.

<sup>64</sup> Some of these supplementary texts have been examined to help gain a deeper understanding of the authors' Paganism.

one of Starhawk's or the Farrars' books, for instance, would approach those books in the same way; i.e. as though this was what the authors still believed.

What follows is a brief biography of the authors of the above five texts as well as a description of those texts. By understanding something of the lives of the authors a greater understanding of the context of their books is gained, thus allowing for a better understanding of their importance and influence upon those Pagans who have employed them in their personal practices.

### **A: Janet and Stewart Farrar**

The Farrars were trained and initiated into Alexandrian Wicca by Alex and Maxine Sanders in February of 1970. They received their second degree later that year and decided to 'hive off' from their parent coven in December. It was at this point that the Farrars began their own coven. They were granted their third and final degrees within the initiatory system of Alexandrian and Gardnerian Wicca in April of 1971. Being somewhat dissatisfied with Alex Sanders' teachings, the Farrars began to develop their own curriculum and rituals, still based on the Gardnerian/Alexandrian model.<sup>65</sup> By the time the Farrars moved from England to Ireland in 1976 their ritual structure had drastically altered from their Alexandrian origins and they would eventually no longer consider themselves to be functioning as Alexandrian Wiccans.<sup>66</sup> However, *Eight Sabbats for Witches* and *The Witches' Way*<sup>67</sup> represent a culmination of their understanding of Alexandrian and Gardnerian Wicca, compiled with their

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<sup>65</sup> James Lewis and Shelly T. Rabinovitch, *The Encyclopedia of Modern Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism* (NY: Citadel Press, 2002), pp. 95-7. C.f. Susan Greenwood, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Witchcraft: An Illustrated Historical Reference to Spiritual Worlds* (London: Hermes House, 2006), p.203.

<sup>66</sup> Gavin Bone and Janet Farrar, *Our Wiccan Origins*, <http://www.wicca.utvinternet.com/origins.htm> (Kells, Co. Meath, Ireland: Teampall na Callaighe, Last Updated: 2005, Last Viewed: 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Also signified in this thesis as *ES* and *WW* respectively.

own insights on the numerous subjects they discuss. These books, in turn, have been influential upon many other Pagan authors.

Janet and Stewart Farrar's *A Witches' Bible: The Complete Witches' Handbook* is a compilation of two of the Farrar's books on British Wicca; *Eight Sabbats for Witches*<sup>68</sup> and *The Witches' Way*.<sup>69</sup> *Eight Sabbats for Witches* was originally published in 1981 and reprinted in 1986. It presents both a collection of rituals for the eight seasonal holidays celebrated by Wiccans as well as many other kinds of Pagans. Specifically these rituals are written in the tradition of Alexandrian Wicca and were used by the Farrars in their own covens over the years. They are represented as being *their* understanding of the holidays and *their* rituals, which, while being based on an Alexandrian Wiccan paradigm, should not be thought of as the way these holidays should necessarily be celebrated by all Pagans, Wiccans in general or even the way that Alexandrian Wiccans should celebrate them. As important as the rituals are the essays on what the holidays mean, which often include information that is now known to be historically or linguistically incorrect, are of at least equal importance as they give the reader a glimpse into the workings of the Farrar's minds at the time of writing. Also of import are the frequent references to Frazer's *The Golden Bough* as an authority on ancient, pre-Christian religious practice. Many Pagans, including members of TOSC, have become influenced by Frazer's writings through secondary Pagan sources such as the books of Farrars.

Also relevant to this study is the second half of *A Witches' Bible* which consists of the Farrar's *The Witches' Way*, a companion volume to *Eight Sabbats*, originally published in 1984. This text presents parts of Gerald Gardner's *Book of*

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<sup>68</sup> Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, Inc., 1996.

<sup>69</sup> Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, Inc., 1996. Both of these texts are published together in *A Witches' Bible: The Complete Witches' Handbook* (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, 1996) but retain the original page numbering of each individual book. Because of the page numbering each part of *Witches' Bible* is referenced here as separate books.

*Shadows*, a text containing, rituals, spells and/or any type of information that its owner considers important in the practice of their religion and associated practices. This is given to or copied by each new Gardnerian (or Alexandrian) Wiccan,<sup>70</sup> as well as information derived from the Book of Shadows and their own training in Wicca. Accordingly, this text includes information original to Gardner's conception of Wicca as well as Alexandrian variations and ideas derived by the Farrars from their personal experiences. Both *Eight Sabbats* and *The Witches' Way* contain much information given by Doreen Valiente, one of Gardner's High Priestesses, who co-wrote, and in many instances re-wrote, Gardner's *Book of Shadows*,<sup>71</sup> including a great deal of anecdotal information on how various rituals and concepts were developed between her and Gardner.<sup>72</sup> Put together these two texts include not only original rituals by the Farrars for their various covens but also form a critical edition of Gardner's writings, reconstructed to present, as much as possible, the original versions of his *BoS*. They also present the various iterations his writings have undergone, which is why some consider *A Witches' Bible* one of the most complete general introduction to Wicca available.<sup>73</sup>

In the context of this study *A Witches Bible* is one of the most recommended of the highly recommended books, being found on 47% of the reading lists surveyed, higher than both Buckland and RavenWolf, and recommended only one fewer time than Cunningham. Further, portions from either *Eight Sabbats* or *The Witches' Way* are cited or quoted by all of the other books on this list. Consequently, reliance upon the ritual structure of British Wicca will be found in many of the following texts, even

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<sup>70</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *WW*, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> A Book of Shadows is a book compiled by the practitioner and may contain rituals, folklore, definitions or anything else the practitioner may find of value in the practice of their craft and religion. In British Wicca the Book of Shadows, or BoS, contains not only the writings of the practitioner but also a traditional corpus or rituals and lore.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. Hanegraaff, p. 89.

where the specific words within the rituals vary.<sup>74</sup> Also, as TOSC's High Priest claimed a Gardnerian Wiccan background, this text is all the more relevant to the research at hand as it reflects a variation of the corpus of training he would have undergone to gain that degree.

**B: Raymond Buckland, Jr.**

British-born Raymond Buckland, a former student of Gerald Gardner, was initiated into Wicca by Gardner's then High Priestess Monique Wilson, who was also known by her craft name as the Lady Olwen.<sup>75</sup> It was Buckland, with the aid of his then wife Rosemary, who introduced Wicca, in the form of Gardnerian Wicca, to the United States in the 1960s. In 1971 Buckland was attacking 'home-made' Wiccan traditions and self-initiation.<sup>76</sup> However, when the Bucklands retired from being the High Priestess and High Priest, and after their divorce and Raymond's desire to form a new coven elsewhere, problems developed due to the strict rules they had left for their former coven. As a result Buckland became disenchanted with Gardnerian Wicca and the rigidity he perceived within it. Consequently, by 1974 he had abandoned this position and then formed his own tradition called Seax or Saxon Wicca, a Wiccan tradition that was available to anyone who could read his books<sup>77</sup> and in which men and women had equal authority.<sup>78</sup> In 1986 *Buckland's Complete*

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<sup>74</sup> Also examined were the Farrars' *A Witches Goddess* (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing Co., 1995) and *A Witches' God* (Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing Co., 1989), both of which frequently appeared on recommended reading lists, with the former present more frequently than the latter. As both of these books focus on mythologies from around the world and apply them in a ritual format they have served as an excellent example of how the Farrars view both of these subjects.

<sup>75</sup> Greenwood, *Encyclopedia*, p. 204.

<sup>76</sup> Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), pp. 92-3.

<sup>77</sup> Adler, pp. 92-3.

<sup>78</sup> Greenwood, *Encyclopedia*, p. 205.



*Book of Witchcraft*<sup>79</sup> was published, continuing his trend of publishing books for people who could not find, or did not care to find and be initiated into, a coven.

The *Complete Book of Witchcraft*, unlike the other books on this list, is in the form of a workbook that is designed to teach the reader the history, philosophy, beliefs and practices of witchcraft, a term he uses interchangeable with Wicca, including magical practices and seasonal celebrations. Buckland also provides tests at the end of each chapter for the reader to take before going on to the next section. The overall style of Wiccan ritual that Buckland presents is based on the Gardnerian Wicca he was originally trained in<sup>80</sup> and the *Complete Book of Witchcraft* is no exception, thus there are a number of similarities between the ritual structures found within *Complete Book of Witchcraft* and *Eight Sabbats*, though the ritual rubric and liturgy themselves often vary significantly.

### **C: Scott Cunningham**

By the time of his death in 1993 American born Scott Cunningham had over twenty years of experience as a Pagan and had published over thirty books, both fiction and non-fiction. More than fifteen of these books were written on the subject of eclectic, Wiccan styled, Paganism. Cunningham was first introduced to Paganism and the occult through a book entitled *The Supernatural*, which discussed the use of herbs and minerals in magical ways. It also discussed the 'evil eye' and showed hand gestures to ward it off. While in high school Cunningham used these gestures to attract the attention of a classmate who was reputed to be involved in the occult. It was through this classmate that Cunningham was formally introduced to witchcraft and Paganism. Over the next several years Cunningham would go on to be initiated

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<sup>79</sup> St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1986. Also denoted as *CW* in this thesis, this text was found in 46% of the recommended reading lists surveyed.

<sup>80</sup> Adler, p. 93.

into several covens of varying traditions, though he preferred to work and worship in a solitary fashion.<sup>81</sup>

One of Cunningham's more important books, *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*,<sup>82</sup> was first published in 1988, and was repeatedly reprinted through the late 1990s. *Wicca* is Cunningham's most recommended book, appearing on 60% of the recommended reading lists here surveyed. While *Eight Sabbats*, *The Witches' Way* and the *Buckland* are all designed with a coven of practitioners in mind *Wicca* was written, as its title clearly states, for the solitary Wiccan. *Wicca* discusses many of the same topics as the above books, including magical implements, ritual formats, magical theory and seasonal celebrations and is ultimately grounded in the ritual formats of British Wicca, though again with often widely varying liturgies that had evolved through Cunningham's own experiences in Wicca.

*Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* is unique amongst these selected texts for a number of reasons. Foremost, it is the first of these books to be written specifically for a solitary Pagan, predating RavenWolf's *To Ride a Silver Broomstick*, which is also aimed toward solitary Pagans, by five years.<sup>83</sup> Second it does not present itself as revealing an ancient religion nor does it portray Wicca as being ancient, though it does maintain that it is 'spiritually descended from [ancient] rites',<sup>84</sup> a view not dis-similar to that which was held by members of TOSC, who frequently represented their religion as being in line with the spirit, if not the actual practice, of pre-Christian pagan religions. Finally, unlike the texts of the other authors, *Wicca* has

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<sup>81</sup> Lewis and Rabinovitch, p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1988. Also signified as *SP* in this thesis.

<sup>83</sup> *SP* was originally published in 1988, *To Ride a Silver Broomstick* in 1993. I am utilizing the 1998 and 2002 editions of these books.

<sup>84</sup> Cunningham, *SP*, pp..xi, 4.

a companion text that was popular enough to be reported on an adequate number of reading lists to nearly be placed on this list.<sup>85</sup>

#### **D: Silver RavenWolf (Jenine Trayer)**

Silver RavenWolf, the 'craft' or Pagan name of Jenine Trayer, is an American born Wiccan and author of several popular books on Wicca. According to her autobiography<sup>86</sup> she has been involved in various aspects of Wicca, which she typically refers to as 'the Craft' or 'Witchcraft', since she was seventeen years old. RavenWolf was formally initiated into a coven in 1991 and received her second and third degrees in the Caledonii Tradition of Wicca. RavenWolf is currently the leader of the Black Forest Circle and Seminary, a Pagan organization containing over thirty-eight 'Clans', each of which contains several covens.<sup>87</sup>

*To Ride a Silver Broomstick*<sup>88</sup> is the first of eighteen books written by RavenWolf on the subject of Wicca and is found in 40% of the recommended reading lists surveyed. *Broomstick*, while presenting itself as a text for modern Wiccans represents the farthest departure from British Wicca of all the books on the subject discussed here.<sup>89</sup> *Broomstick*, which is the first of over sixteen publications for RavenWolf, a number of which are specifically focused upon teenage Pagans, discusses much of the same material as the other books. However, being a book for a 'new generation' of Witches, a term that is not fully explained, but appears to be in

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<sup>85</sup> Cunningham also wrote *Living Wicca: A Further Guide for the Solitary Practitioner (LW)* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1993) as a companion book to *Wicca*, published in the same year of Cunningham's death. While it is the companion to *SP* it is also much less frequently recommended than its antecedent, or any other book on this list, appearing in only 26% of the recommended reading lists surveyed. While not on the list above this text was also consulted to help present a clearer view of Cunningham's Wicca.

<sup>86</sup> Silver RavenWolf, *About Silver*, <http://www.silverravenwolf.com/ocean/host.php?folder=1&T=edn>, (Silver RavenWolf, Last Updated: Unknown, Last Viewed: 2006).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1993. This text is also signified as *SB* in this thesis.

<sup>89</sup> Starhawk's *Spiral Dance* is even farther removed from British Wicca in its presentation, but unlike RavenWolf, Starhawk does not consider herself to be Wiccan.

direct opposition to British Wicca, often referred to as ‘Traditional Wicca’ or ‘British Traditional Wicca’ in the United States, which is seen as being stuffy and moribund by some American Pagans, and this can perhaps be seen in the apparent purposeful use of the names of established techniques, such as Drawing Down the Moon, to mean something completely different from their original Gardnerian context. Nevertheless *Broomstick*, like other presentations of Wicca, still retains the underpinnings of British Wiccan practice, such as its ritual format and much of what goes into its presentation of the Wiccan cycle of seasonal celebrations. While little discussion of RavenWolf’s books occurred at TOSC meetings there is still, as will be discussed in chapter four, a remarkable similarity between their rituals and those of RavenWolf.

#### **E: Starhawk (Miriam Simos)**

Starhawk, born to an American Jewish family as Miriam Simos, is considered to be one of the most influential American Witches<sup>90</sup> and it is thought by some that her first book, *The Spiral Dance: The Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*<sup>91</sup> alone has helped to create over 1000 covers in the US.<sup>92</sup> Ironically, TOSC’s High Priest disliked Starhawk’s feminist politics and her reliance on what he considered to be poor scholarship held Starhawk in low esteem. Yet, as will be shown in later chapters of this thesis, TOSC’s rituals bare numerous similarities, both ideological and practical, to those presented by Starhawk.

Starhawk has been an important figure in Pagan, feminist, peace activist and environmentalist circles in both the United States and Europe and, unlike the other authors presented here, holds not only an undergraduate degree but also a Masters

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<sup>90</sup> Hanegraaff, p. 90.

<sup>91</sup> San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999. *The Spiral Dance* is also denoted as *SD* in this thesis.

<sup>92</sup> Adler, pp. 227-8.

degree.<sup>93</sup> Starhawk was one of the co-founders of the Reclaiming Tradition of witchcraft. Reclaiming, as it is popularly called, is a tradition of 'Feminist Witchcraft', which combines feminism, aspects of Wiccan-derived ceremonialism and the Faery tradition of Paganism, which was taught to Starhawk by Victor Anderson, one of the founders of that tradition.<sup>94</sup> Many of Reclaiming's members are also deeply involved with numerous types of political and environmental activism, which is seen as being an important aspect to their spirituality. While Starhawk is the author, or co-author, of numerous books on the Reclaiming Tradition she has since left Reclaiming and its magical and religious traditions and repudiated many of her former beliefs.

*The Spiral Dance*, being present on 61% of the recommended reading lists surveyed, reflects the popularity of the text, as does the fact that it is still in print over twenty years after its initial publication. However, unlike the other books researched here, *SD* does not present yet another variation of Wicca. Starhawk was a key founder of the San Francisco-based feminist Witchcraft organization known as the Reclaiming Collective. While Starhawk's brand of feminist Witchcraft does combine elements of British Wicca, it also involves a rich blend of Goddess spirituality and feminism.

*The Spiral Dance* discusses many of the same ideas as do the above texts, but often from a very different position. Some of these differences are readily apparent, such as the use of the term 'Priestess' to refer to both women and men alike, as well as a much heavier emphasis on the Goddess. At the same time the ritual format presented in *Spiral Dance* is based upon the basic Wiccan schema presented in the other texts, as are the general presentations of the holiday cycle.

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<sup>93</sup> Lewis and Rabinovitch, p. 259.

<sup>94</sup> Greenwood, *Encyclopedia*, p. 212-3.

#### **IV: Summary**

This thesis focuses upon the practices and beliefs of TOSC, a coven American Eclectic Wiccans, and their ritual celebrations of eight Pagan seasonal holidays. Such a study places myself as researcher in a position where I am simultaneously an insider and an outsider. Because of this a careful study of insider/outsider and emic/etic dynamics has been made so as to place better myself within a useful and ethical frame for fieldwork that involves Jone Salomonsen's 'method of compassion' and taking into consideration Kenneth Pike's tridimensional view of participant-observation. To place better TOSC within the wider world of modern Paganisms, five 'how-to' texts written by Pagan authors have been culled from sixty-two lists of recommended reading developed by Pagans for Pagans. This was done on the basis of a need for context: as Pagans, both in general and specifically the members of TOSC, have been influenced, either directly or indirectly, by these books, these books must be studied to better understand what has been retained in a Pagan's personal practice, what has been rejected, and why. The above sections now enable us to move further into the study and chapters two and three will help to further place the Temple of the Sacred Craft and its practices within the Pagan community at large.

## Chapter Two: What is Paganism?

The word “witch” is defined so differently by different people that a common definition seems impossible.<sup>1</sup>

Defining the precise field of research is the first step in any investigatorial process. As the above quotation from Margot Adler’s seminal work *Drawing Down the Moon* demonstrates, the field of Pagan studies can be difficult fully and adequately to define. This is because it is more encompassing than any single, simple definition.<sup>2</sup> What, then, is Paganism, and in particular where does TOSC sit within the broader realm of Pagnaism? Answering this question is important to understand the nature of TOSC and its place in modern Pagan religions. To answer it this thesis makes use of classification and definition theory.

Classification and definition theory attempts to develop encompassing definitions by excluding all that falls outside the intended definition while simultaneously including as much of the common understanding of the term in question. It does this through the use of monothetic and non-fuzzy descriptors for exclusionary purposes and the use of polythetic and fuzzy descriptors in order to maintain a connection to the common use of a term. ‘Monothetic’, ‘non-fuzzy’, ‘polythetic’ and ‘fuzzy’ are terms used in classification theory. ‘Monothetic’ refers to a set of characteristics that is present in all members of a taxonomic. For instance all red heads, regardless of other traits, have red hair. ‘Non-fuzzy’ refers to a class of objects with a single grade of membership and not a continuum of memberships. Thus, members of a non-fuzzy set are identical in their characteristics. The term ‘polythetic’ distinguishes a set of characteristics that are not present in all members of

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<sup>1</sup> Adler, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Michael York, *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion*, (NY: New York University Press, 2003), p. 8.

a group but are present in the majority of them and ‘fuzzy’ refers to a class of objects that has a range of grades of membership. For example, a class of ‘giant’ objects is a fuzzy set.<sup>3</sup> Such a definition has the advantage of allowing the theorist to define any word in nearly any way they wish with two caveats. First, the definition cannot confuse communication by abusing the common use of the term. Second it cannot simply define one word as a synonym of another; i.e. it must represent a unique definition.<sup>4</sup> Thus a definition can be created that is both familiar to its every day use while allowing it to be specific to the needs of the theorist.

### **I: The Meaning of ‘pagan’**

The American Heritage Dictionary (A.H.D.) defines ‘pagan’ as follows:

1. A person who is not a Christian, Muslim, or Jew; heathen. 2. One who has no religion. 3. A non-Christian. 4. A hedonist.

The first three definitions of ‘pagan’ are in keeping with the popular usage of the term in the United States. However these definitions are problematic. The first and third are too broad and can refer to virtually any religion<sup>5</sup> and thus do not help narrow the field to a useable definition. The second and fourth are simply inaccurate,<sup>6</sup> especially in today’s world. It instead reflects a Christian bias that runs through Western society.

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<sup>3</sup> Snoek, *Initiations*, pp. 28-31.

Jeffrey S. Kupperman, *Towards a Definition of Initiation: Emic and Etic Views of Initiation in the Western Mystery Tradition*, <http://www.aseweb.org/Papers/Initiation.htm> (East Lansing, MI: The Association for the Study of Esotericism, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2004). Snoek, *Initiations*, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> J.A.M. Snoek, ‘Grimes’ *Deeply into the Bone*, a Non-American Comment’, *Heidelberger e-Journal Für Ritualwissenschaft*, 2001/2002 (2003), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> With the possible exceptions of Judaism, Christianity or Islam. c.f. Shelly T. Rabinovitch, ‘Spells of Transformation: Categorizing Modern Neo-Pagan Witches’, in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. by James R. Lewis (Albany: SUNY, 1996), pp. 75-91 (p. 76).

<sup>6</sup> York, *Pagan Theology*, p. 14.



The word 'pagan' is, according to the American Heritage Dictionary,<sup>7</sup> derived from the Latin *paganus*, and is given the meaning of 'country-dweller'. However, there are other possible derivations of the word. First, according to Robin Lane Fox<sup>8</sup> the Christian Roman world use of the term had the connotation of a person who was a civilian, or more specifically, one not enrolled in the Christian army of God. Later, Pierre Chuvin<sup>9</sup> challenged both of these ideas, claiming that the word *paganus* referred to the adherents of the older religious traditions in Roman times, who were mostly town dwellers. He suggested that the term meant those who preferred the faith of the *pagus*, the local unit of government; i.e. the old religion. Michael York<sup>10</sup> also challenges the meaning of *paganus* as 'country dweller' saying that it referred to a 'person of the place,' regardless of whether that place was town or country. According to York<sup>11</sup> the Greek term, *Hellene*, was the equivalent of the Latin *paganus* and further suggests that the pagan could be from either the country or the city. A pagan was one who preserved the indigenous customs of their region; this was in opposition to the *alienus*, a person who was out of touch with the local practices, typically a Christian. Though Pagans today often rely upon the 'pagan as country-dweller' etymology, all of the above etymologies could be used to support the modern Pagan notion of their religions being connected, either historically or spiritually, to ancient, traditional and pre-Christian religion. None of these, however, necessarily define Paganism in its modern context.

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<sup>7</sup> Hereafter referred to as the A.H.D..

<sup>8</sup> *Pagans and Christians* (NY: Knopf Publishing Group, 1986), pp. 30-1.

<sup>9</sup> *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, trans. by B. A. Archer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 7-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Pagan Theology*, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

In 'Defining Paganism' York<sup>12</sup> approaches the topic of paganism in a somewhat different manner. Rather than dwelling on etymology York wrote that paganism is not itself a religion but what he refers to as a 'root religion'. By this York appears to mean that paganism represents a basic religious worldview and is a source from which specific pagan theologies and practices can be drawn. This worldview acts as source or 'root' for individual pagan religions.

To understand this it is necessary to understand York's view of paganism beyond its nature as a root religion. York<sup>13</sup> considers the primary aspect of the pagan worldview to be a focus on 'this worldliness'. 'This worldliness' refers to a focus on the physical world and its sacral or divine nature. Pagan 'this worldliness' is set in opposition to what he designates as a 'gnostic'<sup>14</sup> focus on 'otherworldliness'.<sup>15</sup> According to York<sup>16</sup> gnostic religions<sup>17</sup> emphasize the spiritual world over the physical, often devaluing the physical as an impediment to achieving true spirituality.

From the above discussion it seems clear that the term 'pagan' cannot be reduced to meaning simply non-Abrahamic religions. York also excludes some religions that might commonly be considered pagan as being 'gnostic' instead. This includes Brahmanic Hinduism and both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, which seek ultimately to escape the world of suffering and grasping through either *moksha* or *Nirvana* respectively. Included in the category of 'pagan' are Australian aboriginal

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<sup>12</sup> In *Pomegranate: The Journal of Pagan Studies*, (2000), pp. 4-9.

<sup>13</sup> 'Defining Paganism', p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Like paganism, York considers gnosticism to be another root religion or the underlying religious paradigm that is today found as the basis of the Abrahamic religions, amongst others.

<sup>15</sup> See *Pagan Theology*.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> As Richard Sutcliffe ('Left-Hand Path Ritual Magick: An Historical and Philosophical Overview', in *Paganism Today*, ed. by Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman (London: Thorsons, 1995), p. 119) notes, this should be distinguished from 'Gnosticism', a term that is 'used to designate the complex of religio-theological notions characteristic of the "Gnostic" sects that flourished . . . in Egypt during the second century CE.'

religion and Voodoun, which are pagan in nature due to their sharing in an essential this-worldliness.<sup>18</sup>

It can be thus be seen that York is attempting to define 'pagan' as a root religion whose nature is primarily that of being 'this worldly' centred. However, York is not simply attempting to define 'pagan' religions but is also attempting to set such religions in opposition to 'gnostic' religions. This dichotomy is problematic because York's view presents an oversimplification of 'gnostic' religions, as well as an oversimplification of the dialectic between 'this worldly' and 'otherworldly' foci. For instance what might be considered the most gnostic aspects of Islam, mystical Sufism, emphasizes the importance of any 'otherworldly' experiences as necessarily being grounded in and relevant to this world.<sup>19</sup> Regardless, York's view presents a useful starting point for understanding what is pagan. This will be clearly set forth in section B of this chapter, which examines modern Paganisms as a type of nature religion, an ideology that is undoubtedly present in TOSC.

## **II: Putting the Pagans in Paganism**

The previous section helps to define what 'paganism' is. However the field of modern Pagan Studies does not focus on the generalities of York's pagan root religion. Instead it focuses upon a New Religious Movement designated by its practitioners as Paganism or Neo-Paganism. Thus it must be asked how does 'paganism' and 'Paganism' differ and what makes a Pagan a Pagan?

First, for the sake of clarity this thesis will distinguish between 'pagan' and 'Pagan', much in the way 'Catholic' is employed to differentiate between the Roman Catholic Christian denomination and a wide-ranging or 'catholic' worldview,

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<sup>18</sup> York, 'Defining Paganism', pp. 6, 7.

<sup>19</sup>Fazlur Rahman, 'Islam' in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol 7, (NY: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), p. 314.

Pagan/Paganism will be used to refer to the modern set of New Religious Movements while pagan/paganism will be used to refer to a particular worldview and/or an overall grouping of pre-Abrahamic religions. It is in this light that York<sup>20</sup> stresses that Paganism is a form of *modern* Western paganism. Rabinovitch<sup>21</sup> similarly defines Paganism as a modern religious movement or movements that have returned to old religious roots for inspiration and is both holistic and balanced.<sup>22</sup> However Paganism is not simply a modern Western paganism. It is instead a part of what are termed 'New Religious Movements' that came into being within the last sixty to eighty years, though inspired in some way by ancient or pre-Abrahamic paganisms. It is also true that Paganism encompasses the beliefs of non-Western peoples such as the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians; however Western-inspired pagan cultures are more typically favoured than non-Western cultures.

The modern-ness of Paganism has been well documented. This is important, especially in light of a perception amongst some Pagans that their religion is either directly or somehow spiritually descended from the pre-Abrahamic religions of the world, and especially Europe.<sup>23</sup> For instance the Pagan religion of Wicca, as developed by Gerald Gardner, Doreen Valiente, and others, was developed c. 1940<sup>24</sup> and shows elements from medieval books of ceremonial magic that would not have been part of indigenous traditions.<sup>25</sup> Other Pagan religions, such as Asatru, Romuva,

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<sup>20</sup> *Pagan Theology*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Pagan Theology*, p. 76.

<sup>22</sup> Rabinovitch and Carpenter both emphasize the pre-Christian sources of inspiration within Paganisms today but ignore the influences of sources from, or influenced by, Christianity and Judaism such as Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry and Kabbalah, all of which have played an important role in the formation and practice of many Pagan religions, including both Wicca and Druidry.

<sup>23</sup> This understanding of Paganism's ancientness can be found in the writings of all of the Pagan authors discussed in the introduction.

<sup>24</sup> Aidan A. Kelly 'An Update on Neopagan Witchcraft in America' in *Perspectives on the New Age*, ed. by James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), pp. 136-151 (p. 136).

<sup>25</sup> Ronald Hutton (*The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) aptly demonstrates those influences mentioned in note 22, above. Modern Druidry is similarly influenced.

and Celtic, Greek, and Egyptian Reconstructionisms all have their origins in the twentieth century.

The modern nature of Paganism requires us to differentiate between the generic terms 'paganism', as defined above, and the modern group of religions referred to collectively as 'Paganism'. As a modern form of York's pagan root religion the category of 'Paganism' automatically excludes the ancient pagan religions, and as a Western form of paganism it excludes other contemporary but ancient pagan religions such as Shinto or the various Native American religions.

Further, Paganism does not have a single dogma or leadership, nor does it represent a single religion, tradition, or set of beliefs.<sup>26</sup> Because the term covers such a large area, Denny, in the editor's preface to *Voices from the Pagan Census*,<sup>27</sup> describes 'Paganism' as an umbrella term, covering multiple religious movements with a variety of forms.<sup>28</sup> Thus it is frequently more appropriate to speak not of Paganism but of Paganisms such as Druidry, Heathenism or Wicca, the Pagan religion most influential on the TOSC.

To answer the second question, 'what makes a Pagan a Pagan?' we can turn to both academic and popular writings on the subject. These suggest two features common to modern Paganisms: non-monotheistic conceptions of deity or deities and the identity of Paganism as a 'nature religion'. However, neither ideology is as simple as it appears. For instance many different theological conceptions of the divine exist amongst Pagan religions. Despite the apparent atheism suggested by the A.H.D's

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<sup>26</sup> Helen A. Berger, Even A. Leach and Leigh S. Shaffer Berger, *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2003), p. 3; Denis D. Carpenter, 'Emergent Nature Spirituality: An Examination of the Major Spiritual Contours of the Contemporary Pagan Worldview' in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. by James R. Lewis, (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1996), p. 55072 (p.60); Rabinovitch, p. 75 and York, 'Defining Paganism', p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Berger et al., p. xiii.

<sup>28</sup> C.f. Denis D. Carpenter, 'Practitioners of Paganism and Wiccan Spirituality in Contemporary Society: A Review of the Literature' in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. By James R. Lewis (Albany: SUNY), pp. 373-406, (p. 77).

definition of 'pagan', Carpenter<sup>29</sup> includes pantheism and panentheism<sup>30</sup> in his exegeses on Pagan beliefs. Adler defines 'pagan' as:

. . . a member of a *polytheistic* nature religion such as the ancient Greek, Roman, or Egyptian religions, or, in anthropological terms, a member of one of the indigenous folk and tribal religions all over the world.<sup>31</sup>

Prudence Jones in 'The European Native Tradition'<sup>32</sup> and Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick in *A History of Pagan Europe*,<sup>33</sup> also define paganism as being polytheistic in nature, recognizing multiple divinities, both male and female. However their assertion that all Pagans reduce the many deities of the world into manifestations of the God and Goddess is demonstrably untrue, as some Pagans are 'hard' polytheists,<sup>34</sup> meaning that they believe in multiple, distinct, divinities that cannot be reduced to a single God or Goddess. For example Andrew Campbell, in 'About Hellenismos: Some Frequently Asked Questions' wrote that '. . . the majority of us are polytheists and, as such, believe that the gods are individual beings with distinct personalities and wills'<sup>35</sup> and the description of Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism (CR) at Witchvox.com states that '[w]e believe there are many deities and that they are separate entities worthy of worship.'<sup>36</sup>

Adler<sup>37</sup> also includes pantheism to her understanding of Pagan theology and Wiccan author Amber Fisher<sup>38</sup> includes henotheism. Both Adler<sup>39</sup> and York<sup>40</sup> include animism and allow for a combination of any of these theisms when discussing Pagan

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<sup>29</sup> 'Practitioners', p. 375.

<sup>30</sup> 'Emergent', pp. 70-1.

<sup>31</sup> Adler, p. 10, emphasis added.

<sup>32</sup> *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, ed. by Robert H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 77-88 (p. 77).

<sup>33</sup> London: Routledge, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> See for example Adler, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> <http://demos-oreiadon.8m.net/faq.htm> (Demos Oreiadon, Last Updated: 2003, Last Viewed: 2004).

<sup>36</sup> Erynn R. Laurie, [http://www.witchvox.com/trads/trad\\_cr.html](http://www.witchvox.com/trads/trad_cr.html) (Tampa, FL: The Witches' Voice Inc., Last Updated: 2003; Last Viewed: 2005).

<sup>37</sup> p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Philosophy of Wicca*, (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002), pp. 48-9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *Pagan Theology*, p. 62.

understandings of the divine.<sup>41</sup> This allows Pagans simultaneously to hold animistic, polytheistic and henotheistic beliefs depending on how they wish to discuss their understanding of the nature of the gods and/or spirit world. Thus Paganism appears to encompass an extremely large range of ‘theisms’. It also appears that Pagan beliefs concerning deity or deities encompass multiple and varied forms of beliefs, almost without restriction. This was evident in the practices of TOSC, wherein the coveners held differing, and sometimes opposing, views concerning the nature of the gods. Due to this, the presence of specific types of theologies ceases to be useful in identifying Paganisms or Pagans.

The description of Paganisms as ‘nature religions’<sup>42</sup> can be difficult if left unexplained. This is especially true as there are Paganisms that do not engage in nature worship in the common understanding of the term. This difficulty stems in part from the nature of the term itself, as constructed by Catherine Albanese in *Nature Religion in America*.<sup>43</sup> As an academic construct Albanese<sup>44</sup> meant the phrase to refer to a type of religiosity that focused on the third of the Western religious trinity of God, humanity and nature but not a specific worship of nature.

In order to understand better the essence of nature religion and Paganisms’ place within it, Prudence Jones speaks of ‘nature veneration’. Jones<sup>45</sup> states that nature veneration includes not only ‘a diffuse awareness of a greater power’ but also includes an awareness of *genus loci* and the sacredness of specific locations.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Paganism is not the only set of religions or spiritualities that is placed in this category by scholars, also included is eco-spirituality and many indigenous religions (Jo Pearson ‘Wicca, Esotericism and Living Nature: Assessing Wicca as Nature Religion’, *Pomegranate: The Journal of Pagan Studies*, (2000), pp. 4-15, (p. 4)). In *Defining Paganism* York (p. 7) expresses the belief that any religion that is characterized as being a ‘nature religion’ is also a type of paganism, though not necessarily a type of Paganism.

<sup>43</sup> Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> p. 78.

Albanese<sup>46</sup> shares a similar understanding of nature religion in her discussion of Native American nature religion that, according to Albanese, has a spatial and environment orientation that allows its practitioners to engage in and with nature as personified Beings. In a similar fashion York<sup>47</sup> sees nature veneration as being expressed by honouring the natural world as the 'sacred itself made tangible', while Jones and Pennick<sup>48</sup> see pagan religions, including modern Paganisms, as those that view nature 'as a theophany, a manifestation of divinity'. Scholars such as Albanese, Clifton, Greenwood, Bado-Fralick, as well as many practitioners<sup>49</sup> describe modern Paganisms as being types of nature religions.

More recently Clifton<sup>50</sup> has distinguished between three conceptualisations of 'nature': Cosmic Nature, Gaian Nature and Embodied Nature. Cosmic nature reflects the 'natural magic' of the Middle Ages and Renaissance and which was popularised by occult writers such as Henry Cornelius Agrippa. This understanding of nature sees connections between all parts of the universe and is the basis of Frazer's conception of sympathetic magic. It is an understanding of nature that sees real and metaphysical connections between stars, plants, spirits, souls and everything else and may be seen today in the lists of magical correspondences popular with modern occultists and Pagans alike. Gaian nature presents a classical form of nature developed by the Romantics. This is a nature fully populated by noble savages and wise Druids, one that is outside of the cities and human made artefacts. It is a nature that is fully alive and sometimes identified as a deity in its own right. Embodied nature emphasizes the human body as a natural thing but human sexuality and, indeed, all of the functions of

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<sup>46</sup> *Reconsidering Nature Religion*, (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), p. 4-5.

<sup>47</sup> 'Defining Paganism', p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Reconsidering*; Chas Clifton, *Her Hidden Children: The Rise of Wicca and Paganism in America*, (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006); *Magic* and Bado-Fralick, p. 66.

<sup>50</sup> *Children*, pp. 45-66).



the body, as being part natural. All three of these modalities of nature can be found within the belief systems of modern Paganisms to varying extents, though several scholars<sup>51</sup> also note that the level to which this is understood, felt and expressed can vary greatly, and the idea that nature is sacred within Pagan religions should be neither generalized nor taken for granted. The importance and role of Cosmic and Embodied nature in the rituals and myths employed by TOSC will be discussed in chapters four through six of this thesis.

### **III: Pagan or Neo-Pagan?**

In some scholarship concerning modern Pagan religions such as Wicca or Druidry, as well as in some popular books written by Pagans, the modern set of religions known as Paganism are referred to as 'Neo-Paganism'. It was Tim O'tter Zell, an American Pagan, who first used the term 'Neo-Pagan' and it is used by some scholars and Pagans today. Zell used the term to differentiate between initiated Traditional Wiccans and those who were either not initiated into a coven or rejected the labels 'witch' or 'Wiccan'.<sup>52</sup> While Zell's original use of the term separated Wiccans from other Pagans, today 'Neo-Pagan' is used to include all types of modern Pagans, even though the 'neo-' prefix is explicitly rejected by many contemporary Pagans.

'Neo-' means 'new' or 'recent'. This corresponds closely to the use of the prefix in the term 'Neo-Pagan' as denoting modern expressions of the beliefs and

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<sup>51</sup> Magliocco, *Witching Culture*, p. 6; Jo Pearson 'Wicca, Esotericism and Living Nature: Assessing Wicca as Nature Religion', *Pomegranate: The Journal of Pagan Studies*, (2004), pp. 4-15, (pp. 13-14); Bado-Fralick, pp. 66-7; Greenwood, *Magic*, p. 111-13. Here Pearson is referring specifically to Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, which are collectively referred to as 'British Traditional Wicca' or 'Traditional Wicca' in the United States. Given the agreement of other scholars who write of either other forms of Wicca or of Paganism in general, this sentiment can potentially be extended to all Paganisms

<sup>52</sup> Berger et al., p. 1.

practices of ancient pagans.<sup>53</sup> Yet the use of 'Neo-' in 'Neo-Paganism' can be problematic. The *Pagan Census*<sup>54</sup> demonstrates that in the United States the term 'Pagan' is preferred over that of 'Neo-Pagan' by practitioners. This is perhaps due to the tendency of some practitioners to see modern Paganisms as being directly evolved from ancient paganisms, and the idea of continuity is seen to be very important amongst Pagans.<sup>55</sup> For example the founder of Wicca, Gerald Gardner, claimed that his witchcraft religion of Wica (*sic.*) was a form of traditional witchcraft that had survived for centuries or longer.<sup>56</sup> Some contemporary scholars have taken a similar view of Paganism, such as Prudence Jones, who wrote that her understanding of paganism encompasses not only the ancient religions of Europe, but also the ancient and modern religions of India and Japan, most tribal religions, Native American traditions, as well as 'the modern forms of nature religion in Europe and the European-settled countries abroad.'<sup>57</sup>

Kelly<sup>58</sup> too has demonstrated the modern nature of Wicca, and Reconstructionist Paganisms<sup>59</sup> are reconstructed from archaeological, historical, linguistic, mythological, and other academic sources and therefore have no *direct* lineage to ancient paganisms. While it is true that many practitioners label themselves as Pagans as opposed to Neo-Pagans, many also label themselves as Wiccans instead of Pagans or Neo-Pagans.<sup>60</sup> Also, amongst different scholars both 'Pagan' and 'Neo-Pagan' are used to denote the same thing. According to Pearson, Roberts and

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<sup>53</sup> Carpenter, 'Practitioners', p. 375.

<sup>54</sup> Berger, Leach and Shaffer, p. 90.

<sup>55</sup> Pearson, Joanne, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel, 'Introduction', *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 1-5 (pp. 1-2). This use of the 'traditional appeal' is a legitimization strategy commonly found in New Religious Movements (James R. Lewis, *Legitimizing New Religions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 13-14).

<sup>56</sup> C.f. Carpenter 'Practitioners', p. 45.

<sup>57</sup> p. 78. See also Jones and Pennick, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> p. 136.

<sup>59</sup> See section F below.

<sup>60</sup> Berger et al., p. 90.

Samuel<sup>61</sup> American scholars tend towards the use of 'Neo-Pagan' while British and European scholars tend to use 'Pagan'. However even this is not absolute; for example Hannegraff, a European scholar, uses Neo-Pagan while the academic journal *The Pomegranate: The Journal of Pagan Studies*, published in the United States, states in its guidelines for contributors that the term 'contemporary Paganism' is preferred over 'Neo-Paganism', suggesting a shift in the academic language. This is also possibly due to the fact that many of the scholars involved with the production of the *Pomegranate* are themselves practicing Pagans. Importantly, TOSC refers to itself as a 'Pagan' group rather than a 'Neo-Pagan' one.

Throughout this thesis the terms 'Pagan,' 'Paganism' and/or 'Paganisms' will be used to refer to the forms of modern Paganism under consideration. While it is understood that modern Paganisms represent a new form of religiosity, there is little reason specifically to refer to it as 'Neo-' Paganism, a term which, as has already been noted, few practicing Pagans use for themselves. The preference of one type of terminology over the other is important. As Catherine Bell<sup>62</sup> has aptly stated; by removing something from its context means that that thing is not what it was before; so too with the term 'Pagan'. Thus, utilizing the emic terminology will also better convey the practitioner's understanding of their religion. Thus this thesis describes TOSC as, alternatively, a Pagan or a Wiccan coven, to reflect the language used to describe it by its various members.

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<sup>61</sup> See Pearson, Roberts and Samuel, pp. 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 81.

#### IV: Classifying Pagan Religions

Issac Bonewits,<sup>63</sup> author and founder of the American Druid order *A'r nDra'ocht Fe'in* ('Your Own Druidry' or 'ADF'), defined three different forms of paganism: Paleo-, Meso- and Neo-. Bonewits defined 'Paleopaganisms' as those original, tribal religions of the world, as they were or still are, being practiced. Bonewits saw them as pre-Christian religions that are still intact and represent a continuous system of belief since ancient times. Examples of Paleopagan religions would include, according to Bonewits,<sup>64</sup> Shinto, Hinduism, Australian aboriginal religion and Native American religions. Bonewits uses the term 'Mesopaganism' to refer to those religions and organizations created in an attempt to reconstruct, renew or continue what their founders believed to be the Paleopagan practices and beliefs of the ancient world. However Bonewits<sup>65</sup> found that those falling under this heading are highly influenced, deliberately or otherwise, by monotheistic and dualistic Christian, Jewish and/or Muslim paradigms.<sup>66</sup> 'Neopaganism' refers to the religions created since approximately 1940 that have blended aspects of various types of Paleopaganism with modern 'Aquarian Age'<sup>67</sup> ideology while attempting to remove as much of the monotheistic and dualistic influences of the Abrahamic religions as

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<sup>63</sup> 'The Druid Revival in Modern America' in *The Druid Renaissance: The Voice of Druidry Today*, ed. by Philip Carr-Gomm (London: Thorsons, 1996), pp. 73-88. (p. 74).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> This fails to take into consideration dualistic notions found within pre-Christian pagan belief systems such as Neoplatonism and early Hermetism.

<sup>67</sup> The 'Aquarian Age' encompasses the belief of a coming age where the world will be transformed into something better (Hanegraaff, p. 78), sometimes being characterized 'by unimaginable splendour and bliss' (Hanegraaff, p. 336). These views and the New Age in general appear to be less popular in today's Paganisms. See for example Berger et al., p. 24 and Joanne Pearson, 'Assumed Affinities : Wicca and the New Age', in *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, ed by. Joanne Pearson, Robert H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 45-56 (p. 45).

possible. Bonewits<sup>68</sup> includes in this area Wicca and many of its offshoots, his own ADF and *its* offshoot the Henge of Keltria.

Some authors on the subject of Paganism, especially with regard to Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca as well as Druidry, will mention the influences of Freemasonry, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, also known as the GD, or other Jewish or Christian esoteric traditions on the development of many Paganisms.<sup>69</sup> However, Bonewits includes them in his definitions of Paganism, referring to them as types of 'Mesopaganism'.<sup>70</sup> The inclusion of Freemasonry, the GD, or the numerous Rosicrucian orders as being types of Paganism poses several problems. First, many of these orders, such as Freemasonry and the GD do not consider themselves to be religions at all, even though they may be religious in nature.<sup>71</sup> While this does not necessarily rule them out as being religions, members of these groups, as well as many Rosicrucian groups, identify themselves as being explicitly Christian.<sup>72</sup> This includes the Masonic Rosicrucian organizations based on the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, which require their members not only to be Master Masons, but also

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<sup>68</sup> 'Druid Revival', p. 74.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Adler, Farrar and Farrar, *A Witches' Bible*, Pearson et al., and Magliocco, *Witching Culture*.

<sup>70</sup> Pike (*New Age*, pp.20-1) includes such orders as the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis in her view of what is Pagan. However this contradicts her own understanding of Paganism being focused on the relationship between humans and nature (Pike *New Age*, p.18), whereas these occult orders are often focused upon the relationship between humans and the divine beyond nature as well as humans and the divinity within.

<sup>71</sup> Grand Lodge of Illinois, *Basic Information about Masonry*,

<http://www.ilmason.org/Basic1/bainfo.htm> (Springfield, IL: Grand Lodge of Illinois, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2004); Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, *The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, <http://www.hermeticgoldendawn.org/index.shtml> (Elfers, FL: Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Inc., Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2004). In the cases of Freemasonry and the Golden Dawn, neither considers themselves to be religions, with Freemasonry explicitly stating that it is not a religion. However, Freemasonry and the Golden Dawn, as well as many other fraternal and occult orders, do make use of symbolism from various religions, including Christianity and Judaism, as well as religious titles; for instance the Golden Dawn uses Greek religious titles for its initiatory officers.

<sup>72</sup> C.f. Rosicrucian Fellowship, *The Rosicrucian Fellowship - an International Association of Christian Mystics*, <http://www.rosicrucian.com/>, (The Rosicrucian Fellowship, Last Updated: 2003, Last Viewed: 2004).

Trinitarian Christians.<sup>73</sup> Further, while explicitly identifying these organizations as being gnostic in nature is problematic.<sup>74</sup> The nature of these organizations is still essentially gnostic in York's use of the term: they aim at the improvement of the individual through knowledge of the divine and generally lack the element of nature veneration that is common to paganism in general and modern Paganisms more specifically.<sup>75</sup> As at least nominally gnostic types of Christian organizations, or magical and fraternal organizations heavily influenced by Judaism and Christianity, Freemasonry or the Golden Dawn cannot easily be classified as being types of paganism, if they can be called pagan at all.

Bonewits' usage of these traditions in his definitions is pejorative as he considers their influence on what he calls 'Neopaganism' to be 'unfortunate'.<sup>76</sup> His inclusion of Wicca and Wiccan-based religions as being Neopagan and not Mesopagan is, then, curious. Wicca's origins, with Gerald Gardner in the 1930s – '40s, clearly demonstrate a heavy influence of numerous 'Mesopagan' traditions, including the GD, the OTO,<sup>77</sup> Freemasonry,<sup>78</sup> Rosicrucianism,<sup>79</sup> various Renaissance magical traditions and even Neoplatonism,<sup>80</sup> and yet he still considers Wicca to be Neopagan and not Mesopagan. Bonewits' negative feelings towards Mesopaganism in Wicca are evident in comments made regarding Gerald Gardner<sup>81</sup> but appear to have

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<sup>73</sup> John M. Stubbs, 'Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia', <http://members.tripod.com/~jomastes/orders/infosria.html>, (John M. Stubbs, Last Update: Unknown, Last Viewed: 2004).

<sup>74</sup> See note 7 concerning the apparently dual gnostic/pagan nature of Sufism. This critique can also be applied to apparently 'gnostic' occult or mystical organizations.

<sup>75</sup> York, 'Defining Paganism', pp. 5-7.

<sup>76</sup> Philip Carr-Gomm, 'Forward: The Door' in *The Druid Renaissance*, ed. by Philip Carr-Gomm (London: Thorsons, 1996), pp. 1-16 (p. 13).

<sup>77</sup> Adler, pp. 84-5, Berger et al, p.9, Farrar and Farrar, *A Witches' Bible*, p. 304 and Hanegraaff, p. 87.

<sup>78</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 304, Berger et al., p. 9, Magliocco, *Witching Culture*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>79</sup> Morgan Davis *From Man to Witch: Gerald Gardner 1946-1949*,

<http://www.geraldgardner.com/index/Gardner46-49.PDF>, (www.geraldgardner.com, Last Updated: 2002, Last Viewed: 2004).

<sup>80</sup> Magliocco, *Witching Culture*, pp. 27-31, 55-6.

<sup>81</sup> Adler reports Bonewits as writing that Gardner took 'material from any source that didn't run too fast to get away' (p.70).

been moderated by the time he wrote 1998 article 'The Druid Revival in Modern America'. Further, Bonewits' claim that 'Neopagan' religions, as he defines them, consciously reject the influences of these 'non-pagan magical sources'<sup>82</sup> suggests that they are influenced by these sources in their reaction against them. Bonewits' definitions of paganism are still important for their inclusion of Masonry and related esoteric organizations in modern Paganisms, and their continuing influence on modern Paganisms, especially in America but also in relation to forms of British Druidry.<sup>83</sup> However, given the numerous types of Paganism it must be asked whether or if they can be usefully classified and distinguished from one another. While this thesis finds difficulty with several of the attempts made by scholars to do just this, section F of this chapter will demonstrate that it is both possible and useful to accomplish this task. This helps with the study of TOSC in that, if it is possible, such a categorization will help place TOSC within the broader context of Pagan religions.

## **V: Further Attempts at Classification**

In light of the above question it should perhaps also be asked whether or not it is necessary to classify the various types of Paganisms. In lieu of this, Pearson<sup>84</sup> states that feminist witchcraft or Goddess spirituality and hedgewitchcraft are often grouped under the single heading of Wicca.<sup>85</sup> Rabinovitch<sup>86</sup> also shows that the term 'witch' is used differently amongst different Pagan groups and can mean either a person who has been initiated into a Pagan coven or any sort of Pagan at all, whether they have

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<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Adler, p. 71.

<sup>83</sup> For example, as I frequent the on-line message board of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, I have seen several references to Bonewits' use of Mesopaganism, especially in relationship to OBOD being a Mesopagan instead of a Neopagan Druidic Order.

<sup>84</sup> 'Going Native', pp. 52-3.

<sup>85</sup> This broad generalization is referred to as 'Wiccan spirituality' by some scholars (Carpenter, 'Practitioners', pp. 60-1).

<sup>86</sup> pp. 87, 88.

been initiated or not.<sup>87</sup> These examples suggest a general confusion of emic-level terminology that can make the study of Paganism, both by practitioners and scholars, difficult.

It may be possible to identify individual Pagan traditions through self-identification, such as where a group or individuals refer to themselves as ‘Celtic’ or ‘Druidic’ or ‘Wiccan’. For instance, in the Pagan census conducted in the United States by Helen Berger, Evan Leach and Leigh Shaffer between 1993 and 1995,<sup>88</sup> twenty-one designations for different Pagan categories were given for respondents to choose. This led to their finding of six major categories of Paganism within the United States: Wiccans, Pagans, Goddess Worshipers, Druids, Shamans, and Unitarian Universalist Pagans.<sup>89</sup> In his book on modern Paganisms in England Harvey cites not six but five major categories: Druids, Witches, Heathens, Goddess Spirituality and Shamans.<sup>90</sup> However these schema are still open to the critiques voiced by Pearson and Rabinovitch above; i.e. they are easily confusable and have no distinct meanings within the Pagan community as a whole, thus obfuscating rather than explicating the practices variously associated with these categories. For instance members of TOSC alternatively identify themselves as Wiccans or Pagans while giving both words the same meaning.

Rabinovitch<sup>91</sup> approaches the problem differently. In her study of ‘Wiccan spirituality’ she found Pagans came to their religions in one of three ways: through hobbies, through global activism and through feminist contacts. Associated with these three approaches to Paganism are three foci for the Pagans’ transformation of the

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<sup>87</sup> The term has even wider implications than this, for it can refer to someone with not religious bearings at all, or someone involved in radical feminism that may or may not be religious in nature, such as Starhawk’s Reclaiming Witchcraft.

<sup>88</sup> Berger et. al., p. 90.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Berger et al. 2003, p.91

<sup>91</sup> p. 76.



world around them. The groups formed from these foci are: Religionist, Ecopagan and God/dess Celebrants. As there is crossover between categories, Rabinovitch<sup>92</sup> also adds an Eclectic category that is not itself a tradition but a combination of many traditions.

Rabinovitch<sup>93</sup> finds that the more 'traditional' and 'ceremonial' branches of Paganism tend to fall under the 'Religionist' category. Members of this category are concerned with the worship of the divine as both male and female, both immanent and transcendent. Members of these groups often label themselves as 'Wiccans' and they focus on the relationship between the Self and the Divine. These include Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, the Wiccan Church of Canada and a large section of Eclectics. This group cannot be limited to Wicca, however, and may include certain types of Druidry and religious expressions that are ultimately derived from Wicca but are no longer Wiccan in either a theological or practical sense.<sup>94</sup> This points to the general lack of clarity of Rabinovitch's system.

Rabinovitch's category of Ecopagan is not definable by its ritual praxes but is instead identified by its religious beliefs, focusing heavily upon the importance of the sacredness of the Earth, who is often personified, euphemistically or not, as the goddess Gaia or simply the Goddess.<sup>95</sup> This view is similar to Clifton's Gaian nature. However, as previously discussed, it is one that, in varying levels of magnitude, can be found amongst many different Pagans, including Wiccans, whom Rabinovitch labels as Religionists.

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<sup>92</sup> pp. 77-8.

<sup>93</sup> pp. 78-9, 80.

<sup>94</sup> This may include groups that use a fairly standard Wiccan ritual format, as discussed by David Cheal and Jane Leverick ('Working Magic in Neo-Paganism', *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 13 (1999), pp. 7-19), but are not initiatory or duo-theistic nor apply authority as Wiccan covens, especially Gardnerian or Alexandrian covens, do. Many of Rabinovitch's (pp. 86-7) Eclectic Pagans would be included here.

<sup>95</sup> Rabinovitch, p. 76, 81.

Rabinovitch states that members of the God/dess Celebrants category are usually set apart from other Pagan movements by their highly eclectic and often radically feminist agendas. God/dess Celebrant groups are highly influenced by the feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s and are concerned with social and personal activism. Their rituals are often poetic and focus on 'the reclaiming and re-empowerment of certain sectors of society such as the gay and lesbian communities, women of colour, and so forth.'<sup>96</sup> They see their rituals as having the effect of freeing the participants, and through them society, 'from patriarchal restraints and assumptions endemic to North American culture in the late twentieth century.'<sup>97</sup>

Eclectics are those who, often having been trained in a traditional style of Paganism such as Gardnerian or Alexandrian Wicca, have moved away from those systems and have adapted those systems, as well as other ritual elements and beliefs, to fit their needs. Rabinovitch<sup>98</sup> finds that Eclectics generally work alone but occasionally will form groups or even 'mini-traditions.'

Robert J. Wallis and Jenny Blain discuss another category that they refer to as either 'shamanism' or 'neo-shamanism'. According to Blain shamanic practices are designed to bring the practitioner into contact with gods and spirits as well as the ability to see future events or cause physical healing to occur.<sup>99</sup> The exact methods of neo-shamanism vary, though they generally involve entering into a trance or ecstatic state that allows the practitioner to contact the entities or produce the results they desire. Typical methods include drumming, dancing and singing as well as possibly

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<sup>96</sup> Rabinovitch, p. 83.

<sup>97</sup> Rabinovitch, pp. 83, 84.

<sup>98</sup> p. 86.

<sup>99</sup> Jenny Blain, 'Tracing the In/Authentic Seeress: From Seid-Magic to Stone Circles' in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas S. Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), pp. 217-240 (pp. 222, 224).

wearing special clothing that may have magical, symbolic or psychological significance,<sup>100</sup> all for the purpose of gaining ecstatic experiences.

Yet problems abound within both the Rabinovitch and Wallis/Blain classification schemas and an alternative to these classifications systems will be discussed in the following section of this chapter. Rabinovitch grouped these categories based on a typology developed by Pagan author Starhawk which is based on how groups or individuals understand and use power within their praxis. Starhawk's categorizations focus on what she perceived to be either inappropriate or appropriate uses of authority and power within human social structures: power-over, power-with and power-from-within.<sup>101</sup> The so-called 'power-over' model, which is seen as the Abrahamic model, to which Paganism is here being contrasted, is viewed as giving an elite few power over many.<sup>102</sup> Numerous examples of abuse under this power structure are given, where it is further postulated that those coming from abusive family situations are drawn towards this model.<sup>103</sup> Both Starhawk and Rabinovitch see this model as being almost entirely illegitimate.

The 'power-with' model appears to be viewed more ambivalently. It is seen as the power of a powerful individual within a group of equals. It is not for commanding but for giving suggestions and seeing how the group responds to them.<sup>104</sup> The final power model, 'power-from-within', is that which reflects Starhawk's own preferences and is seen as being the most beneficial and legitimate. According to her this model sees the world as a dynamic, living entity, where all things within it have their own

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<sup>100</sup> Blain, 'Tracing', pp. 224, 225-6; Robert J. Wallis 'Between the Worlds: Autoarchaeology and Neo-Shamans' in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004) pp. 191-216 (p. 191).

<sup>101</sup> Rabinovitch, p. 78.

<sup>102</sup> Rabinovitch, p. 77.

<sup>103</sup> Rabinovitch, pp. 79, 80.

<sup>104</sup> Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), p. 10.

inherent and divine value.<sup>105</sup> Because everyone has this power from within there is no room for abuse or coercion.<sup>106</sup>

The power models employed by Starhawk and Rabinovitch fail as a useful system of classification of Paganisms for a number of reasons. First, they are based on a pejorative bias found in Starhawk's writings that uncritically evaluate all examples against her own life experiences. Thus all groups using a 'power-over' model are corrupt and therefore through Rabinovitch's system all Religionist Pagans are working in a corrupt and patriarchal system, whether or not they in fact are working in such a system. The 'power-from-within' model, which Rabinovitch explicitly identifies with the God/dess Celebrant, does not explain why one person or being should not have more power inherent to them than another, just as one person is physically stronger than another, or taller than another; there is no reason why there is not as much chance for abuse in this model than either of the others. Finally neither Starhawk nor Rabinovitch are able to demonstrate how one class of Pagans is actually distinct from another except through the use of the power model. TOSC demonstrates how Rabinovitch's system fails. During public rituals TOSC employed a hierarchical system of ritual officers, all of whom were lead by the High Priest and High Priestess. However the private New Moon rituals were neither written nor directed by the High Priest or High Priestess but by one of TOSC's initiates. As previously discussed, TOSC also holds a Gaian nature view of the world similar to that of Rabinovitch's Ecopagans. This suggests that TOSC employs both a 'power-over' and 'power-with' model that should make it both a Religionist and Ecopagan coven. Yet Rabinovitch's definitions of these suggest that they are mutually exclusive.

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<sup>105</sup> Starhawk, *Truth or Dare*, p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> Rabinovitch, p. 78.

The use of the term Shamanism is equally unsatisfactory; not all Pagans who primarily utilize ecstatic methods in their religious practice are necessarily shamans or neo-shamans. Mircea Eliade<sup>107</sup> showed that shamans have very specific functions within their communities, and not all Pagans using ecstatic techniques necessarily fulfil the social functions that shamans have traditionally fulfilled. Indeed, some may have no interest in those functions whatsoever. For instance one frequent attendee of the seasonal and lunar rituals of the TOSC described herself simply as an ecstatic Pagan with no interest in the traditional roles of a shaman; ecstatic ritual was just how she preferred to practice her spirituality.

Magliocco discusses at length the use and experience of ecstasy as being of great importance amongst the Pagans she has studied. She says that for many Pagans ‘the ecstatic state is the essence of magic’<sup>108</sup> and here uses the term ‘ecstasy’ as it is derived from the Greek *ekstasis*, meaning ‘to stand outside of the self’. Thus Magliocco would consider nearly all Pagans to be ecstatic by nature, and thus Shamanistic, *sensu* Blain and Wallis. Experiences with the rituals of TOSC reinforce Magliocco’s findings. As these systems of classification systems ultimately fail an alternative must be found. This thesis develops such an alternative system below.

## **VI: A New Approach to Pagan Typology – Revivalist and Reconstructionist Paganisms**

The attempts at classification overviewed in the foregoing section fail either due to an inherent pejorative bias in the classification schema, a lack of useful distinction between classifications or both. However, there different types of Paganisms that are unrelated and based on different theologies that have been

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<sup>107</sup> *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 3-6.

<sup>108</sup> *Witching Culture*, pp. 15-181.

developed through different methodologies. Because of this some system of taxonomy needs to be developed in order both to avoid confusion and to prevent the glossing of distinct Paganisms into a generic and all encompassing 'Paganism'. Since Paganism does not represent any single religious tradition with a commonly accepted set of sacred texts, beliefs or praxes<sup>109</sup> any definition of Paganism must be purposefully broad. As difficult as it is to define Paganism in general, examining the individual Pagan traditions and paths may appear to be quite simple, though the sheer volume and variety of these traditions can make that task quite daunting. Further, there is little by way of academic writing to help lead us through the forest of traditions.

This thesis resolves these issues through the introduction of a classification schema based upon a dynamic continuum. Bonewits' understanding of 'Mesopaganism' and 'Neopaganism', along with York's 'recopaganism',<sup>110</sup> will serve as a starting point for distinguishing between Pagan traditions. Bonewits' typology is useful for a number of reasons, the most important of which is his inclusion of Freemasonic, Jewish, Christian and other non-pagan influences on Paganism. However, his separation of 'Mesopaganism' and 'Neopaganism' is dubious at best. As has already been noted these non-pagan influences have played an important roll in the religions that Bonewits himself considers 'Neopagan', despite his critique of such influences as generally leading to 'Mesopagan' religions. Instead of either using Bonewits' terms, which belie Bonewits' own internal biases, or collapsing the terms into one, which would fail to distinguish between those Pagan religions that are heavily influenced non-pagan religions and those that are not, the this thesis will introduce and utilize the terms 'Revivalist' and 'Reconstructionist' in reference to the

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<sup>109</sup> Berger, Leach and Shaffer, p. 3, Carpenter 'Practitioners', p. 60 and Rabinovitch, p. 75.

<sup>110</sup> *Pagan Theology*, pp. 60, 61.

two major genres of Paganisms. These two categories are not fully inclusive but instead represent a continuum that reflects methodological approaches in the development of theology, methodology, praxis and community.

Revivalist Paganism refers to those Paganisms that have been derived from, and are often still influenced by, the Romantic Revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as the various Occult Revivals that have occurred over the last 300 years. Ronald Hutton<sup>111</sup> has shown the influence of the Romantics on the development of Gerald Gardner and Wicca in the early half of the twentieth century. This has included not only Romantic writers but also those poets and scholars, such as Robert Graves and Sir James Frazer,<sup>112</sup> who wrote during the Romantic Revival.

There have been numerous important individuals and organizations in the occult world that have influenced Revivalist Paganisms. Perhaps the earliest of these is Freemasonry, which, came to exist as early as the middle half of the 1600s,<sup>113</sup> gained its popular form in the 1700s. The influences of Freemasonry on numerous occult orders, including the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis, which in turn have greatly influenced Revivalist Paganisms, cannot be ignored. Also at this time came the formation of the Druid Circle of the Universal Bond. Alphonse Louis Constant, better known as the occultist Eliphas Lévi, was born in 1810. Lévi would exert a strong influence on both Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers and Aleister Crowley as well as many other occultists of his time.<sup>114</sup> Both Mathers and Crowley, either directly or indirectly, would influence Gerald Gardner and the formation of Wicca, especially Crowley whom Gardner knew personally.

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<sup>111</sup> *Triumph*.

<sup>112</sup> The influences of Graves and Frazer on Pagan hermeneutical approaches to myth will be considered again in chapter five.

<sup>113</sup> Christopher McIntosh *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order*, (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1997), pp. 63-4.

<sup>114</sup> Francis King *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism*, (Dorset: Prism Press, 1989), p. 28.

These influences would continue into the 1900s when Crowley formed the magical order known as the Argenteum Astrum and took over the OTO. All of these influences, and more, will come to affect many aspects of Revivalist Paganism.<sup>115</sup> For this thesis the most important influence will be on the ritual structure of Wiccan-derived Paganisms, including that of TOSC.

Amongst Revivalist Paganisms are included Wicca and those religions ultimately derived from it, as well as many forms of Druidry, such as the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids.<sup>116</sup> This end of the Revivalist/Reconstructionist continuum generally includes what Bonewits refers to as 'Mesopaganism'. Also included within the area of Revivalist Paganisms is what Pearson calls 'hedgewitchcraft' or what York refers to as 'geopaganism'; being a natural and generic expression of paganism that is considered to be a survival of ancient rural folk paganism.<sup>117</sup> Such hedgewitchcrafts are generally derived from Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca.<sup>118</sup> These Paganisms frequently incorporate the myths, beliefs and practices of paganisms from multiple cultures. For instance Irish, Welsh and Babylonian influences are all found within the Gardnerian and Alexandrian initiation and seasonal ceremonies as presented by Janet and Stewart Farrar.<sup>119</sup> This will be explored in greater depth in chapters four and five of this thesis. Also, by their inclusion of aspects of Masonry and ceremonial magic on top of their other practices, Revivalist Paganisms automatically draw from multiple cultural practices. This is true even when a particular Revivalist Pagan or Pagan group

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<sup>115</sup> C.f. King and McIntosh.

<sup>116</sup> The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids is directly descended from the an older, Masonic styled Druidic order (Raoult, p. 108). The writings of OBOD's founder, Ross Nichols, show practices clearly derived from Christianity, Masonry and the Golden Dawn (see Nichols and Philip Carr-Gomm, *Druidcraft: The Magic of Wicca and Druidry*, (London: Thorsons, 2002).

<sup>117</sup> Pearson, 'Going Native', p. 52, York, *Pagan Theology*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>118</sup> Pearson, 'Going Native', p. 52.

<sup>119</sup> *Eight Sabbats*.



only recognizes itself as drawing upon a single pre-Christian paganism for its practices and beliefs.

'Reconstructionist' Paganism describes those Pagan religions that rely heavily upon archaeological, historical, linguistic, anthropological and mythological information in the development of their theology and praxis.<sup>120</sup> These religions try to 'reconstruct' as much as is as possible of an ancient religion for modern practitioners. Reconstructionist Paganisms include, but are not limited to, various Druidic orders<sup>121</sup> such as the ADF<sup>122</sup> and the Henge of Keltria,<sup>123</sup> non-Druidic Celtic Reconstructionist organizations such as IMBAS<sup>124</sup> or Inis Glas Thoir,<sup>125</sup> as well as Egyptian traditions such as the House of Netjer<sup>126</sup> and Akhet Hwt-Hrw.<sup>127</sup> It also includes the

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<sup>120</sup> C.f. York's 'recopaganism' as being the 'various attempts at reconstructing or reviving particular pagan traditions of the past,' (*Pagan Theologies*, pp. 60-1.) York (ibid.) also discusses 'ecopaganism', a category to define those Pagans who have emphasized ecology and nature in their practices. However, beyond this, York fails to demonstrate how his 'ecopagans' differ from the category of Revivalist Paganism presented here or indeed why ecopagans should necessarily be considered Pagans at all.

<sup>121</sup> York, *Pagan Theology*, p. 61.

<sup>122</sup> Isaac Bonewits' ADF was founded to recreate 'the best aspects of the Paleopagan faiths of our ancestors within a modern scientific, artistic, ecological, and holistic context' (Isaac Bonewits, *What is ADF?* <http://www.adf.org/about/what-is-adf.html>, (Tuscon: Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship, Inc., Last Updated: 2003, Last Viewed: 2004).

<sup>123</sup> The Henge of Keltria splintered from ADF in 1986-7 to form a more specifically Celtic oriented religious path (Ellen E. Hopman, *The Origins of the Henge of Keltria 1.1: An Interview with Tony Taylor*, <http://www.neopagan.net/OriginsKeltria.html>, (Nyack, NY: Isaac Bonewits, Last Updated: 2001).

<sup>124</sup> Founded in the 1990s, IMBAS 'IMBAS is an organization that promotes the religion of Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism, and traditional Celtic culture and heritage' (IMBAS, *IMBAS Homepage*, <http://www.imbas.org/imbass/index.html> (IMBAS, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2004)).

<sup>125</sup> Founded in Maryland in the 1993 by some of the founders of the Celtic Reconstructionist movement, designed to be a 'tool for teaching a system of Neoceltic Paganism' (John Machite, *History of Inis Glas Hedge School*, <http://www.thunderpaw.com/neocelt/history.htm> (Maryland: Inis Glas Thoir, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2004)).

<sup>126</sup> The House of Netjer is the home of 'Kemetic Orthodoxy' founded in the 1980s (The House of Netjer, *Kemet.Org the Kemetic Orthodox Faith*, <http://www.kemet.org/home>, (The House of Netjer, Last Updated: 2003, Last Viewed: 2004), and constitutes 'a current day practice of the traditional religion of Kemet' (The House of Netjer, *Kemet.Org FAQ #2*, <http://www.kemet.org/faq/FAQ-02.html>, (The House of Netjer, Last Updated: 2003, Last Viewed: 2004).

<sup>127</sup> Akhet Hwt-Hrw was founded in the 1990s and provides members with reconstructions of updated Egyptian religious calendars, and has a members only course entitled Mdw Hwt-Hrw: Reconstructions of Religious Rituals from Ancient Egypt (Akhet Hwt-Hrw, *About Akhet Hwt-Hrw*, <http://www.hwt-hrw.com/page1.php>, (Nashua, NH: Akhet Hwt-Hrw, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2004).

Norse/Germanic traditions such as Ásatrú<sup>128</sup> and what is referred to as ‘Heathenism’ in general. As can be seen from these examples, Reconstructionist Paganisms typically focus on the cultural and religious practices of a specific culture. By focusing upon a specific culture these Paganisms tend towards a lesser degree of cultural eclecticism than Revivalist Paganisms, which will incorporate elements from multiple cultures. For instance while the reconstructionist group Inis Glas Thoir focused up Iron Age Irish pagan beliefs, TOSC incorporates aspects of Irish, Welsh, Babylonian and even modern American Unitarian Universalism in its practices.

It is likely that emic typologies will still be necessary in any system for the classification of Paganisms. By themselves these emic descriptors may tell us little about the beliefs and practices of Pagans, but they may have a place as second tier descriptors. There are two reasons for this. First, by itself the Revivalist/Reconstructionist continuum will tell us the general methodology and shape of the Paganism in question, but no more. So, for instance, knowing that a Pagan is a Revivalist does not inform us if they are a polytheist or a monist or how they express their polytheism or monism. Knowing that a Pagan is a Reconstructionist does not tell us which holidays they celebrate or what culture they exemplarise. While emic descriptors such as ‘Wiccan’ or ‘Druid’ will not completely remedy this, they will provide more information and will function as the basis for further research, allowing the scholar to delve more deeply into the beliefs of the Pagan(s) in question and to understand better what they mean by ‘Wiccan’ or ‘Druid’, etc.

Second, there has been a tendency amongst scholars of Paganisms to marginalize certain Paganisms. For instance some scholars have focused on Wicca and Wiccan-derived Paganisms and then generalized their findings for all of

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<sup>128</sup> York, *Pagan Theology*, p. 61. Ásatrú was founded in 1973 by Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson in Iceland and Stephen McNallen in America as a re-created Heathen religion (The Troth, *Our Troth Online*, <http://www.thetroth.org/resources/ourtroth/>, (Our Troth, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2005).

Pagandom.<sup>129</sup> This fails to take into consideration the often vastly differing theologies and practices of not only other Revivalist Paganisms such as Reclaiming's brand of Feminist Witchcraft but also Reconstructionist Paganisms. By specifying both the emic and etic descriptors, scholars are forced to discuss the beliefs and practices of specific Paganisms, decreasing the likelihood of developing inappropriate, cross-Pagan, generalizations. In order to avoid unnecessarily complex terminology, this thesis will, after having identified the Paganisms in question along the primary Revivalist/Reconstructionist tier, refer to these Paganisms by their own emic terminology. Thus TOSC can be described as a Revivalist Eclectic Wiccan coven. Knowing this prevents the possible inflation of theories into areas they are not equipped to regard.

## VII: Paganism and the New Age

Since Tanya Luhrmann's 1985 study of Pagans in London<sup>130</sup> academic scholars have defined Paganism as part of the overall New Age movement.<sup>131</sup> The idea that Paganisms are New Age religions is repeated by several scholars.<sup>132</sup> Others, such as Kelly and York<sup>133</sup> show that while there are some similarities between the New Age and Paganism there are just as many differences. Looking directly at Heelas' work on the New Age, Pearson<sup>134</sup> shows that his three central premises are not easily applied to Wicca as practiced in Britain. Berger<sup>135</sup> states that Wicca fits

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<sup>129</sup> C.f. Hanegraaff.

<sup>130</sup> Hanegraaff, pp. 78-9.

<sup>131</sup> Pearson 1998, 'Assumed Affinities', p. 45.

<sup>132</sup> See Helen A. Berger, *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Hanegraaff and Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: Religion, Culture and Society in the Age of Post Modernity*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>133</sup> Michael York, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995).

<sup>134</sup> 'Assumed Affinities', p. 54.

<sup>135</sup> p. 5.

Beckford's model of a New Age religion in that it has a holistic worldview. If so, and this is our sole requisite for New Age religion, then we must include Confucianism, Shinto, Siberian shamanism and more, none of which are included in scholarly groupings of the New Age.<sup>136</sup> Further, as Pearson has stated,<sup>137</sup> the extent to which this holistic focus is understood and practiced within Wicca varies greatly and generalizations cannot be made.

Hanegraaff<sup>138</sup> found Kelly's argument that Paganism is not a type of New Age religion to be faulty because Kelly's definition of the New Age was superficial and is based on a rather selective view of the former, which occasionally exerts gentle pressure on the evidence. It is difficult to escape the impression that his attempt to separate neopaganism from the New Age as much as possible is inspired by apologetic considerations – Kelly is not only a well-known researcher, but also a neopagan – rather than by empirical ones.<sup>139</sup>

Alternatively Hanegraaff<sup>140</sup> found York's understanding of the New Age to be much more satisfactory. He continues by assuring us that Yor's comparisons are significantly more apt as he assures us that according to the demarcations in his own introduction that Paganisms are in fact part of the New Age. Hanegraaff's three major demarcations or sets of restrictions on what the New Age are time period, cultural and geographical context, and considerations *vis á vis* New Religious Movements.

With the first restriction, it is interesting to note that Paganism, beginning with Wicca in 1939<sup>141</sup> predates the birth of the New Age movement, which began in the 1960s,<sup>142</sup> which is approximately the time Wicca was brought to the United States. Due to sociological and cultural changes Hanegraaff,<sup>143</sup> for the purpose of his

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<sup>136</sup> York, 'Defining', p. 7.

<sup>137</sup> Jo Pearson, 'Wicca, Esotericism and Living Nature: Assessing Wicca as Nature Religion', *Pomegranate: The Journal of Pagan Studies*, (2000), pp. 4-15 (p. 14).

<sup>138</sup> p. 78.

<sup>139</sup> Hanegraaff, p. 78.

<sup>140</sup> p. 78.

<sup>141</sup> Kelly, p. 136.

<sup>142</sup> Hanegraaff, p. 10.

<sup>143</sup> p. 12.

research, uses the term 'New Age Movement' to refer to 'a movement which emerged in the second half of the 1970s, came to full development in the 1980s and is still with us at the time of writing'. This demarcation leaves out a great deal of Paganism.

British Traditional Wicca, as already mentioned, developed in the 1930s and '40s while certain forms of non-Pagan Druidry began in the 1700s which would go to influence specifically Pagan Druid organizations, such as the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, in the late 1970s. It does not begin to look at Reconstructionist Paganism, which began its development in separate phases, in both the very early half and the last few decades of the later half of the twentieth century<sup>144</sup> depending on the cultural tradition in question. As Hanegraaff does not tell the reader how he defines 'full development' it is impossible to say whether or not Paganism in general has attained full development, let alone any particular aspect.

Hanegraaff's<sup>145</sup> second demarcation, which finds that English and American publications are the trendsetters for the New Age, does appear to have its equivalence within Paganism. However, his claim that Paganism no longer falls under the 'cult' category and is instead more aptly described as a 'sect', employing Ernst Troeltsch's three-fold division of religious phenomena<sup>146</sup> can be challenging as his main reasoning is the exportation of Wicca into the U.S. by Raymond Buckland in the 1960s.<sup>147</sup> In Troeltsch's classification system a 'sect' contains the qualities of collectivism, being tightly structured, of making many demands upon their members, stability, clearly circumscribed and stable belief systems and the ability to persist over time. However, upon examination, Wicca, Druidry and Reconstructionist Egyptian religions all demonstrate many of these qualities. An examination of an open Pagan

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<sup>144</sup> Reconstructionist Paganisms such as Lithuanian Romuva or Latvian Dievturiba began in the 1920s in Europe, well before Hanegraaff's suggested timeline for a New Age religion.

<sup>145</sup> p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> Hanegraaff, pp. 14-15, 85.

<sup>147</sup> Hanegraaff, p. 85.

on-line message board will also demonstrate numerous instances of intolerance to both Pagan and non-Pagan beliefs and practices.

Hanegraaff<sup>148</sup> also attempts to use Colin Campbell's idea of a 'cultic milieu' in his argument. This idea, developed in the 1970s, includes those belief systems that could be considered magical and/or unorthodox. It allows for a differentiation between what Campbell finds to be the normal and the bizarre or more simply 'us' and 'them', with 'us' being recognized as the mainstream.<sup>149</sup> The cultic milieu allows Hanegraaff<sup>150</sup> to approach Wicca and American Goddess Spirituality and to make generalizations based on these two aspects of Paganism for the whole of Paganism. However, York<sup>151</sup> states that Campbell's analysis of the cultic milieu is inappropriately applied to Paganism. Also, in her refutation of Heelas' depiction of Paganism as part of the New Age, Pearson<sup>152</sup> shows that looking at individual units, in this case Pagan traditions in general, and TOSC in specific, is important. Again, Reconstructionist Paganisms are not included in Hanegraaff's survey of those groups belonging to this cultic milieu.

Hanegraaff<sup>153</sup> argues that Kelly looks at the New Age superficially and therefore does not depict a fair representation of that movement when he compares and contrasts it to Neo Paganism. This same criticism must be made of Hanegraaff concerning his own understanding of Paganism. While using the term in a general sense, an examination of his sources shows that he is mainly dealing with Wicca and Wiccan derived religions or those sources that would clearly support his premise.<sup>154</sup> Because of this, even if all of his criteria were met and Paganism, in Hanegraaff's

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<sup>148</sup> pp. 14-16.

<sup>149</sup> York, *Emerging Network*, p. 252.

<sup>150</sup> pp. 87-8.

<sup>151</sup> *Emerging Network*, p. 523.

<sup>152</sup> 'Assumed Affinities', pp. 52-3.

<sup>153</sup> p. 78.

<sup>154</sup> See Hanegraaff, pp. 89-93.

limited sense of the term, fulfilled his demarcations of the New Age, his failure to define Paganism adequately would prevent us from including the whole of Paganism as part of the New Age. Further, while Hanegraaff finds York's understanding of the New Age to be satisfactory, York himself does not comment on whether Paganism is part of the New Age in his work *Emerging Network*.<sup>155</sup> Sarah Pike, in *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*, does, saying 'Neopagan practice highlights the centrality of the relationship between humans and nature and reinvents religions of the past, while New Agers are more interested in transforming individual consciousness and shaping the future.'<sup>156</sup> This understanding between the goals of Paganism and the New Age are reflected in York's<sup>157</sup> understanding of the central aspects of paganism and gnosticism, where the New Age would be seen as a gnostic movement *separate* from pagan religions, including the numerous forms of Paganism. Finally, Paganism, as an umbrella term covering multiple religions and consisting of numerous individuals and groups, does not meet Hanegraaff's own criteria for being included in the New Age, thus placing modern Paganisms clearly outside that spiritual genre.

### **VIII: A Definition of Paganism**

From the above discussions this thesis defines 'Paganism' in the following manner: Paganism is an umbrella term for wide variety of New Religious Movements that describes a self-identified, generally nature-oriented, modern Western paganism that is a modern expression of ancient, pre-Christian religions, or what are by its practitioners represented as being ancient religions and beliefs, that may include numerous understandings of the divine and recognizes *genus loci* and the sacredness of specific locations and the Earth or physical universe. Pagan beliefs and practices

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<sup>155</sup> 1995.

<sup>156</sup> *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*, (NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 18.

<sup>157</sup> 'Defining Paganism', pp. 5-7.

may occasionally have similar practices and beliefs to the New Age, but cannot be classified as part of the New Age movement as a whole.

Modern Paganisms may generally be distinguished by one of two major influences. Revivalist Paganisms frequently see themselves as being inspired by or descended from ancient, pre-Christian paganisms while having generally, and sometimes unrecognisably, been influenced by the Romantic and occult revival. Reconstructionist Paganisms generally recognize themselves as being modern religions distinct from Revivalist Paganisms and are heavily influenced by history, linguistics, anthropology, archaeology and other scholarly inclined sources concerning specific ancient cultures and their religious praxes or may lie somewhere in between. Where Revivalist Paganisms may incorporate the practices or beliefs of multiple cultures, Reconstructionist Paganisms typically focus on a single culture or cultural group and both their religious and cultural practices. Beyond this, Paganisms may also be identified by their own internal terminology; while these will not necessarily allow the scholar to distinguish between specific theologies and practices, they will allow the scholar to see how each Pagan or Pagan group sees itself within the overall context of modern Paganisms. However, the use of these types of categorizations can only be temporary, reserved perhaps for Paganism in its infancy. As Pagan religions evolve and mature it is likely that some new type of classification system will be necessary.

The above definition allows for the placement of TOSC in the wider Pagan community. TOSC's practices have been influenced by and are derived from Revivalist Pagan sources such as British Wicca, Beyerl's *A Wiccan Bardo* and to a certain extent the writings of Starhawk. For these reasons TOSC can be placed amongst those other Paganisms as a Revivalist Pagan coven. Its duotheistic approach



to the divine and its Wiccan-derived ritual format, which will be discussed in detail in chapter four of this thesis suggests that the members of the TOSC practice a type of Wicca and most of its members, though not all, considered themselves to be Wiccans. Thus, as previously discussed in this chapter, TOSC can be usefully described as a Revivalist Eclectic Wiccan or Pagan coven.

### **Chapter Three: Ritual, Myth and Myth-Ritual Theory**

In the previous chapter the nature of Paganism as a modern group of nature religions was explored. This was accomplished through the examination of historic and modern understandings of the term 'pagan'. This included a discussion of both scholarly approaches to modern Paganisms, including those scholars who are also Pagans themselves, and thoughts on the subject by those within the Pagan community who are not scholars. This allowed both for a general understanding of Paganism itself and for the placing of TOSC within that larger Pagan community through the development of a new classification system.

The current chapter approaches the three remaining topics upon which this thesis focuses in a similar manner. Section one of this chapter investigates theories of ritual and ritualisation. The second section focuses on concepts surrounding the idea of 'myth'. The final section approaches the classical myth-ritual theories of William Robertson Smith, Sir James Frazer and Jane Harrison. As in the previous chapter this chapter, when possible, not only scrutinizes the theories of scholars but also of Pagan practitioners to allow for important emic approaches to these topics. However, whereas chapter two allows for an integration of a discussion relating to the general theories of Paganism and the Pagan nature of the TOSC, the current chapter, while not dealing so directly to TOSC is an important and necessary foundation that leads into the more specific study of TOSC found in the remaining chapters of this thesis. These chapters will examine TOSC's use of ritual and myth and place it, where possible, in the larger context of myth-ritual theory.

## I: Defining Ritual

'Ritual' is perhaps the most difficult aspect of this study to define. Since the beginnings of the discipline of ritual studies no single definition has satisfied those who work within it.<sup>1</sup> Instead there are discussions about 'ritual' in general or 'nascent ritual'<sup>2</sup> or several different applications of the term 'ritualisation' or<sup>3</sup> ritual as performance<sup>4</sup> or the nature of ritual as having purely biological origins;<sup>5</sup> and this list is by no means exhaustive. It is not the purpose of this section to discuss all of the current theories of ritual, nor all the criticism these theories have garnered over the years.<sup>6</sup> Instead this section discusses ritual in the context of this study, which reflects the general understanding of what ritual is amongst many modern Pagans.

This chapter challenges the two major schools of ritual theory and develops a third theory using the ideas inherent in definition theory discussed previously. This theory will inform the analysis of the Sabbat rituals of TOSC in the subsequent chapters of this thesis as well its employment of communication and related theories.

Rituals are typically seen by anthropologists and as others in two general ways: 'as a distinct category of events and as an ever-present aspect of all actions.'<sup>7</sup>

Catherine Bell sees these two 'theoretical points of departure dominating the study of

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<sup>1</sup> Jan N. Bremmer, "'Religion', 'Ritual' and the Opposition 'Sacred Vs. Profane'" in *Ansichten Griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium Für Walter Burkert*, Römerstiftung ed. by F. Graf (Stuttgart and Leipzig: B. G Teubner, 1998), p. 14; Ronald L. Grimes, 'Defining Nascent Ritual', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 50 (1982), 539-555, (p. 540); Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 61; Evan M. Zuesse, 'Ritual' in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 11, (Detroit: MacMillan Reference USA, 2005), p. 7833.

<sup>2</sup> Grimes, 'Nascent Ritual'.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1997); *Ritual Theory*; Grimes, 'Nascent Ritual'; Zuesse.

<sup>4</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory*; Grimes, 'Nascent Ritual'; Letcher; Zuesse.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Segal, 'Making the Myth-Ritualist Theory Scientific', *Religion*, (2000), 259-271.

<sup>6</sup> Such an undertaking would take, as Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994, p. 65) suggest and as Catherine Bell (1992 and 1997) perhaps proves, an entire book, if not two.

<sup>7</sup> Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 64. C.f. Catherine Bell, 'Ritual [further Considerations]' in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 10 (Detroit, MI: MacMillan Reference USA, 2005), p.7849 and Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 160.

ritual'<sup>8</sup> at this time. The first point of departure sees ritual as stemming from evolutionary or biological factors, or what Bell refers to as the 'Communication and a New Naturalism' school.<sup>9</sup> These theories tend to see ritual as being a form of communication. The theories that dominated the 1980s generally focused on ritual as a form of symbolic communication, i.e. rituals are seen as structures for organizing meaning. In contrast to this, the theories coming out of this stream of thought in the 1990s have stressed that meaning within ritual is relatively unimportant for both the participants and theorists.<sup>10</sup> The second school, of 'Practice and Performance'<sup>11</sup> is perhaps typified by Ronald Grimes and Catherine Bell and their understanding of 'ritualising' and 'ritualisation', which does not focus on 'ritual' as a thing or text to be read and understood, but as ways in which certain social actions differentiate themselves from other actions.<sup>12</sup>

Jone Salomonsen,<sup>13</sup> in her study of the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco, also discusses two dominant 'camps' of ritual theorists, which she calls 'what' scholars and 'how' scholars of ritual theory. The 'what' scholars, who Salomonsen sees as the first camp referred to by Bell<sup>14</sup> are those who attempt to define exactly what ritual is through defining its various elements in a relatively strict manner. Victor Turner is seen as being the chief proponent of this approach to ritual, though Salomonsen, like Bell,<sup>15</sup> also finds a heavy reliance on Durkheim's understanding of

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<sup>8</sup> 'Ritual', p. 7849.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Numerous theorists appear to exemplify this school to Bell, including Staal and Rappaport. Burkert's writings (Robert A. Segal, 'Making the Myth-Ritualist Theory Scientific', *Religion*, (2000), 259-271), show him to also be of this school of thought, as does Robertson Smith (Jan N. Bremmer, p. 15), the father of myth-ritual theory and Ricoeur in the way he considers 'meaningful action' as a type of text that can be read and analysed.

<sup>11</sup> Bell, 'Ritual', p. 7853.

<sup>12</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory*, pp. 15-54; 74.

<sup>13</sup> *Enchanted Feminism*, pp. 160-165.

<sup>14</sup> 'Ritual', p. 7849.

<sup>15</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 38.

religion and ritual.<sup>16</sup> 'How' scholars, on the other hand, are those who do not see ritual as a thing but as a quality, of which there are various degrees.<sup>17</sup> Here Salomonsen is pointing to Bell's 'Practice and Performance' scholars. Salomonsen does in fact cite both Catherine Bell and Ronald Grimes, whose statement '[a]ny action can be ritualised, though not every action is a rite'<sup>18</sup> is used to exemplify the 'how' scholars for her.

### A: The 'What' Schools

As noted above Victor Turner is considered to be one of the chief proponents of the 'what' school of ritual theory. Turner's well-known definition of ritual states that it is 'formal behaviour prescribed for occasions not given over to technological routine that have reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers.'<sup>19</sup> The standard dictionary definition of 'ritual', as found in the A.H.D., complies neatly with this type of understandings of ritual:

1. The prescribed form or order of conducting a religious or solemn ceremony.
2. A body of ceremonies or rites, as those used in a church or fraternal organization.
3. A book of rites or ceremonial forms.
4. rituals. a. A ceremonial act or series of such acts. b. A detailed method of procedure faithfully or regularly followed: *her household chores have become a ritual with her.*

It can readily be seen how this definition relates closely to that of Turner's, especially his emphasis on formalism and the belief of mystical beings or powers. While he does not explicitly refer to religion, he does appear to be implying it, as well

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<sup>16</sup> *Ritual Theory*, pp. 160-1. The Durkheimian understanding of religion places beliefs as primacy and rites or rituals as secondary, only serving to legitimise and reinforce belief (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, p. 38; Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 161).

<sup>17</sup> Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 160.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in its Practice, Essays on its Theory*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives*, (NY: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 243.

as referring to other nonsensical or primitive beliefs, which is reminiscent of Reformation period understandings of ritual.<sup>20</sup>

This 'what' approach to defining ritual is reminiscent of definition theory's use of monothetic, non-fuzzy descriptors to limit strictly the borders of what a thing is. This type of description often takes the form of lists of qualities all rituals must have to be considered rituals or of lists of types of rituals.<sup>21</sup> Several theorists have put these lists of qualities forth.<sup>22</sup> However, 'what' theories of ritual have been heavily criticized over the last fifteen years by opposing theorists such as Bell and Grimes. Theorists working outside of these schools, such as Jone Salomonsen, have also criticised them, though generally not as harshly.<sup>23</sup> This thesis also criticises this theoretical approach but also finds some aspects of it to be useful for the development of a more comprehensive theory of ritual.

The primary criticism of the 'what' theories is based on their very nature. This school considers 'ritual' to be a thing in and of itself, with the notion that somehow ritual is intrinsically different from non-ritual behaviour<sup>24</sup> and the understanding of ritual this school's exposit is too narrow. While not discussed by other theorists, this thesis holds that this is due to this school of thought solely relying on monothetic and non-fuzzy descriptors. By using only these types of descriptors, these theories naturally limit their description of ritual to those aspects that its creator believes to be part of ritual without the flexibility necessary to account for other cultural

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<sup>20</sup> Bremmer, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Zuesse, p. 7840.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Zuesse (pp. 7840-1) discusses Crawford Howell Toy's classifications, of which there are 16 distinct classifications of ritual types, and Anthony F. C. Wallace's classifications, of which there are five. Zuesse (p. 7841-5) himself defines two major classes of ritual that have many smaller classifications within them. Bell (*Ritual*, p. 93) points out that Grimes proposed a system of sixteen categories of ritual at one time and she (pp. 94-134) proposes six, though ultimately both she and Grimes reject this type of theoretical system.

<sup>23</sup> As will be demonstrated, Salomonsen (*Enchanted Feminism*), while finding limitations in both schools of thought, will eventually combine aspects of both theoretical schools in her analysis of the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco.

<sup>24</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory*, pp. 16, 70; Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 160.

understandings of ritual. As will be discussed in the subsequent part of this section, by discussing ritualisation instead of ritual, critics of this theory believe that a wider, and therefore more contextually accurate, understanding of a culture's ritual activities can be gained. Because of this, such theories have attempted to be generalized or universalised.<sup>25</sup> However, when applied to particular cases of ritual, especially those that are seen or described as rituals by their practitioners, 'what' type theories can prove quite useful.

A second critique of this school is its explicit and dualistic separation of mind and body when studying ritual, with preference given to the mind and cognition in general.<sup>26</sup> Furthering this notion, Bell<sup>27</sup> asserts that theories from this school of thought often see either/or conflicts of this nature that are resolved through ritual. She points out that in many instances these oppositions are not necessarily part of the underlying social, metaphysical or logical values of the cultures being studied. Instead they are convenient tools for the theorist to use in the presentation of his or her theory. This goes back to the Durkheimian idealization of religion wherein beliefs are primary and rites secondary.<sup>28</sup> Grimes, like Bell,<sup>29</sup> wishes to remove this false dichotomy and does so by seeing the performance, which encompasses the body, acting as an enspiriting agent, encompassing the mind or soul, thus combining both body and soul.<sup>30</sup>

A third critique relates to the numerous lists of 'types of ritual' that have been generated over the years. Bell complains that such 'theoretical construction[s] of ritual becomes a reflection of the theorist's method and the motor of a discourse in which

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<sup>25</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory*, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Grimes, 'Nascent Ritual', p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ritual Theory*, pp. 35-7.

<sup>28</sup> Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 161.

<sup>29</sup> See part E of this section.

<sup>30</sup> Grimes, 'Nascent Ritual', p. 544.

the concerns of theorist take centre stage.<sup>31</sup> What this means is that these various constructs have more to do with how the theorist sees ritual than with how the people he or she is studying see ritual, causing them to become misplaced in the world of cultural context that is important to both Bell and Grimes.<sup>32</sup> The sheer number of lists also suggests that there is no clearly defined way in which ritual as an object can be theorized without some sort of specific context in which to place such theories. This again implies that there is a significant problem with this monothetic descriptor approach when trying to apply the descriptors to a universal theory. It further calls for a cultural sensitivity such as that found in Salmonsens's 'method of compassion' discussed in the first chapter. This thesis maintains that such a combined approach will allow the researcher both to understand ritual from a general perspective that will be discussed in the following part of this section, while being able to examine specifically a particular group's or culture's understanding of what ritual is. This will be discussed further in part C of the current section where it will be demonstrated that while the members of TOSC typically perceive ritual in a 'what' manner, there is also a ritualising process, discussed below, that is engaged in as well.

A final critique on the 'what' school of theories, one that is related to Bell's quotation above, is that these theorists often refer to something as a ritual because to them it demonstrates unreasonable or illogical behaviour. In regards to this Humphrey and Laidlaw say '[n]o useful analytical distinction or category of "ritual" can rest on subjective judgements about reasonableness, whether ours or the [the culture's in question].'<sup>33</sup> This is in reference to a description of Yoruba activity described as 'ritual' by Martin Hollis and Quentin Skinner, which involves the belief that certain special boxes contain the souls of the Yorubas who were carrying them and that they

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<sup>31</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 74; 'Nascent Ritual', pp. 549-51.

<sup>33</sup> p. 67.



therefore needed to be treated with special respect and carried only in certain ways. Humphrey and Laidlaw say that ‘both these writers assume the action to be ritual mainly because they think there is something obviously unreasonable or odd about what the tribesmen are doing, and . . . [it] reveals a disregard for the fine grain of what in truth Yoruba people think they are doing’.<sup>34</sup> As discussed below, this approach flies in the face modern anthropological approaches such as Salmonsens’s ‘method of compassion’ as well as this thesis’ own understanding of the importance of the *etic* and *emic* factors when it comes to understanding a culture’s beliefs and practices.<sup>35</sup> Instead, it is important to approach rituals from the perspective of those being studied, otherwise the researcher is in danger of misunderstanding what it is that their subjects are doing.

## **B: The ‘How’ School**

As previously discussed, the chief proponents of the ‘how’ school of ritual theory are Ronald Grimes and Catherine Bell and their use of ‘ritualising’ or ‘ritualisation’ as opposed to ‘ritual’. Grimes defines ‘ritualising’ as a process through which ritual creativity is effected. He says that ‘[r]itualising transpires as animated persons enact formative gestures in the face of receptivity during crucial times in founded places.’<sup>36</sup> His meaning is not necessarily apparent and requires further explanation.

For Grimes ritualising is a continuous process that may create behaviours that its culture may not necessarily consider to be rituals. This process and its results are not only in a constant state of change, but are also in a state of breath-like fluctuation

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> C.f. Jeffrey S. Kupperman, ‘Towards a Definition of Initiation: Emic and Etic Views of Initiation in the Western Mystery Tradition’, <http://www.aseweb.org/Papers/Initiation.htm>, (East Lansing, MI: The Association for the Study of Esotericism, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2005.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Nascent Ritual’, p. 541.

of 'frequency, force and volume'<sup>37</sup> that is dependant upon its cultural context, quite in opposition to more traditional, 'what' based definitions. The subject of the ritualising process, 'animated persons', can include humans, but does not do so necessarily; instead it includes anything that is 'enspirited' by the performance, which can include not only humans but props, scenery or the entire space in which the ritualising occurs.<sup>38</sup> This is reminiscent of the animistic views found within Pagan theology discussed in chapter two and this idea is revisited in chapter six, which develops and discusses an idea of embodied myth-ritual in relation to TOSC's Sabbat rituals. These animated persons are animated through the ritual actor who attempts to marry the literal and symbolic through their action through the use of so-called 'formative gestures' that in some manner transcend the need for intellectual exegesis that bring about a 'nondiscursive, bodily way of knowing.'<sup>39</sup> Ritualising and rituals occur in an atmosphere that is receptive to them, whether that atmosphere is social or religious and regardless of the nature of that which will receive them. Finally rituals and ritualising occur during significant times and at significant places, with whom it is significant to varying upon context.<sup>40</sup>

Bell, somewhat more prosaically, defines 'ritualisation' as:

a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities. As such, ritualisation is a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'profane', and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors.<sup>41</sup>

There are in fact a number of echoes of Grimes in this definition. Both see ritualising or ritualisation as processes or a 'distinct orchestration of activities' as opposed to

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<sup>37</sup> 'Nascent Ritual', p. 543.

<sup>38</sup> 'Nascent Ritual', p. 544.

<sup>39</sup> 'Nascent Ritual', p. 546.

<sup>40</sup> 'Nascent Ritual', pp. 549-51.

<sup>41</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 74.

concrete objects or fundamentally special way of acting,<sup>42</sup> thus distinguishing them from the 'what' theories of ritual. Bell and Grimes further see this process as existing within their own cultural contexts, thus making the processes potentially different for every culture. Finally, they understand the processes of ritualisation or the act of ritualising as mediating between the ordinary and the extraordinary.<sup>43</sup>

Bell is similar to Grimes in her focus on the so-called 'ritual body'.<sup>44</sup> Here action is more important than cognition, for the ritual actors may not be aware of the true reasons for their behaviour.<sup>45</sup> Both of these are in opposition to what they see in the 'what' school, which focuses on a mind-body split, something that is rejected by the body-focused Bell.<sup>46</sup>

Unlike the monothetic and non-fuzzy descriptors common to 'what' theories of ritual, 'how' theories appear to rely upon polythetic and fuzzy qualities. This allows for ritualising to take a broader vantage than ritual can and thus allows it to include a larger area for study. Parts D and E of this section discuss the weaknesses of this approach and how they can be overcome to develop a more comprehensive method of studying ritual.

There have been surprisingly few critiques regarding the 'how' theories of ritualisation. Grimes<sup>47</sup> makes a minor criticism by pointing out the undeveloped nature of the taxonomies found within the theories of this school. Grimes suggests this stems from the newness of this school of thought. More significant criticisms are to be found by those scholars who work outside of either the 'what' or 'how' schools. For

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<sup>42</sup> Bell, 'Ritual', p. 7853.

<sup>43</sup> Compare to J. Z. Smith (*To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 103), who sees rituals as 'a mode of paying attention' and 'a process for marking interest'. Here too, ritual is not a thing but a particular way of understanding activity.

<sup>44</sup> Bell, 'Ritual', p. 7852.

<sup>45</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, p. 160; *Ritual Theory*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>46</sup> *Ritual Theory*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>47</sup> 'Nascent Ritual', p. 540.

instance, and as will be discussed below, Salmonsens critiques Bell's body-centric approach to ritual, Humphrey and Laidlaw critique this theory's confusion of terminology and this thesis will critique it for its sole reliance upon polythetic and fuzzy descriptors.

Salomonsen<sup>48</sup> alludes to an important criticism of this school as represented by Bell's body-centric approach. As noted above, Bell,<sup>49</sup> while stating that there is no mind/body divide outside of theoretical models, continually gives preference to the body as the source and recipient of ritualisation processes,<sup>50</sup> giving partiality to what she calls the 'ritualised body' that is in some manner imbued with a non-cognitive sense of ritual.<sup>51</sup> Thus, it appears that Bell prefers to reverse the mind/body dichotomy by giving the body priority through her 'sense of ritual', seeing this as encompassing both mind and body. This suggests, as implied by Salomonsen, that for Bell the ritualist, or potential ritualist, makes no active decision to ritualize but appears to do so as a socially-conditioned automaton, with the body conditioned to perform regardless of the intent of the would-be ritualist. Salmonsens<sup>52</sup> suggests that when such a decision to ritualise is missing, we are then discussing neurotic behaviour or social coercion and not ritualised behaviour at all.

Along similar lines Humphrey and Laidlaw<sup>53</sup> criticize Bell's use of 'practice' over 'action', which stems from Bell's criticism of the mind/body divide found in other theoretical models. Humphrey and Laidlaw<sup>54</sup> agree with Bell's criticism, but disagree with her solution to the problem. Their main critique of the use of the term 'practice' is in the non-traditional way in which Bell uses the word as well as the

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<sup>48</sup> *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 164.

<sup>49</sup> *Ritual Theory*, pp. 35-7.

<sup>50</sup> C.f. Bell, *Ritual Theory*, pp. 98-9, 103, 106-8; *Ritual*, p. 139 and 'Ritual', p. 7852-3.

<sup>51</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 98.

<sup>52</sup> *Enchanted Feminism*, p. 164.

<sup>53</sup> pp. 3-4.

<sup>54</sup> p. 3.

'cloud of associations which [they] feel are unproven for ritual action in general.'<sup>55</sup> As has been previously noted, such an approach defies definition theory by creating a definition that would be unrecognisable to a common user of the word. As a solution Humphrey and Laidlaw rely upon Charles Taylor's Hegelian sense of 'action', seeing action in a way that is similar to Grime's 'enspirited' or 'animated persons', a sense that Bell is lacking from her understanding of 'performance'. Thus, action is not seen as something separated from thought but rather being directed from within instead of being directed from without.<sup>56</sup>

Both of the above critiques are significant to the study of modern Paganisms. This is due to the similarities between Bell's approach and that of Tanya Luhrmann's idea of 'interpretive drift'. Interpretive drift describes a process by which new Pagans or occultists come to believe in magic and/or the supernatural without being aware of their growing belief. This heavily criticised theory also reduces the participant to a socially-conditioned automaton and is understood by Luhrmann as a phenomenon somehow unique to beliefs she considers to be irrational in comparison to a Western scientific view, belying her etic-centric anthropological approach.

This thesis proposes a final critique of this school, one that is opposite to its critique of 'what' schools. Whereas those schools employed monothetic and non-fuzzy descriptors to come to their understandings of ritual, 'how' schools rely upon polythetic and fuzzy descriptors. Such an approach allows for a definition that can encompass so wide a variety of phenomenon that it may fall outside of any particular culture's or group's understanding of what rituals are. For example, theories of this school have the danger of turning all behaviour into symbolic, ritualised behaviour.

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<sup>55</sup> Humphrey and Laidlaw, pp. 3-4. These include Bell's insistence that ritualisation produces 'practical knowledge' and 'the ability to deploy, play, and manipulate basic schemes in ways that appropriate and condition experiences effectively' (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, p. 221; Humphrey and Laidlaw, p. 4).

<sup>56</sup> Humphrey and Laidlaw, p. 4.

This danger can be seen in Grimes<sup>57</sup> especially, for whom theatre acting is easily seen as a form of ritualisation, but also in Bell,<sup>58</sup> who discusses the ritualisation process inherent in gift giving, both much in contrast to the general understanding of the word. Humphrey and Laidlaw, repeating a criticism made by Jack Goody and John Skorupski, ask '[i]f every action is a ritual action and if the facts which make them so are an infinity of different "messages", then has anything really been explained?'<sup>59</sup> The answer to this is 'no'.<sup>60</sup> Thus danger of being too universal can be seen: exactly the opposite problem of the 'what' theories. When confronted with a *reductio ad absurdum* argument this theory poses the danger of making itself meaningless, as 'ritualised behaviour' and 'behaviour' become exactly the same thing. To prevent this from happening Humphrey and Laidlaw propose a reorientation of ritualisation. Instead of seeing ritualisation as a characteristic of every action, as do Grimes, Bell and others, Humphrey and Laidlaw argue that ritualisation is in fact a special characteristic of some action, a 'particular, occasional *modification* of an intrinsic feature of action, namely its intentionality. . .'.<sup>61</sup> Thus they change ritualisation from an aspect of all actions to a *quality* of some actions.<sup>62</sup> It is through this modification of intentionality that the action of sweeping the floor with a broom becomes the sacred and magical act of purification that found so frequently in the Sabbat rituals of TOSC that will be described and discussed in chapters four through six of this thesis.

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<sup>57</sup> 'Beginnings'.

<sup>58</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 82.

<sup>59</sup> p. 73.

<sup>60</sup> See also Humphrey and Laidlaw (p. 66) where they quote Skorupski's very similar question, 'What use does a term have which brings together a man shaking hands, a man praying to his god, a man refusing to walk under a ladder, a man clapping at the end of a concert, a man placing medicine on his crops?' with the answer being 'None at all.'

<sup>61</sup> p. 73.

<sup>62</sup> p. 89.

### **C: A Third Option: Ritual and Ritualisation Together**

From the above discussion it appears that we have mutually exclusive ideas about how rituals can and should be thought about and discussed. Both have their merits; some people do think of their rituals as discrete and concrete occasions while at the same time it is demonstrable that rituals do not come from nothing, but from processes found within their own cultural context. It is a mistake, however, to see ritual as an end product of the ritualisation process, which as Grimes<sup>63</sup> notes, is a continuous process. Thus rituals should be seen as snapshots in time, pinpointing where a culture is within its own ritualisation process. It is context, as Bell<sup>64</sup> has frequently stressed, that appears to be the keyword here and it is what will enable 'how' and 'what' theoretical approaches to join together into a third theoretical school, what this thesis proposes be called the 'where' school of ritual theory, because it looks at *where* rituals and ritualisation takes place; i.e. rituals and ritualisation within its cultural context.

This thesis understands this approach to be necessary for a number of reasons. First, the 'what' theories are too limited, being able to look only at a particular culture's rituals, even though they attempt to be universal theories. They become less useful for approaching a society's rituals that do not fit in a theorist's particular framework. Also, they do not focus upon what processes occur 'behind the scenes' that cause rituals to be formed and practiced. Nor do they necessarily focus on what the people under observation consider ritual but, as discussed in part A of this section, instead look at what the researcher feels is ritual. 'How' theories, however, are too universal; they potentially explain all behaviour. Without looking at a particular

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<sup>63</sup> 'Nascent Ritual', p. 543.

<sup>64</sup> *Ritual Theory*, pp. 74, 81-8, 90-2, 107, 112-8, 176, etc. This is also supported by Humphrey and Laidlaw (p. 71) and is implied in the methodology of Salomonsen (*Enchanted Feminism*, pp. 162-5) when she approaches ritual and is explicit in her over all approach of 'compassionate anthropology'.

culture they may tell us how rituals can potentially come about but little about how they actually do come into existence in any specific situation. Even though there is repeated stress on the need for context in the interpretation of ritual actions, and that there can ultimately be no universal theory of ritual,<sup>65</sup> 'How' theories attempt to do just that.

Salomonsen<sup>66</sup> and Humphrey and Laidlaw approach ritual and ritualisation together, seeing 'ritual' as being a product of 'ritualisation'; 'what' and 'how' together. By applying the theory of ritualisation to the actions of a people we are better able to see their rituals through their eyes. Such an application of these theories creates an approach that is both specific and universal; it is specific in that it looks specifically at the culture that is being studied and what *they* consider to be rituals but remains universal in that the *approach* can be applied to any culture. This is a valuable approach as it is demonstrable that many modern Pagans view ritual as a thing to be engaged in and not simply as a set of processes.<sup>67</sup> Salomonsen<sup>68</sup> demonstrates that this is indeed the understanding of ritual that is held by the Reclaiming Witches that she has studied, and the numerous books and websites on or containing Pagan rituals<sup>69</sup> as well as discussions on ritual, seen as a discrete type of practice, by Pagans<sup>70</sup> suggests a similar understanding is common amongst modern Pagans of differing verities. This also appears to be the general approach taken by scholars of Paganism outside of Salomonsen.<sup>71</sup> Members of TOSC fit this model as

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<sup>65</sup> C.f., Bell, *Ritual Theory*, pp. 74, 81-3, 90-2, 107, 176, etc.

<sup>66</sup> *Enchanted Feminism*.

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<sup>68</sup> *Enchanted Feminism*, pp. 157-60.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Beyerl; Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' God, Witches' Goddess, Witches' Bible*; Alexi Kondratiev, *The Apple Branch: A Path to Celtic Ritual*, (NY: Citadel Press, 2003), Nichols; Starhawk, *Spiral Dance*

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Farrar and Farrar (*ES*, pp. 145-55) and Fisher, pp. 205-10.

<sup>71</sup> C.f. Berger, Cheal and Leverick, Magliocco, *Witching Culture* and 'Ritual is My Chosen Art Form: The Creation of Ritual as Folk Art among Contemporary Pagans' in *Magical Religion and Modern*



well, speaking of rituals as concrete things rather than abstract processes. This approach also fits the need for both monothetic and polythetic descriptors discussed earlier in this section, as discussed in previous chapters, though any monothetic descriptors beyond identifying ritual as manifestation of the ritualisation process would be ones that are culturally specific and not universal in nature.<sup>72</sup>

The ‘where’ theoretical approach is the one employed during research for this thesis, and will crystallize in a discussion of a form of communication theory not discussed by Bell or Grimes, and which incorporates a number of their important ideas, in chapter six. In order to utilise this approach an understanding of Revivalist Paganisms in general, including the history of their developments and the influences that have formed their ritual praxes, was necessary. This, however, needed to be mitigated with an understanding of TOSC and how it developed and practiced its rituals. This is discussed in the following section.

#### **D: Ritualisation Amongst Pagans**

The process of ritualisation can be exceptionally difficult to observe amongst Pagans due to the many internal aspects of such a process, as well as the length of time over which it occurs. There are a number of reasons for this. First, many Pagan covens are initiatory in nature, thus limiting the outsider’s ability to observe the teaching process. Second, many Pagans are ‘solitary’; not working with a group but instead practicing and learning their religion on their own, often through the medium of books by popular Pagan authors, much as has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis. This solitary nature also limits the outsider’s ability to observe the learning

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*Witchcraft*, ed. by James L. Lewis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); and Rabinovitch.

<sup>72</sup> This approach will be revisited when defining ritual from the perspectives of the modern Paganisms that are being discussed.

process. Third, some covens do not actually teach their members, relying instead upon their coveners' to take an auto-didactic approach that is usually, as with the solitary practitioner, done in private. This was in fact the case of TOSC.

Instead of formal training it was observed that TOSC relied on a type of informal ritual training that consisted of either simple observation during any of the Sabbat or Esbat rituals that they hosted or through being placed, without training, as a ritual officiate. As rituals were never rehearsed before being performed as the High Priest believed that this stifled spontaneity and made for sterile rituals. This put new ritual officers in the position of learning the rituals as they were being enacted. Both options granted the covener an opportunity to participate to varying extents within a given ritual as even the simple observation of a Pagan ritual typically involved participation in the ritual; chanting, singing, circumambulating, facing various directions during key points in the rituals, and so forth. Only rarely, though becoming more common as TOSC dissolved, did someone attend a celebration and not step within the circle to participate in the religious observance.

However, even though the ritualisation process of new Pagans may be difficult to observe it is not impossible. As previous scholars of religion have already found,<sup>73</sup> people come from pre-existing backgrounds. In the case of Paganism, most new Pagans come from another religious context,<sup>74</sup> the majority coming from some form of Christianity.<sup>75</sup> Because of this certain ideas of the nature of rituals are already formed in the new Pagan.

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<sup>73</sup> e.g. Salomonsen, 'Methods of Compassion'; Bado-Fralick; Diane E. Goldstein, 'The Secularization of Religious Ethnography and Narrative Competence in a Discourse of Faith', *Western Folklore*, 54 (1995), 23-36; and Ewing.

<sup>74</sup> Berger, Leach and Shaffer; Melissa Harrington, 'The Long Journey Home; a Study of the Conversion Profiles of 35 British Wiccan Men', *Revista De Estudos Da Religião*, 2 (2002), 18-50 <[http://www.pucsp.br/rever/rv2\\_2002/p\\_harrin.pdf](http://www.pucsp.br/rever/rv2_2002/p_harrin.pdf)>; Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*; Carpenter, 'Practitioners'; Eugene V. Gallagher, 'A Religion without Converts? Becoming a Neo-Pagan', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LXII (1994), 851-867; and Adler.

<sup>75</sup> Berger, Leach and Shaffer; Carpenter, 'Practitioners'.

Beyond this it is possible to look at many of the sources to which new, as well as experienced, Pagans turn in order learn about and practice their religion. One major resource beyond initiation into a teaching coven, as evinced by the numerous recommended reading lists available to Pagans, are books written specifically to teach Pagans how to act like Pagans. Members of TOSC were observed reading such texts before a Sabbat ritual. Frequently these texts were dedicated to the Sabbat that was about to be celebrated so that the members in question could gain a better understanding of what the holy day was about. A secondary form, especially today, are internet based message boards and e-mail lists, which in many ways provide the same sort of information, often in the same format, as books on Paganism. In either case a level of auto-didacticism is required on the part of the learning Pagan. This was occasionally apparent in members of TOSC. While some had received training in ritual and magic before their involvement with TOSC others had no such background and were frequently observed reading books on Pagan holidays before TOSC's Sabbat gatherings.

Through the observation of TOSC's seasonal rituals, as well as through conversations with its members, it was possible to gain an understanding of what TOSC considered to be Wiccan or Pagan ritual. This understanding of ritual was representative of Revivalist Pagan thoughts on the subject as found in the Pagan textual sources discussed in chapter one as well as other living Pagans who were not associated with the TOSC at all. These views are discussed below.

#### **E. Pagan Definitions of Ritual(s)**

While the ritualisation process may frequently be hidden the product of that process is not. It is not, however, always obvious because definitions of ritual vary

amongst Pagans. Further, those definitions do not always match what ritual appears to be in practice. For instance, when this question was raised on the Village, a Pagan message board,<sup>76</sup> several different understandings of ritual were discussed. Some approached ritual holistically, without differentiating between religious ritual, magical ritual or social rituals. These tended to focus on the repetition of actions. For instance, a woman writing under the on-line name of 'Firefly'<sup>77</sup> wrote: 'I maintain that a ritual may develop out of nowhere based on repetition.'<sup>78</sup> Others, such as 'Crystalmoon66', while generally agreeing with this idea of ritual, specified that *magical* ritual involved not only this but also specific intent. She wrote, 'These are done with intent and preparation and are meant to bring about [the] change that I want.'<sup>79</sup> However, for some a ritual is a much vaguer thing. In responding to a similar question posed to several Pagans via an online discussion group created for the purpose 'summerskky', who lived in Hawai'i at the time, wrote:

A ritual to me is any time that I stop to pray, meditate or create a sacred space. Throughout the day, I find myself stopping and enjoying the environment around me, and when I do, I say something to Pele, the elements that drew me to stop and meditate for a few moments. I do this at sunrise, sunset, midday when tradewinds blow across my face. I also consider rituals when I plan and write something for holidays, moon cycles, etc. Normally those are more structured [sic]. I plan those out, what I'm going to do and when. Not to mention those normally last longer!<sup>80</sup>

Responding to the same question 'ari\_brigi' wrote:

Ritual? Simple! What you feel is needed when you need it. Need the dishes done? do them! Need a quiet time to think about a problem? Meditate! Want to celebrate a day that is special? Make it special to

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<sup>76</sup> www.witchcraft.net. When quoting from an online message board I have retained the spellings and grammar of the original posts.

<sup>77</sup> Names in quotation marks represent the 'online' name of the respondent.

<sup>78</sup> Firefly, summerskky, Crystalmoon66, \*moonfeary\*, Silver\_Faery333, *What Makes a Ritual?* The Village, <<http://www.witchcraft.net/index.php?act=ST&f=54&t=16036&hl=&s=45c18dc8a13f2489f1eed34c5dfe4de1>> (Last Updated: 2005, Last Viewed: 2005).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Kupperman, et al., <http://www.livejournal.com/community/paganmythritual/384.html>, Last Updated: 2005, Last Viewed: 2005.

you! For ritual you only ever need to do what makes the time a special occasion for YOU.<sup>81</sup>

Thus rituals can be structured or unstructured, repeated or unique, planned or spontaneous. Significantly, the idea of intent echoes 'how' schools of ritual theory while the idea of repetition echoes 'what' schools.

The authors of Pagan books show the same propensity as the Pagans above. The Farrars, quoting Tom Chetwynd's *A Dictionary of Symbols*, define ritual as '...the dramatic enactment of myth, designed to make a sufficiently deep impression on the individual to reach his unconscious.'<sup>82</sup> On the same subject Cunningham writes:

I have defined ritual as: "A specific form of movement, manipulation of objects or series of inner processes designed to produce desired effects" . . . . In Wicca, rituals are ceremonies which celebrate and strengthen our relationships with the Goddess, the God and the Earth.<sup>83</sup>

Cunningham specifically says that rituals do 'not need to be pre-planned, rehearsed or traditional, nor must they slavishly adhere to one particular pattern or form.'<sup>84</sup>

RavenWolf's<sup>85</sup> definition is similar. Buckland<sup>86</sup> uses a dictionary definition on par with Turner's understanding of ritual, i.e. rituals are formal acts of religious ceremony done in the manner of performing a divine service. Starhawk<sup>87</sup> describe rituals, especially magical rituals, as a type of technology or set of techniques, implying the repetition of a particular set of actions to create a desired effect. As will be demonstrated in chapter four, all of these ideas can be found, to a certain extent, in TOSC's understanding and practice of rituals.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> *WW*, p. 149. This appears to be defining religious and magical ritual, here seen as being connected and not separate as in Frazer, and is set in an overall discussion of myth, ritual and symbolism.

<sup>83</sup> *Wicca*, p. 47.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *Broomstick*, p. 119.

<sup>86</sup> *Witchcraft*, p. 203.

<sup>87</sup> *Spiral Dance*, pp. 37-8.

## **F: Defining ‘Ritual’**

Any definition of ritual attempted through the above perspective will likely be disappointing at this remove; very little of a concrete ‘thing’ can be had at this point. It is not the intention of this chapter to create a definition, or definitions, of ritual from the perspective of the modern Paganisms being studied here. Taking this into consideration, this thesis understands ‘rituals’ and ‘ritualisation’ as the products, though not end products, of social-psychological processes that exist within their own unique social and cultural context. Within their contexts, rituals will generally consist of actions that are recognized as being important and different from other, non-ritualised, actions as defined by the communities that practice them.

The idea that some actions are special or ‘ritualised’ in comparison to other normal or ‘non-ritualised’ actions occur through the process of ‘ritualisation’ which, like rituals themselves, are enacted in ways that are culturally specific. The process of ritualisation does not necessarily take into consideration the specific actions that become ritualised but instead functions by creating an understanding, frequently internalized or embodied, of when particular actions have been ritualised and when they have not been. Rituals, then, are groupings of actions that become enspirited and significant through this way of understanding.

## **II: Defining Myth**

### **A: Definitions of Myth**

According to the American Heritage Dictionary the word ‘myth’ is defined in the following manner:

1. a. A traditional story originating in a preliterate society, dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serve as primordial types in a primitive view of the world. b. A body of such stories told among a given people; mythology. c. All such stories collectively. 2. A read or fictional story,

recurring theme, or character type that appeals to the consciousness of a people by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to deep, commonly felt emotions. 3. A fiction or half-truth, esp. one that forms part of the ideology of a society . ... 4. A fictitious story, person or thing . ...

The majority of the definition is negative in nature; it shows myth as the creation of preliterate and primitive peoples on the one hand or as falsehoods and fiction on the other. This common use of 'myth' as something pejorative is not recent<sup>88</sup> but can be traced back to at least sixth century B.C.E. For instance Theagenes of Rhegium interpreted Homeric descriptions of arguments of the gods on Olympus as the actions of natural elements through the theory of opposites that was in use during his time,<sup>89</sup> thus transforming mythological into scientific, if allegorical, text. This way of defining myth was persistent in the West until the nineteenth century.<sup>90</sup> It is through this association of the Greek *mythos* with the Latin *fabula* that the European use of 'myth' as 'fiction' and the English word 'fable' came about<sup>91</sup> and hence the negative understanding of the word found outside of the Academy.

In an attempt to discuss myth and mythology in a positive light, Doty begins by stating that the word 'myth' comes from the Indo-European root for 'mother', *ma*, which through changes in speech became *my*. From *my* comes the Greek word *mythos*, or 'that which comes from the mouth', i.e. words. The root of the English word 'myth', *mythos*, later came to mean words organized into a story.<sup>92</sup> *Mythos* eventually came to be combined with the Greek *logos*, meaning 'word', to form *mythologia*, 'words concerning words' or 'words concerning stories' the source for the English word 'mythology'. These two words, *mythos* and *logos*, combine two

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<sup>88</sup> William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*, (Tuscalolosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2000), pp. 13, 7.

<sup>89</sup> K. K. Ruthven, *Myth*, (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1976), p. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1976), p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Doty p. 7; Mircea Eliade, 'Towards a Definition of Myth' in *Greek and Egyptian Mythologies*, trans. by Wendy Doniger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 3 and Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> Doty, p. 6.

different understandings of words; one is the sense of the fictive and the other is the sense of the doctrinal or theoretical.<sup>93</sup> This provides a radically different understanding of myth than the more common usage of the term. Taking myth out of the realm of the fable is important as it allows us potentially to place, for instance, historical narratives in the category of myth.<sup>94</sup>

In *Myth and Reality* Eliade<sup>95</sup> tackles the difficult task of defining myth by using the simplest and most encompassing definition he can develop, saying that '[m]yth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, in the fabled time of the "beginnings".' This seemingly simple definition embraces a surprisingly wide area, including most aspects of more complex definitions such as Doty's 17-point explanation of myth.<sup>96</sup>

The initial part of Eliade's definition states that myths narrate. So myths, as 'words concerning words,' are narrations or stories, and this is fundamental to the nature of myth in almost any definition of the term,<sup>97</sup> though the idea that myths *must*

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. C.f. Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 29. Faivre adds that eventually *logos* would supersede *mythos* with philosophy, and eventually sciences, taking precedence over mythology 'to the detriment of metonymy and meaningful displacements of sense' (ibid.).

<sup>94</sup> C.f. Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 81.

<sup>95</sup> p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> This definition is then further defined and explained by Doty between pages 34 and 87. The complete definition reads as follows:

A mythological corpus consists of (1) a usually complex network of myths that are (2) culturally important, (3) imaginal (4) stories, conveying by means of (5) metaphoric and symbolic diction, (6) graphic imagery, and (7) emotional conviction and participation (8) the primal, foundational accounts (9) of aspects of the real, experienced world and (10) humankind's roles and relative statuses within it.

Mythologies may (11) convey the political and moral values of a culture and (12) provide systems of interpreting (13) individual experience within a universal perspective, which may include (14) the intervention of suprahuman entities as well as (15) aspects of the natural and cultural orders. Myths may be enacted or reflected in (16) rituals, ceremonies, and dramas, and (17) they may provide materials for secondary elaboration, the constituent mythemes (mythic units) having become merely images or reference points for a subsequent story, such as a folktale, historical legend, novella, or prophecy (pp. 33-34).

<sup>97</sup> C.f. Doty p. 42, Lawrence J. Hatab, *A Phenomenological Analysis of Myth*, (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1990), pp. 17, 19, and Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 5. This notion is challenged in chapter five of this thesis.



be in story or narrative form will be challenged in chapter five of this thesis. The mythic story can be presented in numerous ways. Being a type of story, myths can use any or all of the techniques used in storytelling to convey their message and/or events. This includes imagery, both graphic and mental, metaphor, symbolism, emotional response and participation on the part of those to whom the story is directed.<sup>98</sup>

According to Eliade these stories are sacred histories. This leads to two further aspects of myth. In stating that these stories are sacred histories we must assume that these histories belong to someone: a society. That they are considered sacred implies that they are important to that culture. Thus myths are stories that are culturally important. It is this type and level of importance that separates myth from other types of stories such as folklore.<sup>99</sup> Myths are culturally important in that they shape and inform culture.<sup>100</sup> Other types of stories, such as folklore or stories important to an individual or small group, can gain what Lévi-Strauss' calls 'mythic status' by becoming important, sacred, to the rest of that individual's society or to another society. Once attaining this status the myth's meaning and importance is decided or agreed upon by the society at large and no longer by just its originator(s).<sup>101</sup> This process is similar to Ricoeur's<sup>102</sup> hermeneutical approach to textual interpretation. In the case of Ricoeurian hermeneutics, myth, which is seen as text, is interpreted by the originator(s)' culture not in response to the original understanding of the story but by the needs of the culture through meaning markers within the myth itself. This process can occur many times over the life of a myth, such as when a later culture, such as a group of Pagans, interprets the myth for their own use. For instance TOSC has revitalized and reinterpreted certain myths surrounding the Irish god Lugh, who is

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<sup>98</sup> Doty, pp. 33-4.

<sup>99</sup> Doty, p. 37.

<sup>100</sup> Hatab, p. 21.

<sup>101</sup> Doty, p. 38.

<sup>102</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'What is Text?', pp. 118-124.

understood by scholars to have been a god related to light, lightning and sudden inspiration, as relating to the Wiccan solar cycle of rituals discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

Viewing myths as ‘sacred histories’ points to another important aspect of what myths do: they distinguish the sacred from the profane.<sup>103</sup> Hatab<sup>104</sup> defines sacred and profane in the following manner: sacred refers to the extraordinary, the uncommon, the wondrous and terrifying, while the profane refers not to that which is sacrilegious but to the ordinary or common. Hatab<sup>105</sup> further shows these distinctions as not defining two separate worlds, but a single, two-dimensional world. While this distinction between sacred and profane is useful, Hatab’s use of the terms goes beyond the boundaries of the common understanding of the words. What Hatab<sup>106</sup> appears to be describing is not simply the sacred and the profane. This is seen in his understanding of the profane as something being ‘before the sanctuary’, designating common ground outside of a sacred space. Instead what he describes is the ordinary and the extraordinary, or as York<sup>107</sup> expresses it, the *preternatural*; i.e. that which is beyond nature and the ordinary. This is reminiscent to Bell and Grimes’ view of ritualisation as mediating between the ordinary and the extraordinary discussed in the previous section; here myth takes on a similar function.

The preternatural appears in myth in many different ways. The most common of these appears to be through supernatural entities or beings: deities, spirits, monsters, fairies, etc. This aspect of the preternatural experience is focused upon by

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<sup>103</sup> Eliade ‘Definition’, p. 5; Hatab, p. 19; Clyde Kluckhohn, ‘Myths and Rituals: A General Theory’ in *The Myth and Ritual Theory*, ed. by Robert Segal (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), p. 315.

<sup>104</sup> p. 22.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> *Pagan Theology*, p. 1.

both Doty and Eliade.<sup>108</sup> However, Hatab<sup>109</sup> convincingly insists that the preternatural world does not need to be supernatural.<sup>110</sup> Instead the key element of the preternatural world appears to be ‘mystery’, which is seen as the true nature of all that is sacred.<sup>111</sup> This mystery is an ‘ambush of reality’;<sup>112</sup> it remains hidden within our ordinary lives to be suddenly activated, plunging us into a reality within ourselves. These ‘mysteries’ do not lead us into ourselves but outside of ourselves and into a larger universe that contains within itself truths ready to be perceived. It is a limited universe yet it is one that is not limited by others but by its own structures which cause us to move beyond ourselves.<sup>113</sup>

This ‘ambushing’ world of the preternatural discussed by Mason is seen as being true, having its own external existence<sup>114</sup> just as the ordinary world does.<sup>115</sup> This dual ordinary/extraordinary world is one single lived or experienced reality.<sup>116</sup> Because they are part of the real and experienced world, myths can create a link between mythic history and the present, allowing individuals and even societies to participate in the myth as a living thing. Myths serve to delineate between the ordinary and the preternatural within the lived world; they also allow humans to know their place within that world.<sup>117</sup>

Eliade’s second point,<sup>118</sup> that myths relate an event that took place in primordial time, forms the next major characteristic of myth.<sup>119</sup> Myths are viewed as

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<sup>108</sup> p. 75; *Definition*, p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> p. 22.

<sup>110</sup> C.f. F. B. Welbourn (*Atoms and Ancestors*, ‘Chapter Two: The natural and the supernatural’ (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/books/atoms/CP2.html>, Last Updated: 2000, Last Viewed: 2007), who discusses how amongst African tribes, such as the Baganda, there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Herbert Mason, ‘Myth as an “Ambush of Reality”’ in *Myth, Symbol and Reality*, ed. by A. M. Olson, (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1980) p. 16.

<sup>113</sup> Mason, p. 16.

<sup>114</sup> Doty, p. 62.

<sup>115</sup> Eliade, *Definition*, p.5

<sup>116</sup> Doty, p. 62; Hatab, p. 20.

<sup>117</sup> Doty, p. 62.

<sup>118</sup> *Myth and Reality*, p. 5.

the essential, primary stories of a society that shape and express its most significant images and ideologies, its essential mythical foundations. These roots are what essentially matter to a society.<sup>120</sup> As emergence or creation stories, myths are concerned with how something comes into being or is established as a tradition.<sup>121</sup> Creation myths, i.e. those myths that explain how the world or universe began, are of three types: cosmogonic, cosmological and theogonic. Cosmogonic myths refer to the origins of the universe, cosmological myths are those that offer a philosophical explanation of the universe's existence and theogonic myths discuss the origins of superhuman, often divine, powers or entities. These roots are what essentially matter to a society and how people function within it.<sup>122</sup>

However, emergence stories are not limited to creation stories nor do they necessarily take the audience back to the time of the gods or some other primordial time. They may instead take the audience forward in time<sup>123</sup> or discuss ways in which traditions started or even why a place came to be named as it is.<sup>124</sup> Time, in mythology, is also qualitative rather than quantitative and is revealed within the context of the emerging event.<sup>125</sup> Therefore Eliade's term 'primordial time' is not an appropriate term for the type of time that is evident in mythology. Both Cassirer and Hatab<sup>126</sup> use the more obvious term 'mythical time'. Mythical time includes Eliade's 'Primordial Time' but is not limited to it. This distinction is important and, significantly, this thesis will demonstrate in chapters five and six that some myths,

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<sup>119</sup> C.f. Doty, pp. 33-4 and Hatab, p. 20.

<sup>120</sup> Doty, p. 58.

<sup>121</sup> Eliade, *Definition*, p. 5.

<sup>122</sup> Doty, pp. 16, 58, 63.

<sup>123</sup> Robert A. Segal, Robert, *Theorizing about Myth*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), p. 23.

<sup>124</sup> Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 6.

<sup>125</sup> William Schultz, *Cassirer and Langer on Myth: An Introduction*, (NY: Garland Publishing, 2000), p. 110; Hatab, p. 38.

<sup>126</sup> Schultz, p. 100; *Phenomenological Analysis*, pp. 38-9.

such as those present in TOSC's Sabbat rituals, are centred upon an eternally recurring *now*.

Mythology also serves several important functions that fall outside of Eliade's definition. For example Doty says that myth 'may convey the political and moral values of a culture and provide systems of interpreting individual experiences within a universal perspective.'<sup>127</sup> Thus, while acting as a people's sacred stories and serving to differentiate between the preternatural and the ordinary while mediating between them, myth can also serve as a form of social control and as a source of authority for an individual or organization as well as its rites, morals and philosophies.

## **B: Mythic Phases**

Doty finds three distinguishable phases in the 'relative vitality' of a myth. The first phase is the 'primary myth', where it is at its most powerful and important to its culture. Inconsistency is indicative of this stage as the myths in question are still in their original formulation. 'Implicit myth' is the second stage. Here the central myth is widely accepted and inconsistencies are removed. The mythic narrative also develops. In this stage it supports an orthodoxy and becomes more global in its application, often by assimilating opposing stories into it, thus losing some of its original form and power.<sup>128</sup> The final stage is that of 'rationalized myth'. In this phase the myths are reinterpreted in such a way that they do not conflict with current understandings of the world. This phase opens the myths up to frequent and personal reinterpretation.<sup>129</sup> This is demonstrated by Hesiod's recording of myth; he not only recorded the stories, but also systematized them and introduced a rational principle

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<sup>127</sup> p. 33.

<sup>128</sup> Doty, p. 138.

<sup>129</sup> Doty, p. 139.

that they were heretofore lacking.<sup>130</sup> This third stage of myth engages in a type of Ricoeurian hermeneutics, allowing, or even requiring, the individual to recontextualise the myths in a more personalized manner. In this phase myth is approached as a type of text, something that has been divorced from its originators and original context.<sup>131</sup> As such the myth can be interpreted without the need to reference that which may have been the original intent of the myth. As will be discussed in chapter five of this thesis the Revivalist Pagan interpretation of myth, such as found amongst the members of TOSC, begins only *after* a myth has reached this stage.

Two further stages develop from the rationalized myth, which this thesis calls ‘demythologised myth’ and ‘recontextualised myth’. Myths can become ‘demythologised’ in a number of ways. It can happen as a culture changes and with it the understanding of how the extraordinary manifests itself thus causing the myth to lose its cultural importance. It is also possible that myths become mere allegories or metaphorical stories, filled with hidden meanings but not something that represents the experienced world.<sup>132</sup> When this phase is reached myth becomes a fictive story that may represent *truths* but not *the* truth. It is from either this or the previous phase in the vitality of a myth that a fifth stage can occur: the recontextualised myth. The myths appearing and discussed in chapters four and five of this thesis, are myths that have been recontextualised for TOSC’s use.

This stage also relies upon Ricoeurian hermeneutics but occurs after a myth ceases to function as a culturally important or sacred story; for instance because it’s originating culture no longer exists or because the culture has demythologised the narratives and turned them into fictive stories. This ‘dead’ text is then brought back to

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<sup>130</sup> Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 151.

<sup>131</sup> Ricoeur, ‘What is Text?’, p. 107.

<sup>132</sup> Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 153-4

life by a person or persons recontextualising the myth within the framework of their own context.<sup>133</sup> This is the end of a hermeneutical arc; the recontextualisation is what grounds the new interpretation into living experience. It ceases to be arbitrary or subjective in that it uses markers within the text itself that tells the reader how to interpret it. As Ricoeur argues, 'What the interpreter says is a resaying that reactivates what is said by the text.'<sup>134</sup> Again, it is this fifth phase in the life of a myth that is important to this thesis for, as this thesis will demonstrate, this is how myth is frequently utilized by TOSC. For instance TOSC's eisegetic reinterpretation of the Welsh myth of Llew Llau Gyffes to fit with Wiccan mythological motifs that are not present within its original pre-Christian form.

### **C: Science as a Replacement for Myth**

In *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer defines myths as mistaken explanations for physical or natural occurrences. For Frazer<sup>135</sup> it is the fact that they are erroneous, coming out of ignorance concerning how the world works, that makes them myths; if they were correct they would be not be myths but fact or science. Ruthven<sup>136</sup> states that long before Frazer, Cicero also found myth to be a type of proto-science, arguing that the Greek and Roman myths contained clever scientific theory, for by his time the names of the gods had been associated with astronomical and astrological bodies as well as other features of the physical world. However it was Xenophanes who began the trend to remove myth of all spiritual or metaphysical worth.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Ricoeur, 'Model', p. 162.

<sup>134</sup> Ricoeur 'What is Text?', p. 124.

<sup>135</sup> 'The Golden Bough' in *The Myth and Ritual Theory*, ed. by Robert Segal (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), p. 380.

<sup>136</sup> pp. 10-11.

<sup>137</sup> Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 1.

Hatab and Doty<sup>138</sup> argue that myth is not *simply* a primitive science. Hatab and Eliade<sup>139</sup> make it clear that while myth does employ explanation as part of its function, as a form of mystery it does not simply explain things but instead tells its audience that something *is*.<sup>140</sup> Myth does not deny or misunderstand empirical findings, but instead find them to be less important than the sacred meaning behind them.<sup>141</sup> Doty<sup>142</sup> expands this saying that at other moments myths are metaphorical and not literal at all. This suggests that myths are, like rituals, modes of communication. This is significant in light of the theory of embodied myth-ritual developed in chapter six of this thesis.

Doty approaches this view somewhat differently. Doty<sup>143</sup> points out that neither 'primitive' nor 'mythological' necessarily mean anti-logical or anti-scientific. Such notions are antiquated on the part of the analyst<sup>144</sup> who, as Cassirer puts, reads 'back into myth and anachronistically interprets learning about the physical universe as a scientific purpose.'<sup>145</sup>

Cassirer<sup>146</sup> sees mythic thinking as the lowest form of human experience and scientific thinking to be the highest. Although he did not find science to be a direct product of myth, he did see science as coming out of the same type of empirical thinking from which he believed myth derived, though for different purposes. He does not see myth and science as being completely separate. Instead they are connected through palingenesis; where science recontextualises the symbolism of myth in a new

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<sup>138</sup> p.23; pp. 89-90.

<sup>139</sup> pp. 89-90; *Myth and Reality*, p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> C.f. Segal, *Theorizing about Myth*, p. 22.

<sup>141</sup> Hatab, p. 24.

<sup>142</sup> p. 50.

<sup>143</sup> p. 89.

<sup>144</sup> Doty, pp. 90, 94 and Hatab, p. 23.

<sup>145</sup> Schultz, p. 192. C.f. Doty, pp. 90, 94 and Hatab, p. 23.

<sup>146</sup> Schultz, p. 192.



and more empirical or 'scientific' manner.<sup>147</sup> Doty also finds a connection between myth and science. However, where science takes the place of myth for Cassirer, Doty<sup>148</sup> sees science as being inherently mythological and explicitly not non-mythical in nature. Instead he shows that modern science is based on the myth of Cartesian dualism while simultaneously denying that the foundation is mythical in nature.

In the study of Pagan practice and belief the view of myth as simply being either a form of mistaken science or as something whose symbols have been subsumed into or replaced by science is untenable. First, the majority of Pagans in the United States, have at least some university education if not an undergraduate or higher degree.<sup>149</sup> Second, at least 15% of those working who did not list themselves as students work in science or technology related areas.<sup>150</sup> Third, even with this high level of modern education and technological work, Pagans engage in magical and mythical understandings of the world.<sup>151</sup> This is a view that works with, over, or through the laws of nature and natural science<sup>152</sup> or possibly through a world of understanding that has nothing to do with science,<sup>153</sup> suggesting that myth, while perhaps occasionally containing some form of science, cannot be limited to any single cognitive domain.

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<sup>147</sup> Schultz, p. 201.

<sup>148</sup> pp. 92-3.

<sup>149</sup> The Pagan Census conducted between 1993 and 1995 in the United States shows that at least 25% of those who participated had at least some college education and that 53.1% have either a college or equivalent degree and/or a postgraduate degree, another 11.4% had done at least some postgraduate work (Berger, Leach and Shaffer, p. 32). Carpenter ('Practitioners', pp. 87-8) reports studies conducted between 1979 and 1989 that showed similar results. This demonstrates a higher level of education amongst Pagans than the average American citizen.

<sup>150</sup> Berger, Leach and Shaffer, pp. 32-3. The specific categories being Computer (mgr./prog./analyst), Librarian, Graphic artist/Designer, Engineer and Technician (Berger, Leach and Shaffer, p. 33). Adler found that 16% of her respondents worked as either computer programmers, technical writers or scientists (Carpenter, 'Practitioners', p. 88).

<sup>151</sup> Berger, Leach and Shaffer, pp. 35-7, Carpenter, 'Emergent', pp. 77-9.

<sup>152</sup> Rabinovitch, p. 78.

<sup>153</sup> Cheal and Leverick, p. 9.

## D: Pagan Understandings of Myth

Attempting to define what is 'myth' amongst modern Pagans is nearly as difficult as defining what a Pagan is in the first place. It was repeatedly found that when asking Pagans about what myth was and when observing how myths were discussed in conversation or on-line media on the one hand, and how they were utilized in ritual creation, in the construction of personal identity and within ritual praxes on the other, the two did not match. It was found that by observing how myth was employed, and what kinds of myths were employed, that it was easier to theorize about what myth was to those who were using and talking about it.

When, through the medium of the Pagan Myth Ritual 'LiveJournal' community, the participants were asked what myth was there was received a surprisingly similar set of answers. Of nine respondents<sup>154</sup> five either implicitly or explicitly included in their understanding of myth the idea that myths were stories that explained how things were and that while they were once considered to be truth they were now seen as ultimately fictive stories. Typical answers included ones similar to 'silver\_faery333's'<sup>155</sup> 'A myth to me is a story that at one time explained the "unkown" [sic]<sup>156</sup> and 'ari\_brigi's' 'Myth seems to be a bit of truth and a bit of fiction (exaggerated if you like). Like truth explaining anything that would have been unexplainable before our current time, still having a sort of basis in truth. It gave humanity a way of explaining things like death, love, the seasons of their area.'<sup>157</sup> Such replies were in fact quite similar to the understandings of myth presented by Frazer and the Myth Ritualists. This understanding was unexpected due to previous

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<sup>154</sup> Respondents included two Canadians, one Norwegian and six Americans. Of these respondents only two were not practitioners of some form of the Revivalist Eclectic Paganism is the focus of this study.

<sup>155</sup> Names in quotation marks represent the 'online' name of the respondent.

<sup>156</sup> Jeffrey S. Kupperman, et al., *Welcome,*

<http://www.livejournal.com/community/paganmythritual/384.html> (paganmythritual LiveJournal, Last Viewed: 2005, Last Updated: 2005).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

experiences with both Pagan and ceremonial magical rituals wherein myths were seen being utilized in ways that did not fit with such an understanding.

However, these were not the only replies. Others, though a minority, indicated a substantially different understanding of what myths were, suggesting that they represented a type of truth that was either non-empirical or true when understood from its own perspective. For instance 'summerskky', when speaking of a Pagan friend with whom she practices her religion, indicated that this friend felt that 'myths / stories are things that although they may not be able to happen here, they may have in other realms . . .'.<sup>158</sup> 'Hedgeryder', a man who practices both an Anglo-Saxon form of Heathenism as well as traditional witchcraft based on the teachings of Robert Cochrane, expressed a similar notion when he wrote that myth, to him, 'is the poetry of spirit given form through tales. . . . To define it further would steal it's true meaning, as it simply wasn't meant to be logically understood.'<sup>159</sup>

It was further unexpected to find that of my five practitioner-written textual sources only two made any attempt to define what they meant by myth. Of these it was apparent that some sort of story was indicated that may or may not have some special characteristic to it that made it mythic.<sup>160</sup> What that characteristic might be, however, was not discussed.

Of the two texts that do make an attempt to define myth, the Farrars' *Witches' Way* is the most explicit and complete. Quoting Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen*<sup>161</sup> they write 'Myth is the facts of the mind made manifest in a fiction of matter.'<sup>162</sup> For

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> This was especially apparent in Cunningham's *LW* (1993). In this text Cunningham suggests that the reader 'create [their] own mythic story of the Goddess and the God . . . '(p. 118)

<sup>161</sup> Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, (Kingston, NY: McPherson & Company, 1983).

<sup>162</sup> p. 146.

a more concrete answer to what myth is they quote Tom Chetwynd's *A Dictionary of Symbols*:<sup>163</sup>

Myths could be defined as extended symbols describing vividly the typical patterns and sequences of the forces of life, at work in the Cosmos, in Society, and in the individual . . . Because every myth has arisen straight out of the human psyche, each one is full of wisdom and understanding about the nature and structure of the psyche itself. Mythology is dramatized psychology.<sup>164</sup>

Starhawk writes of myth in a thematically similar way saying that

[t]he mythology and cosmology of Witchcraft are rooted in that 'Paleolithic shaman's insight': that all things are swirls of energy, vortexes of moving forces, currents in an ever-changing sea.<sup>165</sup>

These definitions suggest, much as had 'summerskky' and 'Hedgeryder', that myths are not only more than stories that reflect a false science, but are in fact more than just stories. That neither the Farrars nor Starhawk actually describe myths as *necessarily* being stories is significant as it opens the way for things other than stories to take on the mythic nature. They also suggest a notion of the preternatural discussed above: that which is extraordinary, that which belongs in the realm of mystery and has its own external existence just as real as the 'real' world's. Thus here we see myth as representing a fundamental truth that is expressed in symbolic form.

### **E: A Definition of 'Myth'**

In light of the above views 'myth' will be defined by this thesis in the following manner: myths are those culturally important, imaginal, explanatory and/or metaphoric yet non-empirical truths that take the form of stories. Myths elicit the emotional conviction and participation of their audience. This participation allows their audience not only to delineate between the lived world of the ordinary and the world of the preternatural, but to also invoke the preternatural, often by means of

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<sup>163</sup> Tom Chetwynd, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (NY: Paladin Grafton Books, 1982).

<sup>164</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *WW*, p. 146.

<sup>165</sup> *SD*, p. 42.

pointing to the emergence of a thing, be it a deity, hero, place, name, season, tradition etc., into that world. There are five different 'life phases' that myth goes through: primary myth, implicit myth, rationalized myth, demythologised myth and recontextualised myth.

This definition forms the basis of this thesis' approach to the myths employed by TOSC in their Sabbat rituals. The following chapters will demonstrate that TOSC regularly utilized myths in their fifth stage of life. It will further be shown that TOSC employed myths in both narrative and, importantly, non-narrative forms. These myths were frequently reinterpreted to fit into a Wiccan cosmological cycle and, through participation, a mode of cognition that brings about Grimes' 'enlivened' action, play a role similar to, and enhanced by, ritual in the bridging of the ordinary and extraordinary.

### **III: Myth-Ritual Theory**

This thesis' primary concern is to examine the ways in which modern Pagans, specifically TOSC, utilize myth and ritual together. As such it is impossible not to consider 'myth-ritual' or 'myth and ritual' theory, though ultimately it will reject such theories as superfluous and go beyond them.<sup>166</sup> Today the term is used in two different ways. Myth and ritual theory, *sensu stricto*, refers to the theory that myths, as well as literature and folklore derived from myth, ultimately arise from rituals that predate them.<sup>167</sup> More recently is the use of the term 'myth and ritual theory *sensu lato*, which includes not only older, more strict usage of the term but also other theories of how myth and ritual relate to one another, regardless of whether they find

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<sup>166</sup> This theory is referred to in a number of different ways, including 'ritualism,' 'myth-ritualist theory,' and the 'myth-ritual theory'.

<sup>167</sup> Robert Ackerman, 'Frazer on Myth and Ritual', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975), 115-134, (p. 115).

myth being derived from ritual,<sup>168</sup> which in fact many do not. The remainder of this chapter will examine three versions of this theory; its original formulation, the second formulation found in various editions of *The Golden Bough*, and the theories of the Ritual Dominant School, which is the successor to the previous two theories.

The first theory, developed by William Robertson Smith, was chosen due to its influence on the second two theories, as well as to track the development of myth and ritual theories through time. For the purposes of this study it is Sir James Frazer and then the Ritual Dominant School that are of primary importance. It is not my intention to critique, either positively or negatively, the theories presented here; much has already been said on this matter and it is not important to this study whether or not these theories did in fact accurately describe the ancient or 'primitive' cultures they purport to describe. Rather, these two later schools are significant for engaging with themes commonly found within some Revivalist Pagan religions, such as magic and the dying and reviving god, and their subsequent influence on many Pagans and many Paganisms, including the form of Wicca practiced by TOSC. Thus, after an examination and analysis of TOSC's rituals and their use of myth within them, chapter six will return to myth and ritual theory and see how, or if, these theories are applicable to TOSC. Where they are not a new form of myth-ritual theory will be developed before ultimately being surpassed by the new theory of embodied myth-rituals.

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<sup>168</sup> See Robert A. Segal, ed., *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), who uses the term in this manner through a survey of numerous theories of how myth and ritual interact. It is in this manner that myth and ritual theory will typically be used in this work.

## A: Robertson Smith and *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*

William Robertson Smith, Scottish Biblicist and Arabist, was the founder of what would become known as the myth and ritual theory.<sup>169</sup> Robertson Smith first formulates this theory in his 'Lectures on the Religion of the Semites',<sup>170</sup> which is a compilation of his Bennett Lectures, given between 1888 and 1889. In this series of lectures Robertson Smith discusses Semitic religion as a whole 'in its common features and general type'<sup>171</sup> and includes 'the Arabs, the Hebrews and Phœnicians, the Aramæans, the Babylonians and the Assyrians.'

In the first lecture, 'Introduction: The Subject and Method of Enquiry' Robertson Smith sets out his theory on the relationship between myth and ritual and in doing so refutes what was then a more common understanding of the myth as espoused by Edward Tylor several decades earlier. This stated that myth is a record of events in the physical world. Here myth is primary and rituals are the ways in which myths are applied. Myth is to be considered a type of creed or belief that is expressed as a story. However, for Tylor myth does not arise out of ritual and ritual does not arise out of myth, instead they both have their origins in the same source; a sort of primitive misunderstanding of how the world works<sup>172</sup> Robertson Smith stated that the modern habit of examining religion from the perspective of belief, while working well when applied to the study of Christianity, cannot be applied to 'antique religions' which he says 'had, for the most part not creed'; instead 'they consisted entirely of institutions and practices.'<sup>173</sup> He continues by explaining that in ancient religion

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<sup>169</sup> *Sensu stricto*.

<sup>170</sup> Originally published in 1889.

<sup>171</sup> William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), p. 1.

<sup>172</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual Theory*, p. 3. Robert Ackerman, *The Myth and Ritual School: J. G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*, (NY: Routledge, 2002), pp. 38-9.

<sup>173</sup> p. 16.

rituals were fixed in form and practice but that the meanings attached to the rituals were vague and that different people explained the same ritual differently.

‘So far as myths consist of explanations of ritual, their value is altogether secondary, and it may be affirmed with confidence that in almost every case the myth was derived from the ritual, and not the ritual from the myth; for the ritual was fixed and the myth was variable, the ritual was obligatory and faith in the myth was at the discretion of the worshiper.’<sup>174</sup>

These different explanations came in the form of various myths used, according to Robertson Smith, to explain the single ritual: ‘[t]he [ritual], in short, was connected not with a dogma but with a myth.’<sup>175</sup> This first formulation of the theory thus states that myth and ritual are connected with myth arising from a need to explain the purpose of an existing ritual, and that these explanatory myths will differ depending on the people telling them even though the ritual to which they are attached remains the same. While there are some aspects of Robertson Smith’s theory that describe TOSC’s ritual praxis chapter six of this thesis will show that as a whole it is unsuccessful in explaining their rituals. Instead, it will be demonstrated that Frazer’s and Jane Harrison’s Ritual Dominant School’s theories better, though still incompletely, describe the convergence of myth and ritual in TOSC’s Sabbat rituals. Thus, in the light of the new fieldwork presented in this thesis, a variant myth-ritual theory will be developed in chapter six.

## **B: Sir James Frazer and the *Golden Bough***

Sir James Frazer and his *Golden Bough* are important to this study for two primary reasons. First, it and he were highly influential upon the later Ritual Dominant school of the so-called Cambridge Ritualists, which may be considered

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<sup>174</sup> p. 18.

<sup>175</sup> Robertson Smith, p. 17.



Frazer's theoretical successor.<sup>176</sup> Second, and possibly more important, many Pagans today, including members of TOSC, have read Frazer or have been influenced by others who have read Frazer,<sup>177</sup> meaning that many Pagans are at least familiar with some of Frazer's ideas, even if they are not aware of the source of those ideas.

Frazer, a classicist and anthropologist, was both a friend of Robertson Smith's and a student of Tylor's writing and was heavily influenced by both.<sup>178</sup> Where Tylor took the ethnological approach to the religion of the ancient 'savages', and Robertson Smith to the ancient Semites, Frazer employed a comparative approach. This approach allowed Frazer to look at multiple cultures at different times in history, and through the idea that similar acts speak of similar motivations use them to 'prove' whatever it is he is discussing at the time.<sup>179</sup> This is the method employed throughout *The Golden Bough*. From this vast comparative study, Frazer developed his own myth-ritual theory, which has four primary aspects to it: 1) myth generates ritual, 2) rituals, when coupled with myth, are a type of magic and are a type of primitive, and incorrect, science, 3) the idea of the sacred king, of which Frazer forms three different versions, and 4) the concept of the dying and reviving god.<sup>180</sup>

Frazer presents a turning away from Robertson Smith's myth and ritual theory, returning instead to E. B. Tylor's view that myth comes before ritual and that ritual is an enactment of myth. For Frazer, myth still explains ritual, but not after the original

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<sup>176</sup> Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School*, pp. 83-4, 94.

<sup>177</sup> Chas Clifton, Chas, 'Drugs, Books, and Witches' in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. by Chas S. Clifton and Wendy Griffin (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), p.93; Magliocco, *Witching Culture*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>178</sup> Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School*, pp. 39, 41.

<sup>179</sup> Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School*, p. 52.

<sup>180</sup> There are a number of lists of 'important aspects' of *The Golden Bough* and Frazer's version of the myth and ritual theory. Frazer, in the introduction to his third edition of *The Golden Bough*, finds them to be magic and the sacred kingship, taboo and the dying god (John B. Vickery, *The Literary Impact of the Golden Bough*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.39). Ackerman (*Myth and Ritual School*, p. 51-2) lists off the seven sections of the third edition while Segal (*Myth and Ritual*, pp. 4-5) focuses on the nature of the divine king and his relationship to the myths and rituals of various gods of vegetation. I have chosen to focus on these four aspects of Frazer's work because they are, as I will demonstrate, strongly reflected in many different Pagan practices.

reason for the ritual has been lost, as posited by Robertson Smith; instead myth gives ritual its meaning.<sup>181</sup> Frazer, in fact, repeatedly argued that his theory was not the same as Robertson Smith's, to whom he dedicated the first edition of the *Golden Bough*. Eventually Frazer's work would be attacked by some of the Cambridge Ritualists, whom Frazer himself had inspired, due to his Tylorian attitudes.

Where Robertson Smith saw myths as being merely explanations for rituals whose meanings had been lost, Frazer saw ritual in a much different light; it was not merely an enactment of myth but was itself a magical act. For example, in *The Golden Bough* Frazer<sup>182</sup> describes an Egyptian festival during the month of Khoiak that re-enacts part of the myth of the death, resurrection and enthronement of the god Osiris, as well as the conception of Horus. Frazer points to the myth of Osiris, as well as images found in a temple of Isis depicting Osiris as rising from water with stalks of corn growing from him, to show that Osiris was in fact a corn-god. Beyond this, however, Frazer says that the ritual during the month of Khoiak was not only a celebration of Osiris but, due to the fact that it occurred at the same time that crops were first sown, was in fact a magical ceremony used to guarantee the growth of the corn.

Like Tylor before him, Frazer saw myth and ritual as being forms of primitive science, as explanations of how the world works.<sup>183</sup> When combined the resultant magical ritual was seen by Frazer as again being a type of incorrect science,<sup>184</sup> derived from an incorrect understanding of 'natural law'.<sup>185</sup> However Frazer differs

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<sup>181</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 5.

<sup>182</sup> *Golden Bough*, pp. 52-3, also James G. Frazer, *The New Golden Bough*, ed. By T. Gaster (NY: Criterion Books, 1959), pp. 338-9.

<sup>183</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 4.

<sup>184</sup> On this Frazer (*New*, p. 649) says 'For whereas the order on which magic reckons is merely an extension, by *false analogy*, of the order in which ideas present themselves to our mind, the order laid down by science is derived from patient and exact observation of the phenomena themselves' (emphasis added).

<sup>185</sup> Frazer, *New*, p. 7.

from Tylor in one important point: for Frazer magic is not simply an explanation of the world, but rather a means by practitioners attempt to control the world. Both Tylor and Frazer see myth and ritual as primitive science, but for Tylor they are analogous to modern scientific theory and for Frazer they are a primitive version of modern scientific technique.<sup>186</sup>

The third important aspect of Frazer's myth and ritual theory is that of the sacred or divine king,<sup>187</sup> where the king is seen as also being a god. Frazer posits three types of divine kingship. The first form of the divine king has the king merely playing the role of a god during ritual. Myths describes the life and functions of the god, usually a vegetative god, and the king acts out the part of the god, thus manipulating the god of vegetation for the king's and his people's needs.<sup>188</sup> Thus Frazer<sup>189</sup> is found to explain that the burning and scattering of the remains of red-haired men was a sacrifice to Osiris and that the slain men in fact represent him, mimicking the myth of Osiris' own death and the scattering of his remains throughout Egypt. Further, Frazer<sup>190</sup> posits that at one time it would have been the king himself who played this role.

In the second instance of divine kingship the king is a god only temporarily; the king is inspired or filled with the god in question, his personality being subsumed into that of the deity. During this time the possessed king gains the knowledge of, and speaks as, the possessing deity. For example we are told that in ancient Greece a god would enter a priest and through the priest's utterances and often-frenzied

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<sup>186</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 5.

<sup>187</sup> This title is something of a misnomer, as the person acting as deity does not necessarily need to be a king, but may be a magician or priest, or any combination of the three, instead. However Frazer (*New*, pp. 5-6) connects the development of kingship from the roles of the priest that in turn was derived from that of the magician, thus relating all three roles

<sup>188</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 4.

<sup>189</sup> *New*, pp. 341.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

gesticulations the other priests present would be able to divine the will of the possessing god. It is not only divine knowledge the possessed person gains but also sometimes divine power.<sup>191</sup>

In the third version the divine king is not merely possessed by a god from without but is instead a god in his own right. This jump from people being occasionally possessed by deities to people being deities themselves is according to Frazer 'an easy step to the conviction that certain men are permanently possessed by a deity, or in some other undefined way are endued with so high a degree of supernatural power as to be ranked as gods and to receive the homage of prayer and sacrifice.'<sup>192</sup>

The fourth important aspect of Frazer's myth and ritual theory, that of the dying and reviving god is, as has been briefly mentioned above, connected to the third aspect, specifically the first version of the sacred king. Frazer here discusses<sup>193</sup> several gods and their related myths that represent them as dying or being slain and then being reborn. Frazer connects these to rituals that honour them and finds a cyclical, seasonal relationship between the stories of death and resurrection and the times when their rituals are performed. Frazer then connects<sup>194</sup> these deities, their myths and rituals, to a type of Ur-figure, the corn-spirit, who represents the dying and rebirth of the crops and vegetation in general. It is this, along with the first form of the sacred king, that most strongly connects to Frazer's version of the myth and ritual theory, as it is through the re-enactment of the myths of the local version of the corn-spirit that

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<sup>191</sup> Frazer, *New*, p. 62-64.

<sup>192</sup> *New*, p. 65.

<sup>193</sup> Part 4 of *The New Golden Bough*.

<sup>194</sup> Part 5 of *The New Golden Bough*.

the corn-spirit god or goddess can be magically manipulated to provide for the people.<sup>195</sup>

Chapter six of this thesis demonstrates that while some of Frazer's ideas may still describe parts of TOSC's ritual praxis they do so incompletely and inaccurately. It is the myth-ritual theory of Frazer's successors, the Cambridge Ritualists, who carried on several aspects of Frazer's theories of myth and ritual, which most accurately describe TOSC's Sabbat ritual praxis. However while the Ritual Dominant School retains some of Frazer's theories it generally rejects Frazer's notion that myths predate ritual. Instead a focus on Frazer's corn-spirit will be found. The corn-spirit would in turn be taken and modified by the Cambridge Ritualists, especially Jane Harrison with her idea of the 'Eniautos-Daimon' or 'year-spirit'. The Eniautos-Daimon will be discussed both later in this chapter and further in chapter six in relation to TOSC's Sabbat rituals.

### **C: Jane Harrison and the Ritual Dominant School**

Several scholars, including Cambridge Ritualists such as Jane Harrison,<sup>196</sup> F. M. Cornford and Gilbert Murry, as well as others such as S. H. Hooke and Theodor H. Gaster, characterize the Ritual Dominant School of myth and ritual theory. Those making up the Ritual Dominant School were influenced, to various degrees, by the theories and methodology of Frazer.<sup>197</sup> The myth and ritual theory of the Ritual

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<sup>195</sup> .Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>196</sup> Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School* and 'The Cambridge Group: Origins and Composition' in *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered: Proceedings of the First Oldfather Conference, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*, ed. by William M. Calder III (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), shows that Harrison was in many ways the heart of the second generation of ritual dominant scholars after Robertson Smith, the Cambridge Ritualists and as such her ideas often influenced the others to a greater or lesser degree. Because of this many more of Harrison's ideas and terminology have been used in this section of the chapter than other members of this group.

<sup>197</sup> See Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School*. The Cambridge Ritualists were influenced by many others as well, including Émile Durkheim, who was himself influenced by Robertson Smith (Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School*, p. 64), who was also influential upon Harrison (Doty 2000, p. 338, Ackerman 1991, p. 6-7), Henri Bergson (Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 6), William Ridgeway (Gilber Murray, 'Excursus on

Dominant School consists of the following aspects: 1) Rituals deserve primary consideration in the study of religion over myths, 2) myths make up the spoken part of rituals and together they form a magical act, 3) myths, when read by themselves without ritual are also considered magical in nature, 4) the Eniautos-Daimon or year-spirit.

The first major aspect of the Ritual Dominant myth and ritual theory marks the first major departure from Frazer. While Frazer, like Tylor before him, believed that myths were derived from rituals, the Ritual Dominant scholars believed that they arose after already extant rituals, *ala* Robertson Smith, or came into being simultaneously. For example F. M. Cornford,<sup>198</sup> when discussing the origin of cosmological myths, states that myths have their roots in rituals. Harrison seems to have held both of the Ritual Dominant views at one time or another. In her earlier *Mythology and Monuments* Harrison finds that myths, at least Greek myths, stem from ritual and not poetic imagination.<sup>199</sup> However, in writing *Epilegomena*, she says that myth and ritual arise together and that they cannot be separated.<sup>200</sup> Gilbert Murray, in his obituary of Cornford expresses the most useful view of this school's theory: '... the basis of any sound study of Greek religion must no longer be the fictional and largely artificial figures of the Olympian gods, but the actual rites in which the religion expressed itself. . . .'<sup>201</sup> Regardless of which came first, the Ritual Dominant School, as its name suggests, believed that ritual that should be of primary importance in study.

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the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy' in *Themis*, by Jane Harrison (London: Merlin Press, 1963), p. 341) and A. W. Verrall (Ackerman, 'Cambridge Group', p. 2).

<sup>198</sup> 'A Ritual Basis for Hesiod's Theogony' in *Ritual and Myth: Robertson Smith, Frazer, Hooke, and Harrison*, ed. By Robert A. Segal (NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), p. 116.

<sup>199</sup> Ackerman, 'Cambridge Group', p. 7.

<sup>200</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 7. This is a sentiment shared by Hooke (ibid).

<sup>201</sup> Quoted in Robert L. Fowler, 'Gilbert Murray: Four (Five) Stages of Greek Religion' in *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered: Proceedings of the First Oldfather Conference, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*, ed. by William M. Calder III (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), p. 79.

The second part of this form of the myth and ritual theory takes up Frazer's idea that rituals, which play out and are explained by parts of myths, are magical in nature. Harrison presents this idea in her analysis of the 'Hymn of the Kouretes', which she sees as being the part of a ritual that is enacted dramatically,<sup>202</sup> and that the ritual performers, the Kouretes, 'have all manner of magical capacities.'<sup>203</sup> Harrison refers to such dramatic rituals as 'dromenon', a dramatic ritual that is not simply done 'but re-done or pre-done with magical intent'<sup>204</sup> and that myths are the plot of these dromenan.<sup>205</sup>

The Cambridge Ritualists went beyond Frazer's idea of myth and ritual as magic. For this school not only are myths, when performed in rituals, magic, but the reading of myth by itself is seen as a magical act.<sup>206</sup> On this Harrison says 'In the religious sense a myth is not merely a word spoken; it is a re-utterance or pre-utterance, it is a focus of emotion, and uttered as we have seen collectively or at least with collective sanction . . . a myth becomes practically a story of magical intent and potency.'<sup>207</sup> Hooke, fully in agreement with Harrison on this point, says that '[t]he spoken work had the efficacy of an act . . . .'<sup>208</sup>

So, unlike in Frazer's theory of myth and ritual, this version of the theory gives myth its own power, one that is not reliant upon myth's coinciding with ritual enactment. Further, myths are here seen not simply as explanations of natural phenomenon since the ancients 'were not occupied with general questions concerning

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<sup>202</sup> Jane Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, (London, England: Merlin Press, 1963), p. 19.

<sup>203</sup> p. 26.

<sup>204</sup> p. xv.

<sup>205</sup> p. 331.

<sup>206</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 7.

<sup>207</sup> p. 330.

<sup>208</sup> p. 205.

the world but with certain practical and pressing problems of daily life,<sup>209</sup> such as in Tylor.

The final aspect of the Ritual Dominant School's myth and ritual theory is another advancement on Frazer. Based on Frazer's idea of the corn-spirit Harrison developed her theory of the Eniautos-Daimon or year-spirit, an idea of which Murray would become a staunch proponent.<sup>210</sup> Unlike Frazer's corn-spirit, which Harrison found to be inadequate,<sup>211</sup> the Eniautos-Daimon included 'not only vegetation, but the whole world-process of decay, death, and renewal'.<sup>212</sup> In this will be found numerous similarities with the Wiccan concept of the Holly King and the Oak King, a theme that is also central to several of TOSC's Sabbat rituals. This will be discussed in chapters four and five and six of this thesis. The Eniautos-Daimon also differs from Frazer's idea of the corn-spirit in that it is not inextricably bound to the divine king; it instead has greater or lesser importance for different theories.<sup>213</sup>

#### **D: Concluding Thoughts on Myth and Ritual Theory**

Of the three theories presented here those of Frazer and Harrison, and by extension the Ritual Dominant School of which she was a part, are of primary concern to this study and will be taken up again and analysed not in relation to their views on ancient religions but in relation to the modern magical and religious practices of TOSC. The views presented by Frazer and the Ritual Dominant School are in many ways similar. Both represent the convergence of myth and ritual as a type of magic,

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<sup>209</sup> Hooke, p. 204.

<sup>210</sup> Ackerman, 'Cambridge Group', p. 11; Folwer, pp. 89-90.

<sup>211</sup> p. xvii.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> For example, Harrison downplayed the role of the king in relation to the Eniautos-Daimon. Hooke, on the other hand, stresses the role (Segal's *Myth and Ritual*, p. 6), as is evident in his *Myth, Ritual and Kingship* (1958).



both theorize about a dying and reviving spirit, and both state that the study of ritual should take precedence over the study of myth.<sup>214</sup>

However, within the confines of these agreements there are also numerous and important differences. The primary difference focuses on the origins of myth. For the Ritual Dominant School myth either stems directly from ritual or pre-existent myths and rituals come together. For Frazer myths come first and rituals are formed from them. The Ritual Dominant School adds to the idea of magic previously presented and finds that myth, read even without the accompaniment of its connected ritual, has magical power. Finally while they both share the idea of a dying/reviving spirit or god Frazer's is solely one of vegetation and directly connected to the role of the divine king, an important concept for Frazer. For the Ritual Dominant School this spirit is the spirit of the cycle of the year, not just the vegetative aspect of that cycle, and, while it could be connected to the magical role of the divine king, it did not need to be.

The material above has summarised and presented a brief critique of the main theoretical stances that have been taken with regard to myth-ritual theory. This has given a broadly-based context in which to place TOSC's observed practices. Myth-ritual theory will be returned to chapter six of this thesis. It is in that chapter that the theories presented above will be applied to TOSC and their Sabbat rituals. It is also in chapter six that a new theory, or theories, of myth and ritual are developed. This proves to be necessary as the analyses of TOSC's rituals that take place in the next chapters demonstrate that these classical theories, though having been directly influential on the development of Wicca and Wicca-derived Paganisms and indirectly influential on TOSC, are not capable of adequately explaining TOSC's ritual praxes

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<sup>214</sup> However Frazer believed this not because ritual came before myth, as I have already demonstrated, but because rituals are, in his view, more conservative, thus changing less over time than do myths (Ackerman, *Myth and Ritual School*, pp. 55-6).

which have re-imagined and reinterpreted many of the concepts presented in these theories, especially those of Frazer and Harrison.

## **Chapter Four: Rituals and Celebrations**

The previous chapters have set the stage for the remainder of this thesis. In those chapters the main topics: the Temple of the Sacred Craft, Paganism, ritual, myth and myth and ritual theory, were introduced. The current chapter relies on the definitions previously developed as its basis. This chapter focuses on the actual Sabbat rituals enacted by TOSC between March of 2004 and December of 2005. As such the current chapter will act primarily as ethnography and will serve as the underpinnings upon which the theories and ideas of chapters five and six are based.

As described in the introduction the choice of covens to work with and study was greatly assisted by having access to a local coven that would allow me access to its ritual practices. It then remained to be determined what rituals to examine. In some ways this decision was made by TOSC itself; while the High Priest had a policy of having the coven's rituals open to the public, not all of the coven's rituals were open. Thus I had access to the eight Sabbats, or seasonal holidays, as well as rituals associated with the Full Moon. New Moon rituals were for coveners and potential coveners only; likewise initiation rituals would have also been off limits, though to my knowledge no initiations were performed during my time with TOSC. For these reasons I decided to focus upon the Sabbats, as from my experience they contained both a richer and more varied depth of mythological content than the Full Moon rituals. Other possible rituals, such as funerary services or weddings did not occur while I was working with TOSC, so there was no opportunity to examine these. While I would have been able to study these rituals through the means of the texts discussed above I felt that doing so would both overly enlarge the field that I was attempting to narrow as well as create a potentially unbalanced view of these rituals in relation to the seasonal rituals in which I was able to participate in.

However there is more than ethnography in this chapter. Utilizing Van Gennep's tripartite division of rituals, section one examines the opening and closing sections of TOSC's ritual outline, which will be introduced in below. The opening and closing section is then compared to the Pagan texts discussed in the introduction for similarities and influences. As the openings and closings of each Sabbat ritual were nearly identical they are here treated together. Section two treats the bodies or main sections of the individual Sabbat rituals. Later, chapters five and six will delve more deeply into the themes and contexts of these rituals and again it is those two chapters that bring the ethnography of the present chapter to the theories of ritual, myth and myth-ritual already discussed.

## **I. A General Ritual Outline**

Ostensibly, the irregularity of definitions of what rituals are, especially those that express a post-modern notion of complete freedom of expression, such as ari\_brigi's in chapter three, would lead to greatly differing forms of rituals amongst different Pagans. However, when moving to examine a specific type of ritual, such as those for celebrating the eight seasonal holidays or Sabbats, a curious homogeneity emerges.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be related to the reliance of Pagan authors on the ritual formats of British Wicca, and Magliocco writes that this framework was likely to have been initially outlined in a public manner by Gerald Gardner in *Witchcraft Today*, originally published in 1954,<sup>2</sup> though it is quite likely that this outline can be traced at least back to the Order of the Golden Dawn, which originated in the late

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see David Cheal, and Jane Leverick's, ('Working Magic in Neo-Paganism', *Journal of Ritual Studies*. 13 (1999), pp. 7-19), p. 10 and Sabinna Magliocco's (*Ritual is My Chosen Art Form: The Creation of Ritual as Folk Art among Contemporary Pagans, Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 101) ritual outline descriptions.

<sup>2</sup> *Ritual*, p. 101.

1800s. Thus, those Pagans who work in a tradition based on, or whose practice is developed from, Wicca, including groups such as TOSC, tend towards a Wiccan approach to Sabbat rituals, regardless of whether they have been trained in a coven or not. At this point we see a movement from an idea of what ritual is to a presentation of how rituals are.

Rituals that partake of this generalized structure can be approached in several ways. First they may be seen as expressing a tripartite structure related to the arrangement of van Gennep's *rite de passage*<sup>3</sup> with its distinct opening, main point and closing, sometimes described simply as the beginning, middle and end.<sup>4</sup> Each section contains one or more parts, though different traditions or styles of Pagan ritual vary in how each sub-part is considered. What follows is a generalized schema of Pagan ritual. This schema is derived from the textual sources discussed above and in relation to research done on the subject by Salomonsen, Cheal and Leverick and Magliocco.<sup>5</sup>

1. Grounding and Centering of the Participants
2. Purification and Consecration of the Ritual Space
3. Invocation of the Elements and Calling the Quarters
4. Invocation of Deities
5. Central Ritual Observance
6. Cakes and Ale
7. Thanking and Releasing of Deities
8. Banishing and Release of the Quarters
9. Grounding and Centring of the Participants

Despite the relative orthodoxy that this ritual structure appears to have achieved in Wicca as well as Revivalist Paganisms in general<sup>6</sup> there is much variation

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<sup>3</sup> Cheal and Leverick, p. 10; Magliocco, *Ritual*, p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> Magliocco, *Ritual*, p. 102.

<sup>5</sup> *Enchanted; Ritual*.

<sup>6</sup> This ritual format can be found not only in Wicca and derived religions but also Druidry, as evinced by the Druidic writings of Ross Nichols and his protégé Philip Carr-Gomm as well as the writings of the various Archdruids of the Ancient Order of Druids in America (e.g. the anonymous 'Solitary Grove Ritual', Ancient Order of Druids in America, *Solitary Grove Ritual*,

on this structure in both the over all schema as well as the individual parts, thus individual rituals may or may not contain every element or perform them in the same order.<sup>7</sup> Even the exact time at which the three points begins and ends is debatable; for instance it is arguable as to whether the invocation of the deities is part of the opening or middle point and conversely whether the thanking and releasing of the deities is part of the middle point or the closing. From a practical standpoint, however, that level of nuance does not appear to affect either the performance or efficacy of any given ritual. Also, while some, such as Buckland and the Farrars, generally advocate using the same opening and closing sections in every ritual, with the same ritual movements, calls and speeches used every time, this is not universal. For instance, while the general structure used by TOSC in their rituals was the same between rituals, the calls of the quarters or the invocations of the Goddess and God were often unscripted and performed in an *ad hoc* fashion, with the result of these parts of the ritual being unique.

## II: The Ritual Opening and Closing

The High Priest stepped into the centre of the candle-lit room. Gesturing with his athame, a large basket-hilted *main gauche*, he said in a strong voice “As above, so below.” The High Priestess and High Priest then consecrated water and incense. Walking around in a large circle the High Priestess recited a poem invoking the sea and the Mother Goddess. Following this the High Priest fumigated the circle with incense, invoking the Father God and fire. The High Priestess walked to the western part of the circle and welcomed those who wanted to enter. She marked a pentagram with oil on the forehead of everyone who approached and greeted them with a hug while saying “In the name of Kernunnos and Kerridwen, who dwells within you, welcome.” The quarters and elements were then called. Unlike some of the previous rituals, the quarter calls were scripted. Keith called the East, Mike called the South, Bear called the West, and Jen called the

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<http://www.aoda.org/articles/sgrove.htm>, (Ashland, OR: Ancient Order of Druids in America, Last Updated: 2005, Last Viewed: 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Cheal and Leverick, p. 10.

North. As usual the elements were called forth as spirits with particular qualities that could be given to those inside the circle.

Great Spirits of the East,  
Breath of the Gods, Blow!  
Be wind in our sails,  
Be Divine mind in ours.  
Be here in this hour!  
So Mote it Be!

As each quarter was called everyone in the circle turned towards the quarter and then welcomed the guardians of the quarter with a cry of "Hail and welcome!" After this the High Priestess and High Priest returned to the centre of the circle. The High Priest then invoked the Goddess as "Mother of Nature" and "Blessed Lady of the stars and the Moon" into the High Priestess. The High Priestess then invoked the God as "Father of all things, He that plants the seeds and nurtures Life," "God of Fertility and Fruitfulness," and "Blessed Lord of the blazing Sun" into the High Priest, ending the invocation by placing a horned mask upon his head.<sup>8</sup>

Having established a general outline for rituals in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus upon the first and last ritual phases, the opening and the closing. It will demonstrate how TOSC's rituals fit into the general ritual pattern common to Wicca, British, Eclectic or otherwise. As has been shown, the ritual opening consists of either three or four sections: grounding and centring, purification and consecration, invocation of the elements and calling the quarters and, depending on the author or the practitioner's perspective, the invocation of the deities. 'Grounding and centring' is either an implicit or explicit aspect of most, though not all, of the textual sources;<sup>9</sup> typically this part of a ritual was not utilized by TOSC, either at the beginning or end of the ritual, which was a source of frequent complaint from a number of the members of the group. Grounding typically consists of expelling any excess energy that those participating in the ritual have. Sometimes it also allows the participants to partake of the earth's own energy.<sup>10</sup> At other times it is seen as a way of removing excess energy

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<sup>8</sup> Field notes, 19 June, 2004, TOSC Summer Solstice ritual.

<sup>9</sup> See Section A below.

<sup>10</sup> Starhawk, *SD*, p. 74.

from the body.<sup>11</sup> Centring is often a psychological process whereby the practitioner becomes focused on the here and now and the ritual or other event at hand, though it may also focus on a literal centring of the body, especially the spine, along the bodies vertical midline.<sup>12</sup>

The purification and consecration of the ritual space or 'circle' does for the circle what grounding and centring does for the practitioner. That is to say it is understood to create a space that is magically and spiritually 'clean'<sup>13</sup> so that it can better be used in religious and/or magical rituals. Purification and consecration can focus on the magical, spiritual and physical cleanliness of the circle. The banishing nature of the purification is made explicit in some of the exorcisms employed in the creating of holy water. For instance part of the Farrars' consecration of holy water reads 'I exorcise thee, O creature of water, that thou cast out from thee all the impurities and uncleanness of the spirits of the world of phantasm; in the names of Cernunnos and Aradia'.<sup>14</sup>

Next, the invocation of the elements is understood to function to bring forth magical energies into the circle. While this may appear to undo the efforts of the previous section of the rituals this is not the case. The energies called upon and invoked during this section are not random or part of the natural background noise, that which is removed in the previous part of the ritual. Instead the practitioner understands these energies to be called forth on their, the practitioner's, terms. The calling of the quarters, which is sometimes an integrated part of the invocation of the elements, invokes or evokes certain types of spiritual entities to bare witness to and/or

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<sup>11</sup> RavenWolf, *BS*, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> Starhawk, *SD*, p. 74.

<sup>13</sup> As well as sometimes also physically clean. C.f. Douglas, *Purity*, pp. 40-3, who discusses the commonality of the link between cleanliness and sacredness in many religious traditions.

<sup>14</sup> *ES*, p. 37.



help protect the ritual space and the proceedings within it.<sup>15</sup> This often involves calling upon spirits associated with the four elements of air, fire, water and earth and the cardinal directions with which they are associated. Sometimes the elements themselves, anthropomorphized or not, are called on. While the written text of TOSC's rituals contained specific invocations the practitioners were invited to invent their own, often impromptu. The final part, the invocation of the deities, continues to invoke spiritual beings into the circle. In this case the beings are the Goddess and the God themselves; the two central deific personifications found within Wicca. Sometimes they are called simply as the Goddess and the God and other times specific deity names from the various pantheons of pre-Christian religion are employed. Sometimes both specific and general names will be utilized in the invocations. The Goddess and the God may simply be asked to witness or bless the ritual or may be invoked into one of the ritual officers in a type of divine possession. TOSC's invocations of the Goddess and the God, in contrast to the invocations of the elements, always followed the same script.

### **A. Grounding and Centring**

As was previously noted, TOSC's seasonal rituals did not typically include an explicit time for grounding and centring within the ritual, the first step listed in the general outline. This does not automatically remove TOSC's practices from the outline discussed in the previous chapter; neither the Farrars nor Buckland include a specific time for grounding within their written rituals. Such an absence does not necessarily mean that this step is not taken within these authors' actual practice but may simply indicate that it is not considered to be part of the formal ritual process.

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<sup>15</sup> This is explicit in some of the calls employed. For instance the Farrars' call of the east reads 'Ye Lords of the Watchtowers of the East, ye Lords of Air; I do summon, stir and call you up, to witness our rites and to guard the Circle' (*ES*, p. 39).

In previous experiences with modern ceremonial magic it was found that this was often the case. A formal grounding and centring of the ritual participants would happen before the opening of the ritual, however in the written form of the ritual this part was generally not included. Be this as it may, in the case of TOSC not only was there no time explicitly given for this process but neither were any of the ritual participants observed to ground or centre. Instead, most participants, excepting the High Priestess and High Priest, remained in the living room, which was adjacent to the ritual space, often socializing until the High Priestess and High Priest actually began the ritual in the neighbouring dining room.

## **B. Purification and Consecration**

The purification and consecration of the circle was always the first part of the TOSC rituals I attended and, in examining the ritual scripts provided by the High Priest dating back to 2001, this appears to have generally been the case. An example of this process is described in the excerpt from my field notes at the beginning of the section.

Rituals would usually start with the High Priest and High Priestess alone in the ritual room, with the lights off in the adjacent room and turned low or off in the ritual room as well. The High Priest would take his athame or ritual knife, in this case a large, ornate, *main gouche*, and trace the perimeter of the circle, starting and finishing in the East and moving clockwise.

The High Priestess, using a besom or special ritual broom, would then sweep along the outer perimeter of the ritual room, also starting in the East. However, the floor is never actually touched by the broom's bristles, suggesting the sweeping has a symbolic or magical aspect to it. As the High Priestess sweeps the circle the High Priest lights a candle on the main altar located to the South of the room. He would

then move to the centre of the room, athame in hand, and while gesturing first to the ceiling with the athame, and then to the floor, say in a resounding voice 'As above, so below', a phrase whose origin is not in modern Paganism but in Greek Hermetism.<sup>16</sup> Both the High Priestess and High Priest would then return to the Northern altar. The High Priestess would then consecrate water and salt, reciting short speeches either commanding evil to leave the water or describing the purity of the salt, to create holy water, which she then sprinkled around the circle. The High Priest would follow this by wafting incense around the circle while saying:

By fire and smoke do I invoke,  
Our Father from above.  
Fill this rite with your might,  
With sacredness and love!<sup>17</sup>

After the circle has been purified and consecrated with water and incense but before the invocation of the quarters the High Priestess would move to the place where the other participants would be waiting to enter the circle. She would have with her a small vial of oil. As each participant approached she would mark a pentagram on their forehead, just over the brow where the mystical 'third eye' is supposed to be located. After this she hugs the participant and welcomes them into the circle saying 'In the name of Kernunnos and Kerridwen, who dwells within you', thus serving to not only bring the covener into the circle but also to elicit their active participation in the ritual.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The tract from which this is derived is the 'Emerald Tablet of Hermes', which has been interpreted by Medieval and Renaissance occultists as being a treatise on alchemy (Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.134). A translation from the Latin of the section from which this paraphrase is derived reads 'What is below is like what is above, and what is above is like what is below, to accomplish the wonders of the one thing' (Richard Smoley, 'The Emerald Tablet: A New Translation of the most Celebrated Text of Western Magic', *Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions*, Summer (1996), 17-19, (p.18)).

<sup>17</sup> This formula was used in every TOSC ritual I attended, not only the Sabbats but the Full Moon Esbats as well. It originated in Beyerl's *A Wiccan Bardo* (1989), a text that both the High Priestess and High Priest had mentioned as being influential in the development of their rituals.

<sup>18</sup> Field notes. This statement was heard in nearly all of TOSC's Sabbats.

### **C. Invocation the Elements and Calling the Quarters**

The final part of the opening phase is the 'calling of the quarters'. Each quarter of the circle is considered to be associated with one of the four elements, earth, air, fire and water as well as the beings, called elementals or guardians, which inhabit or are part of the elemental realm in question. While there are a variety of element-to-direction associations TOSC employed the most common of them: East = air, West = water, South = fire, North = earth. During the calling of the quarters segment each quarter is invoked or called upon to be present. This is understood to have the effect of bringing into the circle the energies of the element in question and/or the presence of entities that may be associated with the elements.

The precise way in which the quarters were called in TOSC's seasonal rituals varied between rituals. While in every ritual calls were written in the scripts provided to the ritual officers, in some rituals the scripted calls were not used and the officers created ad hoc calls during the ritual. In other rituals, such as the Summer Solstice ritual excerpted above, the pre-scripted calls were used. More commonly each ritual would see a mixture of ad hoc and pre-scripted calls being utilized by the officers and this was generally encouraged by the High Priest who had expressed the opinion that pre-scripted and rehearsed ritual components caused the rituals to feel artificial to him. The use of *ad hoc* calls allowed the officers to express their own understandings of the elements which would typically reinforce those of other members while utilizing the symbol system present in the circle. As will be discussed in chapter six this suggests the participatory and communicative nature of these rituals.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft always began their calls starting with the East and the element of air. All present would turn to face the East as the High Priest circled from the main altar to a small altar in the East and then lit the candles that

were present there. He would then stand behind the ritual officer assigned to that quarter and raise his arms in was to be understood as an 'invoking' gesture. The officer would then read, recite or improvise an invocation to the element:

Great Spirits of the East,  
Breath of the Gods, Blow!  
Be wind in our sails,  
Be Divine mind in ours.  
Be here in this hour!  
So Mote it Be!<sup>19</sup>

All present would then loudly repeat 'So Mote it Be!' or 'Hail and Welcome!'

All would then turn to the South and the High Priest would light the candles there and stand behind the quarter's officer as he did in the East. The officer would then make their call to the element of fire:

Great Spirits of the South,  
Energy of the Gods, Empower!  
Be hot within us.  
Be passion in our hearts.  
Be here in this hour!  
So Mote it Be!<sup>20</sup>

Again all present would repeat the final line and all would turn to the West and then finally to the North with the same process being repeated in each quarter.

Occasionally, depending on the officer and their individual experience, a pentagram, symbolic of the five elements, would be traced in the air in the direction of the element being invoked, by the ritual officer.

#### **D. Invocation of Deities**

It is problematic to orient the invocation or calling of deities segment of ritual neatly within the tripartite *rite de passage* structure. It is alternatively seen as either

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<sup>19</sup> TOSC Summer Solstice Ritual, 2004. While impromptu calls would vary in specific content from ritual to ritual they all took a form similar to the calls presented here; calling on entities or spirits associated with the element at hand, describing the nature of the element and then asking or command it to be present.

<sup>20</sup> Temple of the Sacred Craft, Summer Solstice Ritual, 2004.

part of the opening<sup>21</sup> or as part of the middle section or body of the ritual.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that this stage represents a liminal phase between the opening and body ritual segments. Such liminal phases are, of necessity, of an ambiguous nature and deal with such liminal figures such as deities, who are either neither 'here' nor 'there' or at once both 'here' and 'there.'<sup>23</sup> Which gods are invoked will not only differ from coven to coven but may also differ from ritual to ritual. For instance, during the 2004 Samhain ritual hosted by TOSC the gods called upon were Hecate and Herne while 2005's Ostara ritual focused upon Hades and Demeter. Within the Wiccan-based theology employed by TOSC all of the female goddesses were spoken of as being aspects of a singular great Goddess while male deities are considered to be aspects or manifestations of a singular great God.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of this part of the ritual is to attune either the practitioner, in the case of a solitary Pagan, or the presiding Priestess and sometimes Priest, in the case of a coven, to the 'powers that are the Goddess and the God.'<sup>25</sup>

TOSC's approach to this was to utilize speeches of invocation and a certain amount of dramatics. First, the High Priest would invoke the Goddess, by one or many names, into the High Priestess:

Lady of the Harvest,  
Goddess Mother,  
Bighid, Goddess of Transformation  
Keeper of the Cauldron, Cerridwen.  
As the balance of nature starts its shift from Mother to Crone,  
We look within to partake of the knowledge and wisdom you have given to us.  
We call upon you to help guide the way.  
So Mote it Be.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cunningham (*SP*), the Farrars (*ES*), RavenWolf (*BS*), and Starhawk (*SD*).

<sup>22</sup> Buckland.

<sup>23</sup> C.f. Victor Turner, *Ritual Process*, (NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1997), p. 95.

<sup>24</sup> Similar theologies are found in the writings of Buckland, Cunningham (*SP*), the Farrars<sup>24</sup> (*Witches Goddess, Witches God*) and RavenWolf (*BS*).

<sup>25</sup> Cunningham, *SP*, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> Temple of the Sacred Craft, Mabon Ritual, 2004.

The High Priestess would then invoke the God into the High Priest:

Lord of the Harvest,  
Great Father, Horned One,  
Great Warrior, Cernunnos  
Now is the time of the second harvest,  
When the sun enters his waning time,  
Before the last rays of light descend behind the night  
Illuminate our path to our inner being.  
We call upon you to help guide the way.  
So Mote it Be.<sup>27</sup>

The High Priest would typically kneel before the High Priestess as she made her invocation. At the same time the High Priestess would hold an ornate horned helmet over the High Priest's head, finally placing it on his head as she completed the invocation.

### **E. The Closing**

The last four sections that make up the closing phase of a ritual have the aim of putting the ritual space into a state similar to what it was before the ritual began; an ordinary space. TOSC's rituals invariably ended in the same manner; in effect an abbreviated reversal of the opening was performed, though without a re-consecration or purification of the circle.

The first part of the closing phase, corresponding to point six of the general ritual outline, is 'cakes and ale'. While Cheal and Leverick and Magliocco discuss a similar outline the 'Cakes and Ale' section is missing from both. Magliocco<sup>28</sup> does discuss the Great Rite of British Wicca, but also does not include Cakes and Ale, which is an explicit part of many of the rituals by the popular Pagan authors. TOSC combined aspects of the Great Rite and Cakes and Ale into a single rite whose emphasis appeared to be on the sharing of food rather than the Great Rite. Much as

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<sup>27</sup> Temple of the Sacred Craft, Mabon Ritual, 2004. These two invocations are found in a section that the ritual script entitled 'Invoking the God and Goddess'.

<sup>28</sup> *Ritual*, p. 103.

with the invocation of the deities that was discussed in the earlier in this chapter, this part of the ritual is liminal in nature, belonging neither fully to the body of the ritual nor to the closing. Cakes and Ale finished the body of almost every ritual held by TOSC and simultaneously marked the beginning of a ritual's end. TOSC's Cakes and Ale rite combines a rite known as the 'Great Rite' from British Wicca with a blessed and consecrated repast, usually of bread and wine rather than cakes and ale.

The Great Rite is a symbolic or actual union of the God and Goddess through the persons of the High Priestess and High Priest or others chosen for the role. In the 'symbolic' Great Rite this union is accomplished, after a speech concerning the nature of the 'ancient altar, at which in days past all worshipped'<sup>29</sup> by means of the High Priest lowering the point of his athame into a chalice of wine held by the High Priestess, from which everyone then drinks. It is this symbolic form of the Great Rite from which TOSC modelled their own. Their version, however, is much abbreviated in comparison to what the Farrars present. The High Priest takes up the athame and dips its blade it into a chalice of wine that is held by High Priestess. They then recite the following formula, with the High Priestess speaking first, the High Priest second, and they recite the last line together:

As the athame is to the male,  
And the cup is to the female,  
And conjoined it brings forth blessedness.

The High Priest then picks up a basket of bread from the altar and makes a speech of thanksgiving that would vary from ritual to ritual. He then would take the basket around to each person in the circle, feeding them a single piece of bread much as a Catholic priest might feed a parishioner the host. After each has had a piece of bread the High Priestess would pick up the chalice of wine used in the symbolic great rite

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<sup>29</sup> *ES*, p. 51. The speech continues with 'For in old time, Woman was the altar,' suggesting a type of embodiment as well as sexual activity.



and make a similar blessing and prayer of thanksgiving over it. Then, much as the High Priest had done, she would move around the circle allowing everyone a drink from the chalice. The High Priest and High Priestess would then feed one another bread and wine, finishing the rite.

The releasing and thanking the Goddess and God would follow cakes and ale.<sup>30</sup> The order in which the deities were thanked and released and who did the thanking and releasing of which deity, would vary between rituals. The methods employed here, much like the methods employed for the invocation of the deities, consisted of a speech or prayer and a limited amount of dramatics, mainly the High Priestess removing the horned helmet from the High Priest's head while he knelt before her as the God was released from him.

Following this the elements of the four quarters were also released or banished, corresponding to point seven of the general ritual outline. This was the one time in any given ritual that people might move in a counter clockwise direction. This part mimicked in reverse the calling of the quarters previously discussed. Instead of starting in the East and invoking each quarter and its inhabitants moving clockwise around the circle the High Priest would start in the North and the ritual officer there would make a speech of thanks and release:

Guardians of the watchtowers of the north, return now to the Earth where worms burrow deeper and seeds nestle awaiting the long sleep of Winter. Take with you our blessings and thanks.

Hail and farewell!<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> This part of the ritual was sometimes placed under the heading of 'Thanks to the Lady & Lord' in TOSC ritual scripts; such as it is in the 2005 Mabon ritual. Other rituals label this as 'Release the Gods'. If there was no cakes and ale the release of the deities would follow directly after the section five.

<sup>31</sup> Temple of the Sacred Craft, Samhain Ritual, 2004. Not all of the ritual scripts begin the banishing of the elements in the North, some say to start in the East and move clockwise around the circle as in the calling of the quarters. However, in practice, this is not what occurred.

The High Priest would then snuff out the candles burning there and move to the West, repeating the process with the ritual officer there before moving to the South and finally the East. Typically no pentagrams were traced during this part of the ritual, even if one was traced in the calling of the quarters.

### **III: The Sabbats**

Before delving into the various rituals associated with the eight Sabbats it is helpful to have a basic and general understanding of what these holidays mean to those who celebrate them. As with almost all the other aspects of Paganism previously discussed there is the problem that a multiplicity of meanings for these holidays appear in the numerous Pagan texts available on the market.<sup>32</sup> However, within the context of American Eclectic Wicca, and as seen within the practices of TOSC, a homogeneity of both ritual practice and understanding of holidays bordering on orthodoxy emerges. This appears to be related to the reliance of Pagan authors on the ritual formats of British Wicca, especially as presented by the Farrars. Thus, those Pagans who work in a tradition based on, or whose practice is developed from, Wicca, including groups such as TOSC, tend towards a Wiccan approach to Sabbat rituals, regardless of whether they have been trained in a coven or have had to rely upon auto-didacticism in their Pagan education.

The Sabbats are holy days that divide the year into eight seasonal sections. The four 'Greater Sabbats', as both the Farrars and Buckland<sup>33</sup> refer to them, are Samhain, Imbolc, Bealtaine, and Lughnasadh.<sup>34</sup> These holidays are considered by modern Pagans to be agriculturally based and thematically focused upon the harvest

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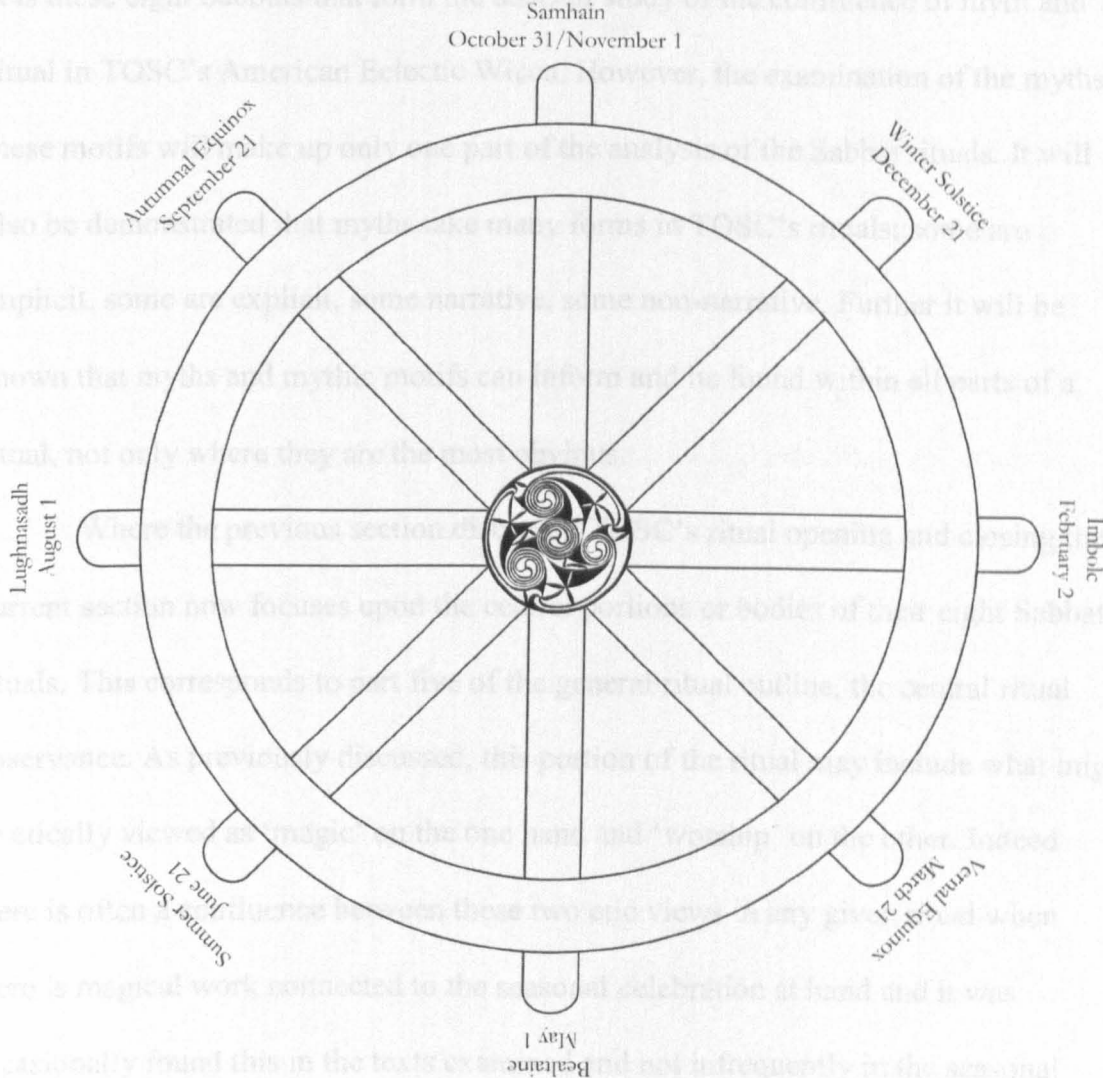
<sup>32</sup> For instance, even in a single book such as *CW*, a single holiday such as Imbolc is given multiple meanings such as fertility, a time for the sweeping out of old things and the beginning of new ones, or the pre-planting season (p. 72).

<sup>33</sup> *ES*, pp. 13-14; *CW*, p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> The names of these Sabbats are Irish in origin. Numerous spellings of the names of these Sabbats exist; the spellings here are consistent with modern Pagan usage and correct Irish spelling.

cycle. The ‘Lesser Sabbats’<sup>35</sup> are considered to be solar-based holidays consisting of the summer and winter soltices and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes.

Diagram 2:  
The Eight-Fold Wheel of the Year



Two things will be discernable from the following descriptions of the holydays themselves. The first is an apparent confusion concerning the role of the God throughout the seasonal cycle. For instance the God, in varying forms, dies and is reborn numerous times throughout the year, often without any sort of rebirth in between deaths. However, it will be shown that there is in fact no confusion but instead a complex and differing but interrelated and interweaving mythic themes

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

present throughout the cycle of the seasons. Second, and as can be perceived through the above, myths are implicit in the motifs of the eight Pagan holidays. It will also be demonstrated that myths are frequently explicit in those holidays' celebratory rituals. It is these eight Sabbats that form the basis of study of the confluence of myth and ritual in TOSC's American Eclectic Wicca. However, the examination of the myths in these motifs will make up only one part of the analysis of the Sabbat rituals. It will also be demonstrated that myths take many forms in TOSC's rituals; some are implicit, some are explicit, some narrative, some non-narrative. Further it will be shown that myths and mythic motifs can inform and be found within all parts of a ritual, not only where they are the most obvious.

Where the previous section discussed TOSC's ritual opening and closing the current section now focuses upon the central portions or bodies of their eight Sabbat rituals. This corresponds to part five of the general ritual outline, the central ritual observance. As previously discussed, this portion of the ritual may include what might be etically viewed as 'magic' on the one hand and 'worship' on the other. Indeed there is often a confluence between these two etic views in any given ritual when there is magical work connected to the seasonal celebration at hand and it was occasionally found this in the texts examined and not infrequently in the seasonal rituals of TOSC. However, it should be remembered that while some Pagans may view magic and worship as distinct categories this is not true for all Pagans, who may see magic as a type of prayer and therefore a form of worship.<sup>36</sup> This lack of reification of magic and religion in Wicca is touched upon by Ronald Hutton,

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<sup>36</sup> C.f. Cunningham *SP*, pp. 5-6, see also Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 33-4, who critiques James Frazer's perpetuation and development of this idea.

‘Paganism and Polemic: The Debate Over the Origins of Modern Pagan Witchcraft’, and is reflected even in Medieval Christian esoteric practices.<sup>37</sup>

Half of the Revivalist Pagan ritual year is composed of the Greater Sabbats; Samhain, Imbolc, Bealtaine and Lughnasadh. These Sabbats are understood to have focused on agricultural cycle,<sup>38</sup> an understanding that is continued in the rituals employed in their celebration.<sup>39</sup> Some writers, such as Buckland, distinguish between the Greater and Lesser Sabbats as theoretical categories and thus discuss them as completely distinct groups. Others, such as Cunningham the Farrars and Starhawk<sup>40</sup> do not. While there are distinct motifs to be found in these groupings I have found that this distinction is artificial on the level of practice, at least as observed among TOSC. Instead the Sabbats, in the Eclectic Wiccan context in which I am working, are viewed not as distinct groupings but as part of a unified whole, and this view appears to be echoed in the writings of Cunningham, the Farrars and Starhawk. Further, as the Sabbats occur in a consecutive order and often build upon the motifs of the previous season, continuing the idea of the circle of the year discussed in above, this thesis presents all eight Sabbats in chronological order as opposed to grouping them according to the categories of ‘Greater’ or ‘Lesser’. The following descriptions of TOSC’s Sabbat rituals occur after the opening phase described in the previous section.

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<sup>37</sup> *Folklore*, 111 (2000), pp. 106; Kieckhefer 2000, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Cunningham, *SP*, p. 63, Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> This understanding is also held by Celtic scholars, such as Miranda J. Green (*The World of the Druids*, (NY: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1997), pp. 34-5) and scholar and Celtic Reconstructionist Alexi Kondraetiv (*The Apple Branch: A Path to Celtic Ritual*, (NY: Citadel Press, 2003), p.109).

<sup>40</sup> *SP*; *ES*; *SD*.

## **A. Samhain – 31 October 2004**

Samhain is celebrated on October thirty-first or November first. This holiday is often considered to be the Pagan New Year as well as the beginning of the dark or winter half of the year. Further, the festival of Samhain is a time for the remembrance and celebration of both the recently dead and one's ancestors in general. It is considered a time when the 'veil' that separates this world of the mundane and the preternatural otherworld of fairies, ghosts and gods is thinnest, allowing nearly free passage between the two realms. It is also time for the removal of old weaknesses.

The central portion of TOSC's Samhain ritual began with a speech made by Eric, the High Priest. While the tone for the ritual was set in the invocation of the deities by calling on the 'Dark Mother, ruler of the night, Goddess of death and rebirth' and the 'Dark Father, aged Consort of the Crone, Lord of the Underworld' the High Priest's speech is more specific, not simply telling those who were present what Samhain is about in general but telling us what that night would actually entail. He explained that the night was a time to remember those who have passed away and he and the High Priestess had set up an altar where those present could light candles in memory of those who had passed. We would also have time, after the ritual was concluded, to 'feast and celebrate the lives of those who have gone before us.'

The High Priest did not only speak of what would occur that evening; he also spoke specifically of the overall mythic motif of the celebration and ritual. He spoke of the 'Sun God Lugh' taking his place as 'Arawn, the Dark Lord of the underworld.' The descent of the Sun God into the underworld would both allow for his taking care of the souls of the dead and for his preparation for rebirth at Bealtaine as the Sun God once again. We are reminded that Samhain is the time of the Dark Father and Dark Mother and that now is a time to be reminded of our physical mortality. We are also

to remember that, like Lugh, our soul is immortal and will be reborn again after physical death. Finally we are told that the harvest, the beginning of which would have been celebrated during Lughnasadh, is now over and that, finally, this is a time to thank the gods for their bounty.

The High Priestess, Rachel, then concluded the speech begun by Eric. She told of us the Dark Mother who was taking the throne from the Dark Father as he descended into the underworld and that she would bless her children before the coming of the harsh winter. She told us of how the Dark Mother was once a maiden and then mother of the earth. The Dark Mother, we were told, is with us through our entire lives; as we are born, grow up, grow old and die she is with us, and after death she sends us on our way to be with the Dark Lord in the underworld. After a pause she then instructed that we would move around the circle while chanting. As we did so we would pass by the ancestor altar and have an opportunity to leave our thoughts with them and to light a candle if we desired to. While circling around the room we chanted the following:

Hekate, Kerridwen  
Dark Mother, take us in.

Hekate, Kerridwen,  
Let us be reborn!

After everyone had an opportunity place an offering or spend a moment of reflection at the altar the circle and chanting came to a halt. The High Priestess and High Priest then took up a plate of food from the altar and consecrated it as food to honour the dead, with hopes that the spirits of the dead would enjoy it as they had enjoyed life. They placed the food on the ancestor's altar and moved back to the main altar.

The High Priestess, speaking as the Goddess, then told us of her desire to be remembered even in the dark of the year and that we should now tell her our joys.

From the altar she took a basket of leaves that had been collected prior to the ritual. The Priest, speaking as the God, spoke of the passing of spring and summer and the coming of the winter and that we should now tell him of our fears and sorrows. The High Priestess then moved clockwise around the circle and each person told of a joy they had in the year and she then gave them a leaf. The High Priestess followed, moving counter clockwise around the circle, and with the exception of a few people, all who were present shared a fear or sorrow they had from the previous year. As they did so they placed their leaf in a basket the High Priest was carrying. The ritual then moved to the 'cakes and ale' section and the closing, as discussed in the previous chapter.

## **B. The Winter Solstice (Yule) – 18 December 2004**

The Winter Solstice, or Yule, is celebrated around December twenty-first, though the exact date varies every year. At Yule the simultaneous death and rebirth of the God,<sup>41</sup> represented as the sun<sup>42</sup> or the Divine Child,<sup>43</sup> is celebrated. This motif is seen as being continued in the celebration of the birth of Christ on December 25th. Also at this time the God, in the form of the God of 'dark half' of the year dies and goes to reign in the underworld while the God in the form of the 'light half' of the year beings his reign on Earth. This, along with the other solstices, marks but one point in a continual cycle of birth, death and rebirth of the God in the form of the sun. This cycle continues throughout the lesser Sabbats.

In TOSC's 2004 Yule ritual the Goddess and God are invoked by numerous names. For the Goddess these included Artemis, Astarte, Aphroditie, Cerridwen and

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<sup>41</sup> In Wicca and related Paganisms the God is considered to be the deific archetype that every male deity from every culture is ultimately based upon or is an aspect of.

<sup>42</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 137, Cunningham, *SP*, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> RavenWolf, *SB*, p. 34.



Isis. The names the God was called by included Pan, Manannan Mac Lyr, Odin, Loki, Zeus and others. Unlike the rituals I have described, the invocations of the deities did not appear to set the thematic tone for the rest of the ritual.

The central part of the ritual began in relative darkness, with only a single candle burning upon the central altar and with a single candle lit on the four altars in the four quarters of the circle. When all were ready, the High Priestess called for the people who were taking on the roles of the Holly King and the Oak King, in this case Mike and Keith. These two came forward, each holding their athames and crowned with leaves. The High Priestess directed them towards the centre of the circle so that they faced one another. While this was happening the High Priest lay down on the floor in the Western quarter of the circle and laid a black shawl over his head as though he were dead.

When ready the Holly King addressed the High Priestess saying 'My brother and I have been arrayed for battle, but where is our Lord, the Sun?' To this the High Priest, still covered by the black shawl, replied that the Sun is dead. The High Priestess, acting as the Goddess, then covered her own head with a dark shawl as though in mourning and then recited the following lamentation:

Return O return, O God of the Sun.

God of the light return!  
Thine enemies have fled, there are no more.  
O lovely helper return, return  
Return to thy sister, thy wife, who loveth thee!  
O my brother, my consort, my love,  
Return; return, when I see thee not,  
My heart grieves for thee!  
Gods and men both weep for thee!  
God of the Sun return,  
Return once more to thy wife,  
Thy sister, who loveth thee!<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> This lamentation is based on a similar, though longer, speech found in the Farrars' (*ES*, pp. 147-8) Winter Solstice ritual.

After her lamentation the High Priestess circumambulated around the circle several times as though looking for the deceased Sun God, eventually stopping in the West and embracing the prone High Priest. The coveners who had a printed copy of the ritual then called upon the High Priestess, calling her the Queen of heaven and earth, to bring the 'Child of Promise'. In response she drew the black shawl from the High Priest's face and pulled him to his feet. She then made the following calls, explicating the motif of the season:

Golden sunshine in the morn,  
The Sun God is reborn.  
Spring come fast, all sorrow past,  
Blessed be the Goddess!

Now in the depths of winter,  
The waning of the year is accomplished.  
And the reign of the Holly King is over.  
The Sun God is reborn and  
The waxing of the year begins. The Oak King must slay his brother the  
Holly King  
And rule over the land until the height of summer,  
When his brother shall rise again.

In response to the High Priest's words the Holly King and Oak King engage in mock combat until the Holly King is forced to his knees in submission. The Holly King is then blindfolded and eventually led to a corner of the room. She then tells the coveners that the spirit of the Holly King is now gone from us, awaiting the time that he will be reborn and rule again with the turning of the year.<sup>45</sup>

After the High Priestess' speech the now risen High Priest called out 'Let the Midwinter fires shine forth!' at which time the Oak King lit a candle in a cauldron on the main altar. The High Priestess then momentarily left the circle, returning with her baby son in her arms as High Priest called out 'A child is born!' She circumambulated

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<sup>45</sup> The actual speech given by the High Priestess is again based on a similar speech found in the Farrars' Yule ritual (*ES*, pp. 149-50).

around the circle to the main altar and declared the birth of the 'Child of Promise', announcing the divine lineage of the Child through the Great Mother and Sun God. All present were then told by her to '[s]et aside all darkness and tears, and look instead to the coming year.' After this the ritual closed with Cakes and Ale and the usual closing sequence.

### **C. Imbolc – 5 February 2005**

Celebrated on February second, Imbolc is especially related to the pre-Christian Irish goddess Brigid. This holiday is associated with the recovery of the Goddess<sup>46</sup> after giving birth to the God at the Winter Solstice. Imbolc marks the beginning of spring and the earth becoming fertile once again. As the 'Feast of Lights'<sup>47</sup> Imbolc is the second of the Greater Sabbats. During this ritual's invocation of the deities the Goddess was called by the name Brigid, the Irish pagan goddess who is traditionally associated with this holiday. The God, however, was not called by any name but only as 'Bright Lord'. As in the Samhain ritual the mood is partially set in descriptions of the Goddess and God that were contained in their invocations. The Goddess is called from her healing slumber, referring to the Earth's apparent slumber during winter, and the God, again representing the sun, is told that we feel his growing power in the lengthening of days. Thus the mood is set for a ritual that marks the beginning of the spring season.

After the invocation the High Priest gave a short speech describing more explicitly the nature of the holiday. We were told that Imbolc is the 'celebration of the first signs of spring', a time for the first births of livestock. It is also a time when the goddess Brigid, who is described as a triple goddess of smiths, healers and bards, and

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<sup>46</sup> In Wicca and related Paganisms the Goddess is considered to be the deific archetype that every female deity from every culture is ultimately based upon or is an aspect of.

<sup>47</sup> Buckland, p. 71.

the young Sun, who was reborn at Yule, are honored. Our attention was then drawn towards a bowl of water that was on the main altar. Each of the quarter officers read a prayer of praise related to one of the four elements and then placed a rock in the bowl of water. Each prayer revolved around the idea of the way in which the earth sustains us and brings forth life.

Following the prayers we were all instructed to sit down and make ourselves comfortable for a guided visualization led by the High Priest. We were first instructed to relax our bodies and our minds. Again the season was described to us, but in greater visual detail. We were told to 'extend [our] senses beyond the walls [of the room] to the world outside'. We were to breathe in the crisp outdoor air, see the dark skies and feel the cold wind on our cheeks. The dark aspects of winter were further brought to our minds; it was a time described through the ideas of sleep, cold and ice with rebirth into the sun but a distant memory.

However the descriptions then changed and the coming of spring weather was brought to mind. We were told that it was a time for transformation, of the promise of new growth. More than that it was the time of Brigid, a time when she would inspire bards, smiths and healers; that fertility and creativity would begin to flow into the world again. We were then focused on fire: the fire of hearths, of cooking fires, of smithies, of desire and the fire of creativity, life and transformation, fires that would transform winter to spring. After we were given time to visualize this change through fire we were then instructed to bring our senses back to our bodies and, after time, we opened our eyes and stood once again. After Cakes and Ale the ritual was closed in the usual manner.

#### **D. The Vernal Equinox (Ostara) - 20 March 2004**

The spring equinox, or Ostara, is celebrated on or about March twenty-first, though the precise date varies from year to year. This equinox celebrates a time when the sun, though in balance between light and darkness, is in its strength; it is a time when light is about to triumph over darkness, as witnessed by the lengthening of the days. At this time the Goddess, in the form of the earth, awakens from her winter's sleep and the God, in the form of the sun, is growing in his strength.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Ostara 2004 Ostara ritual was the same ritual they performed in 2003 and 2005 Ostara, which was the last ritual with Eric as High Priest and Rachel as High Priestess. As with the rituals discussed in both this and the previous chapter the ritual officers begin to explicate its motif during the invocation of the deities and, to a lesser extent, the invocation of the quarters. The Goddess was invoked as Demeter, who was described as 'the life within the earth, the nourisher and bringer of Spring'. The God was left unnamed and instead called the 'Bright God' who is 'the light in our darkness that is the resurrection from the sleep of winter.' After this the Goddess in the form of Demeter was invoked into the High Priestess as the nourisher and bringer of Spring and as a guide for humanity from the depths of Hades. Then the 'Bright God' was invoked into the HP as the light in the 'darkness that is the resurrection from the sleep of winter.' The HPS then welcomed everyone formally as well as the spring season. She declared 'Lord! Lady! Hear us, for we are here. We are here to celebrate with you and for you. Welcome the beautiful Spring! Welcome to the time of birth. Welcome to the time for planting of seed.' While she did not read from the ritual script this was exactly as in the script.

After this two circles of people were formed, one inside the other, so that there would be room for everyone to walk around the circle while singing a goddess chant.

The inner circle turned counter-clockwise while the outer circle turned clockwise. The goddess chant was as follows:

Holy Maiden Huntress Artemis, Artemis, Maiden, Come to us.  
Silver Shining Wheel of Radiance, Radiance, Mother, Come to us.  
Ancient Queen of Wisdom, Hecate, Hecate, Old One, Come to us.<sup>48</sup>

This was sung by all while walking in our respective circles and was repeated until the outer circle had made one complete circuit around the circle. We were then each given a small piece of paper and a pen by the HPS. We were instructed to write on the paper first a prayer or wish we had for ourselves and then a prayer or wish that we had for someone else who was in the circle. These were then put into small plastic Easter eggs, or perhaps more appropriately in this instance, Ostara eggs, which were then put into a basket. Each then took an egg out of the basket and read the prayers/hopes. We were told that whenever we did any personal magical work that we should remember the prayers that we had been given in those workings to help them come true. To work towards this end we then sang a god chant, though we did not break into two circles again nor did we go around the ritual space in a circle as we did with the goddess chant. The god chant went as follows:

Holy Green Oak King, Tower High, Tower High, Horned One Come to us.  
Holy Holly King, the Evergreen Evergreen, Horned One Come to us.  
Shine Lord Pan Come Dance With Us, Dance With Us, Honred One Come to us.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> This chant, called 'Silver Shining Wheel', is credited to Peter Soderberg and was recorded by the Reclaiming Collective, an organization of witches based in California (Magdalene O'Brien, *Silver Shining Wheel*, <http://www.bardicarts.org/chants/Goddess/silvershiningwheel.html>, (BardicArts, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2006). The chant, as utilized by TOSC, is missing the final line, which invokes the God as a solar deity. 'Silver Shining Wheel' was recorded on 'Chants: Ritual Music' by the Reclaiming Collective, of which Starhawk was one of the founding members, in 1987 (ibid). All the chants in this section appear exactly as it does on the BardicArts website; TOSC did not utilize scripts for these chants.

<sup>49</sup> This chant or song was written by Ivo Dominguez and is sung to the same tune as Soderberg's 'Silver Shining Wheel' (Magdalene O'Brien, *Holy Green Oak King*, <http://www.bardicarts.org/chants/God/holygreenoakking.html>, (BardicArts, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2006).

This was chanted five or six times, after which the ceremony moved towards its closing.

### **E. Bealtaine – 1 May 2004**

Bealtaine is typically celebrated on either April thirtieth or May first. Within modern Pagan tradition, Bealtaine is considered a fertility holiday. It is the time when the young God, in full strength is now also in the full of his manhood. It is also the time when the Goddess becomes pregnant with a form of the God by being inseminated by a different form of the God.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Beltaine Ritual for 2004 was held at McKinley Woods, a forest preserve in Chanahon, Illinois, approximately 45 minutes to an hour south and west from the covenstead. The actual site is a camping site at the bottom of a hill in a forest clearing with easily several hundred square feet of clear space, a handful of picnic tables and steel garbage cans, located mostly to the left hand side of the site. The ritual space itself took up much less of this overall space, approximately 30 square feet, in the centre of the clearing. The ritual space was marked out with four ornate oil torches, each about 5 feet in height. There was also an altar in the centre. It was made of a tri-legged round table upon which was set a rectangular piece of wood that was painted black. On this was painted several pentagrams in traditional elemental colours around which were Norse runes, though no one seemed to remember what they said. Upon this was set the chalice and athame used at the covenstead for ritual, as well as basket of bread. Also upon the altar was a small glass bowl filled with dew collected from the site.

Unlike previous rituals everyone entered the area where the circle would be cast before the ritual opening; everyone simply entered the space and filled out the

open spaces between ritual officers. The High Priestess then took the small glass bowl of dew water from the altar. She explained that the water was natural water, having been dew that was collected from the forest and campsite. She further explained that there was a tradition that stated if you washed your face in dew collected on the first day of May it would cause you to be beautiful. Finally she instructed all in the circle to sprinkle, wash or otherwise mark themselves with the water, and the bowl was passed around the circle for this purpose and then placed again on the altar. At this point the regular ritual opening began.

As with the previous rituals the motif for this ritual was alluded to in the invocations of the Goddess, as the 'Bride of Spring' and God as the 'Horned One', however there was no speech describing the season in fuller terms. After this invocation the men in the group stepped toward the centre of the circle while the women, of which there were more than twice as many, remained in the original outer circle. The men started to move clockwise around the circle chanting the following 'God chant': 'Pan, Poseidon, Hern, Ceranunos, Belinos, Loki, Apollo'.<sup>50</sup> This was repeated numerous times as the men walked around the inner circle with increasing speed. The women began moving counter-clockwise around the outer circle and recited a chant of their own: "Isis, Astarte, Diana, Hecete [sic], Demeter, Kali, Inanna."<sup>51</sup> After about five or six repetitions of the chant everyone returned to place. After cakes and ale the ritual was closed in the usual manner.

## **F. The Summer Solstice – 19 June 2004**

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<sup>50</sup> This chant was written by 'Lady Bridget' using the tune from the Goddess chant below (Magdalene O'Brien, *God Chant*, <http://www.bardicarts.org/chants/God/godchant.html>, (BardicArts, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2006).

<sup>51</sup> This chant was originally written by Deena Metzger and Caitlin Mullin (Magdalene O'Brien, *Isis Astarte Diana Hecate*, <http://www.bardicarts.org/chants/Goddess/isisastartedianahecate.html> (BardicArts, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2006).



The summer solstice, also called Litha, is celebrated on or around June twenty-first, marks the middle of summer. At this time the God, in the form of the sun, is in his fullest strength and the darkness has fled before him. At the same time there is a hint of the God's fall, as after this day the nights start becoming longer and the God in his winter form begins to take dominance.

In this ritual the Goddess is invoked as 'Mother of Nature', the 'Blessed Lady of the Stars and the Moon'. The God was the 'Father of all things, He that plants the seeds and nurtures Life', as well as the 'God of Fertility and Fruitfulness', and the 'Blessed Lord of the blazing Sun'. After the invocations the High Priestess told us the reason for the ritual, further explicating the ritual's motif from the invocations as had been done in the rituals already discussed.

We were told that the ritual was in honour of the 'Blazing Sun God' and that this is a season of the fertility of the gods. We were also reminded that while the sun was at its strongest on this day it also marked the beginning of the sun's weakening, which will continue until Yule. For the time being, however 'the Sun is high, the light is bright, the Earth is warm.' Following this speech a dramatized narrative was enacted. This enactment involved five people, including the High Priestess and High Priest; the other two actors in the drama was a man named Keith, who was a regular attendant of TOSC's rituals as well as a regular ritual officer, and Eric and Rachel's then eight year old daughter, who, for the sake of privacy, will be referred to as 'M'. Rachel took on the role of the Goddess, Eric the Holly King, Keith the Oak King, Jen, who was also a regular ritual officer and in this instance took on the role of the Goddess as Crone, and the daughter took on the roll of the Maiden.

In this enactment the Oak King and the Holly King fight over the love of the Goddess. As they did in the Yule ritual, the Holly King and Oak King acted out a

brief and unrehearsed 'fight' with their athames. The Holly King, who during this season is the younger and more powerful figure, slays the Oak King, who allowed himself to be fatally wounded. This too was acted out, with Keith falling to the floor as though dead. The Holly King realizes what he has done and falls to the ground sobbing because he just slew his brother. The Goddess sees her young lover sad and comes down to see what is wrong with him. She comes to him in her Maiden form, which is noted as a 'child' in the ritual script, with the Maiden approaching the Holly King. The Maiden then asks the Holly King, whom she addresses as 'brother' what is wrong.

The Holly King, who is kneeling over the 'body' of the Oak King in sorrow, replies 'I fought with my brother the Oak King and I slew him. I did a very evil deed . . . how can I ever atone for this? I killed my brother. What am I going to do?'

The Maiden attempts to explain that there is nothing to worry about and that the time of season is for the living and for this reason the Holly King should take the crown of his brother. However the Holly King says that he cannot do this as he feels too much sorrow. The Maiden tries again to explain herself, telling the Holly King that his brother is now the Lord of the Dead and that it is his, the Holly King's, duty to celebrate life now. However this is to no avail and M walks back to the edge of the circle. At this point Rachel as the Mother Goddess steps forward and asks the Holly King what is wrong. He explains the situation and asks for advice. The Goddess replied thus:

Just as when he made his marriage to the Earth and conceived you, his death revitalizes the Earth. His vital energies have enriched our people. They have seen his compassion and now they have seen his sacrifice. They know that he sacrificed so that you may live on and rule in his place, so that he may move to the realms of Annwyn [sic] and take care of the souls resting before they move on to rebirth. You will plant the seed of his rebirth when it is his time to come back and you assume the crown of the Oak king. Come and rest in my arms . . .

Eric and Rachel embraced and Jen as the Crone steps from the circle's edge and moves to stand behind the Holly King and places a hand on his shoulder. She then explains that everything must die and be reborn, including the Oak King and including the Holly King, who will also be killed and reign as the 'Lord of the Annwyn', that this is 'the cycle of Birth, Death, and Rebirth . . . The Spiral never ends.' This ended the dramatization. A spiral dance was scheduled to take place at this point; however there was not enough room for the number of people present to do one so they skipped this and moved to Cakes and Ale and the ritual closing.

### **G. Lammas – 31 July 2004**

Lughnasadh or Lammas is usually celebrated on August first and is a celebration of the first harvest. The name of the holiday is Irish and means 'Lugh's Games', and refers to the funerary games the Irish god Lugh is said to have instituted in honour of his foster mother's death. This motif is often replicated in the modern Pagan celebration of this holiday, either in celebrating the sacrifice of the Goddess in the giving of her life or in her giving up of crops. This holiday also celebrates the impregnation of the Goddess by the God of the dark half of the year, who, like his brother, sacrificed himself so that this can occur.

As with TOSC's Bealtaine Ritual, their 2004 Lammas ritual was held at McKinley Woods. While there were more people in attendance than there were at the colder and wetter Bealtaine ritual, a ritual space was arranged in a smaller area. In this ritual both the Goddess and God were invoked by specific names. The Goddess was called into the High Priestess as 'Innana [sic], Lady of Heaven, Goddess of the Grain' and the God was called as 'Lugh, God of the Harvest', thus mixing Mesopotamian

and Celtic figures and mythologies. As with the previous rituals, with the exception of Bealtaine, the invocations also set the motif of the ritual and seasons.

The ritual originally called for Eric to tell those gathered an abbreviated, and somewhat altered, version of the story of Llew Llaw Gyffes, the Welsh cognate of the Irish Lugh Lamfada, the original version of which can be found in the fourth branch of the Welsh *Mabinogion*. Instead of this we were briefly told about each of the deities who were invoked, about Inanna the goddess of grain and farming and Lugh, who was described as simultaneously being a sun god, grain god and harvest god and for whom Lughnasadh is named. After this, pieces of paper were then handed out and everyone wrote a fault or trait that they wished to be rid of on the paper. Then, as in the Bealtaine ritual, the men and women were divided into two circles, this time with the men in the outside circle moving clockwise and women in the inside circle moving counter-clockwise. A chant called 'Hoof and Horn'<sup>52</sup> was recited by all as we circumambulated around the circle six or seven times, after which the pieces of paper were put in a basket held by the High Priest, who stood in the centre of the circle. We were then instructed to direct the energy we had raised in chanting and circling to the High Priest who would release it, along with the faults we wished to be rid of. After cakes and ale the ritual was closed in the usual manner.

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<sup>52</sup> Hoof and horn, hoof and horn,  
All that dies shall be reborn.  
Corn and grain, corn and grain,  
All that falls shall rise again.

This chant was originally written by Ian Corrigan (Magdalene O'Brien, *Hoof and Horn*, <http://www.bardicarts.org/chants/God/hoofandhorn.html> (BardicArts, Last Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2006).

## **H. The Autumnal Equinox (Mabon) – 25 September 2004**

The fall equinox, sometimes referred to as Mabon, is celebrated on or about September twenty-first. This holiday has a motif opposite to that of the spring equinox. Here the God in his summer form is at its weakest and will soon be replaced by the God's winter form or will simply die, waiting for rebirth at the winter solstice. This equinox also sometimes marks the end of the harvest period.

In TOSC's Mabon ritual, which was written by Rachel, their then High Priestess, the Goddess is invoked as Brigid and is described as the Lady of the Harvest, Goddess of Transformation and as Cerridwen, Keeper of the Cauldron. We were told these two goddesses were called upon because it was a time when 'the balance of nature starts its shifts from Mother to Crone', implying that these goddesses represent or embody these two aspects of the Goddess. The God was called forth as Cernunnos, Lord of the Harvest.

After the invocation of the deities the High Priestess began to explain the reason for the holiday and the two motifs that it incorporated. The first motif she told us about was that of the harvest and thanksgiving. To celebrate this aspect of Mabon she employed reading number 514, written by O. Eugene Pickett, from the Unitarian Universalist church as an outline. She then explained that in relation to this reading we would:

[G]o around the Circle and name something we are grateful for. . . . As each person states their joy, we all will join in and say, 'We give thanks this day.' When we run out of things we wish to acknowledge, we will go around the Circle and read the items below,<sup>53</sup> each person reading one, and then all respond with the same chorus, ending with the paragraph in *Italics*, read together.

After making sure everyone understood what we would be doing Rachel began with her own joy. We went clockwise around the circle once, with each

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<sup>53</sup> Referring to the Unitarian Universalist reading.

person doing as the High Priestess did. While everyone had the option to pass no one did so.

The High Priestess then explained the second aspect of Mabon, the celebration of the coming of the dark portion of the year. This part of the ritual was similar to the first part with two differences. First, instead of a joy we were to name something that we would like to let go of. Second we passed around a 'corn dollie', a small figure made of folded corn stalks, into which we were to 'focus [our] energy . . . and let her carry the weight of the thing that [we] want[ed] gone.' After each person named what they wanted gone from their life everyone else would chant 'Be Gone! Be Gone! Be Gone! So mote it be!' Finally, we were reminded that everyone present would be focusing their energy on helping us be rid of whatever it was we wanted gone from our lives.

Once again the High Priestess started the group off. When everyone had spoken and the corn dollie had returned to the High Priestess she burnt the dollie saying 'With the burning of the corn dollie, we have transformation and rebirth.' Everyone responded by saying 'And, as we will it, so mote it be!' After a pause to let the dollie burn completely the ritual was concluded with Cakes and Ale and the usual closing.

#### **IV. Textual Comparisons**

What follows is a comparison between TOSC's Sabbat rituals and those of the textual sources previously discussed. Such a comparison is useful. By examining where and how TOSC fits into the greater Pagan community of which it is a part of and is derived from any theory based on TOSC's ritual

praxes might then be applied to other Pagans and other Paganisms and, possibly to the sources from which those Paganisms have drawn. Such theories are developed in chapter six.

### A. The Opening and Closing

Buckland, Cunningham and the Farrars<sup>54</sup> all describe a similar process to what is employed by TOSC in tracing the circle, though it is found in different places within the ritual. Buckland's version is similar to what has already been described, with the added instruction the coveners to 'concentrate power into the Circle line'<sup>55</sup> as it is being traced. The Farrars'<sup>56</sup> method is more ornate, utilizing speeches similar to what is found in the *Greater Key of Solomon*.<sup>57</sup> In the case of the Farrar's writing it is the High Priestess who 'conjures' the circle, addressing it as the 'Circle of Power' and proclaiming it blessed and consecrated 'in the names of Cernunnos and Aradia.'<sup>58</sup> Cunningham<sup>59</sup> also describes a more complex tracing or casting of the circle.

RavenWolf and Cunningham<sup>60</sup> both describe the use of a ritual broom and sweeping in their rituals. RavenWolf accompanies the sweeping with a visualization of the 'broom leav[ing] a trail of positive light and energy.'<sup>61</sup> While the sweeping was present in TOSC's rituals the instructions on visualization were never included and did not appear to be 'a given' to all present. Cunningham also suggests a magical or

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<sup>54</sup> *SP; ES.*

<sup>55</sup> p. 58.

<sup>56</sup> *ES.*

<sup>57</sup> S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, ed., *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)*, (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1989).

<sup>58</sup> *ES*, p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> *SP*, p. 117-8.

<sup>60</sup> *BS; SP.*

<sup>61</sup> *BS*, p. 124.

symbolic<sup>62</sup> aspect to the sweeping, though he also shows that it can be a literal cleaning of the room as well.

Variants of TOSC's process of purification and consecration by water and incense, can be found in Buckland,<sup>63</sup> Cunningham,<sup>64</sup> who says to 'sense the substances purifying the circle.'<sup>65</sup> It can also be found in the Farrars<sup>66</sup> and Starhawk<sup>67</sup> who tells her readers that '[s]alt and water are both cleansing elements . . . . The ocean, the womb of life, is salt water, and so are tears, which help us purify the heart of sorrow.'<sup>68</sup>

The method by which TOSC's coveners enter the circle is similar to that of Buckland's.<sup>69</sup> In Buckland, though, the Priest and Priestess consecrate one another with oil by marking either a circled, equal-armed cross if robed or a circled cross, pentagram and inverted triangle if skyclad or ritually nude, a practice that did not occur in TOSC. After this the rest of the coven is allowed to enter the circle. Each covener is anointed in the same way as the Priest and Priestess anointed one another; the Priestess anointing the male coveners and the Priest anointing the female coveners. Regardless of who is being anointed, the one being anointed is told 'I consecrate thee in the names of the God and the Goddess, bidding you welcome to this their Temple.'<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *SP*, p. 115. The act of creative visualization can be and is often considered a magical technique. For example Cunningham (*SP*, p. 113) considers visualization to be one of the most advanced magical techniques (p. 82) and spends three pages explaining how it works and providing exercises for the reader to practice.

<sup>63</sup> pp. 58-9.

<sup>64</sup> *SP*, p. 116-7.

<sup>65</sup> p. 118.

<sup>66</sup> *ES*, p. 37-8.

<sup>67</sup> *SP*, pp. 80-5.

<sup>68</sup> p. 84.

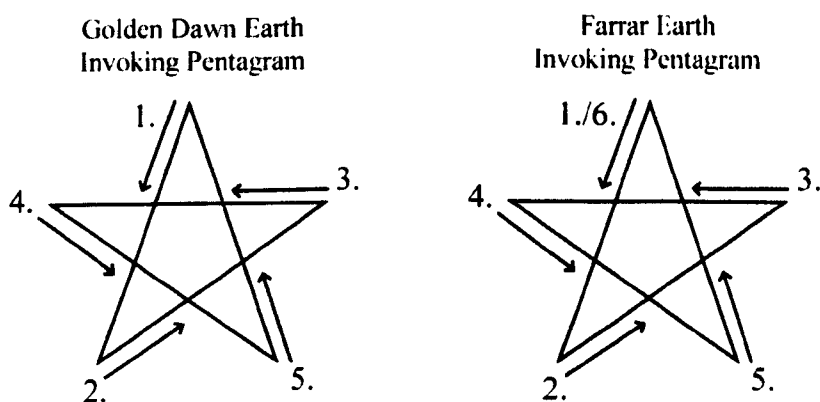
<sup>69</sup> p. 59.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* Notice the similarity between this and TOSC's blessing in the names of Kernunnos and Kerridwen noted above.



The tracing of a pentagram occasionally found in TOSC's calling of the quarters is ultimately derived from the pentagram rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (GD), though variations on how the pentagram is traced have appeared over time. For instance while the GD pentagrams, which are also employed by Buckland<sup>71</sup> and Starhawk<sup>72</sup> are traced so as to begin and end at the same point, the version employed by the Farrars<sup>73</sup> traces an additional line so that the first line traced is retraced to complete the pentagram. The diagram below shows both the Golden Dawn's invoking pentagram and that which is described by the Farrars.

Diagram 1: Invoking Pentagrams



Different versions of the calling of the quarters can be found in all of the Pagan texts consulted. Frequently the two major aspects of this rite, the calling of the Watchtowers at the four quarters and the tracing of pentagrams at the four quarters of the circle, are combined into one rite by Buckland the Farrars, RavenWolf and Starhawk<sup>74</sup> in their formal castings of the circle. All of these authors call each quarter in conjunction with the tracing of a pentagram in the air with the hand or athame. This pentagram is identified as an invoking pentagram by all of the above authors, with the exception of RavenWolf, who only writes that '[a]t each quarter, a pentagram is

<sup>71</sup> p. 59.

<sup>72</sup> *SD*, p. 75.

<sup>73</sup> *ES*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>74</sup> pp. 59-40; *ES*, pp. 39-40; *BS*, p. 124-5; *SD*, pp. 80-2.

drawn in the air and the guardian is verbally invoked.<sup>75</sup> Cunningham<sup>76</sup> utilizes calls for the quarters but not pentagrams. Instead he describes a similar process but instead of pentagrams he places stones in the four quarters and then calls the quarters.<sup>77</sup> While the tracing of a pentagram during the invocation of the quarters was only performed occasionally by the High Priest and only one of the other regular ritual officers TOSC's performance of this phase of the opening does generally follow the openings presented by the above authors. Further it was found that large sections of TOSC's opening were borrowed directly from Paul V. Beyerl's *A Wiccan Bardo*.<sup>78</sup>

The method employed by TOSC to invoke the deities is common to all of the Pagan texts consulted. Buckland's prayers of invocation, which differ for each of the Sabbats, are all verbal in nature. Cunningham<sup>79</sup> presents numerous invocations for the deities. These include general 'God' and 'Goddess' invocations as well as invocations to specific deities such as Diana, Isis and Pan. Like Buckland, no specific method other than the prayer of invocation, and the possible inclusion of music, dance or song<sup>80</sup> is provided for the reader; Cunningham's instructions simply read 'Invoke the Goddess and the God'.<sup>81</sup> The technique presented by the Farrars, called 'Drawing Down the Moon',<sup>82</sup> is more complex than any of the above authors or TOSC's own method of invocation; however elements of the above techniques are to be found within the Farrars' presentation. Here the High Priest invokes the Goddess into the High Priestess in a type of sacred possession not dissimilar to what is found in

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<sup>75</sup> *BS*, p. 125.

<sup>76</sup> *SP*, pp. 118-9.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>78</sup> See especially chapter two, pp. 11-35.

<sup>79</sup> *SP*, pp. 114-5, 146-50.

<sup>80</sup> *SP*, p. 100.

<sup>81</sup> *C.f. SP*, p. 130 or p. 142.

<sup>82</sup> *ES*. Pp. 41-2/

Platonic and Neo-Platonic theurgic practices.<sup>83</sup> This invocation employs both verbal and somatic techniques and is presented as a ritual drama. The High Priestess then proceeds with the final part of the opening, the recitation of the Charge of the Goddess. During the Charge the High Priestess speaks for and as the Goddess, reciting part of a story that is ultimately derived from Leland's *Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches*, originally published in 1899. Finally the 'Witches' Rune' is chanted by, as well as danced, by the entire coven.<sup>84</sup> This is the end of the Gardnerian and Alexandrian opening ritual. While TOSC's invocations of the deities were not identical to the Farrars' Drawing Down the Moon the idea is the same, even if performed in a much simpler manner.

RavenWolf also includes a place to invoke deities, however no particular method of doing this is discussed; one is merely 'meld your energy with that of the God/dess.'<sup>85</sup> The Charge of the Goddess is mentioned at this point as an optional addition to this segment of the ritual. RavenWolf<sup>86</sup> then finishes the opening phase of the ritual with a statement of purpose for the ritual.

Like Buckland, Starhawk<sup>87</sup> offers numerous invocations for the Goddess and the God, both under different names and for different purposes and seasons. Like Buckland and Cunningham these invocations are performed primarily through the means of the prayer of invocation. These invocations are also general in nature; i.e. they call the presence of the deities to the circle and do not, unlike Drawing Down the Moon, necessarily precipitate a case of divine possession in the person of the presiding Priestess.

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<sup>83</sup> Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*, Magic in History. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2002), p. 11; E. R. Dodds, 'Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 37 (1947), pp. 55-69, (p.61).

<sup>84</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, pp. 44-6.

<sup>85</sup> *BS*, p. 125.

<sup>86</sup> *BS*, p. 126.

<sup>87</sup> *SD*.

Buckland's<sup>88</sup> closing is much simpler than that of TOSC's, consisting of only a declaration that the ritual is over and a thanking or releasing of the deities invoked. Others, such as the Farrars,<sup>89</sup> present a more elaborate closing, more similar to what TOSC utilized. In the case of the Farrars banishing pentagrams, which are drawn the opposite direction of the invoking pentagram, are used and each Watchtower is released using specific, pre-scripted banishing speeches.

## **B. The Sabbats**

This central part of TOSC's Samhain ritual contains similar ideas and practices found in both Buckland and the Farrars, both of whom have a portion<sup>90</sup> of their Samhain rituals dedicated to the ritual enactment of a motif befitting the holiday. Buckland leaves this portion of the ritual freeform in that the coveners are free to determine what motif to choose and how to enact it. This segment can take the form of a play, mime or dance and can be related to one of a number of motifs. TOSC did this in the manner described above. TOSC's ritual also had some points in common with the Farrars'. This segment in the Farrars' Samhain ritual is both less freeform and also less apparently a ritual enactment, especially when compared to other ritual dramas present in their rituals.<sup>91</sup> In the Samhain ritual the High Priestess recites a speech describing the season using references to both Egyptian<sup>92</sup> and Welsh mythology.<sup>93</sup> As has already been seen, the mixing of ethnic myths and pantheons occurs within TOSC's rituals as well, and there are further similarities. The Farrar's

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<sup>88</sup> p. 60.

<sup>89</sup> *ES*, pp. 55-7.

<sup>90</sup> pp. 68-70; *ES*, pp. 133-4. This is the first part of Buckland's ritual and the second part of the Farrars'.

<sup>91</sup> For instance, see the Yule ritual.

<sup>92</sup> In describing the West, the land of the dead, as Amenti, the realm of the dead in Egyptian mythology.

<sup>93</sup> Here *Caer Arianrhod*, from the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogion*, and the goddess for whom it is named are discussed. See *The Mabinogion*, translated by Jeffrey Gantz (NY: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 97-117).

ritual drama,<sup>94</sup> which is based on the portions dealing with the Welsh mythology and is explicitly described, also has a portion where the coveners have an opportunity to commune with the dead. However the details of how this occurs differ greatly from the TOSC ritual due to TOSC adapting its rituals to meet its own particular needs.

Starhawk's Samhain ritual,<sup>95</sup> much like TOSC's, also has a portion where the motif is explicitly discussed. There is also an accompanying drama where the coveners are 'taken' to the land of the dead to encounter the God who rules there. Cunningham's<sup>96</sup> solitary ritual, while differing greatly from the other popular Pagan texts as well as TOSC, does have some similarities. For instance the sun God is described as entering the land of the dead. There is also a portion where a piece of paper upon which is written something from the practitioner's life that they wish to be rid of is burnt, thematically this appears to be similar to the High Priest in TOSC's ritual hearing each covener's sorrow or fear and taking the dead leaf they are holding away from them.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Yule ritual was heavily influenced by the Yule ritual of the Farrars found in *Eight Sabbats for Witches*. For example, and as has previously been stated, a number of speeches made within TOSC's ritual are based upon speeches found within the Farrars' ritual, sometimes with only minor changes made. In fact all of the major speeches found within TOSC's Yule ritual can be found, either verbatim or in minor variation, in the Farrar's ritual, with one noticeable exception: the invocation of the God appears to be unique to TOSC. This replication of speeches also requires a replication of some of the dramatics found in the Farrars' ritual and these are found in TOSC's ritual. The leitmotif of the Holly King and Oak King, which will be discussed in chapter five, is also derived, again almost verbatim,

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<sup>94</sup> *ES*, p. 134.

<sup>95</sup> *Spiral Dance*, pp. 209-213.

<sup>96</sup> *Wicca*, pp. 142-3.

from the Farrars' ritual. The only obvious exception to this is that the roles of the Holly King and Oak King, which are determined by lot in the Farrars' ritual, were pre-determined by the High Priestess and High Priest in the TOSC ritual.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Imbolc ritual differed more from the popular Pagan texts than the previous ritual, again for reasons of personal preference and style, with the central portion being dominated by a guided visualization instead of a drama. However there are still some points of similarity between this and the other rituals, though these similarities are found in the area of motif rather than actual practice. For instance the Farrars' Imbolc ritual<sup>97</sup> focuses upon the Irish goddess Brigid as well as the Goddess in her triple form of Maiden, Mother and Crone., which is discussed further in chapter five. While the Maiden/Mother/Crone triplicity was not focused upon in TOSC's ritual it did focus on the triple nature of Brigid.

The Farrars' drama, much as TOSC's guided visualization, also dealt with the motif of new life and generation. Their drama, we are told, relies on the Scottish folk custom of the 'Brigid's bed', which the Farrars' interpret as being 'a seasonal invitation to the God to impregnate the Earth Mother.'<sup>98</sup> This invitation of the Goddess to the God takes the form of the Brigid's bed, upon which are placed a Bidy or roughly made doll dressed in women's clothing and a phallic-shaped wand, both of which are pointed towards a cauldron.<sup>99</sup>

Buckland, too, shares with his readers the above motifs:

[T]he midpoint in the sun's winter journey; sweeping out the old and starting anew; running of the priests of Lupercalia, at the ancient Roman festival; the preparation of seed-grain for growing in the spring; [and] the inviting of the Goddess of Fertility to enter into the house and lodge therein.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *ES*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>98</sup> *ES*, p. 66.

<sup>99</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 68. The Farrars simply describe the Brigid's bed as the basket in which the Bidy is placed (*ES*, p. 63).

<sup>100</sup> p. 72.

We are told that these motifs should be put into action through either drama or dance,<sup>101</sup> however there appears to be no reason to believe that Buckland would have been dismissive of guided visualizations. Starhawk's ritual<sup>102</sup> also focuses on the same motifs and contains a dramatic enactment of a motif described by the ritual's Priestess. Here, as in the TOSC ritual, the God is seen as the Child Sun growing stronger from his birth at the Winter Solstice.

Unlike TOSC's Yule ritual, their Ostara ritual was not based on the Farrars' Spring Equinox ritual. Instead it is based loosely upon Buckland's Spring Equinox ritual. Buckland's ritual has the coveners meditate upon an idea that they wish to plant within their mind that they wish to grow and bring to fruition over time. After this the 'seeds' that they have mentally implanted are written down and then burnt by the Priestess. TOSC cleverly plays on Buckland's seed metaphor and uses instead the symbol of the egg, which is 'fertilized' by the wishes of the coveners. Both of these methods are based on the idea that spring is a time for new growth it is 'the beginning. Life renews itself by [the] magic [of the] Earth Goddess.'<sup>103</sup> This is a motif that is also found within the Spring Equinox rituals of the Farrars and Starhawk,<sup>104</sup> though their methods of enacting it are significantly different from either TOSC's or Buckland's methods.

The Bealtaine ritual kept in line with Buckland's usual advice to perform a drama or dance related to the motifs of the season. Buckland lists those motifs as:

[The] triumphant return of the Goddess from the world between lives; creativity/reproduction; start of one of the breeding seasons for animals, both wild and domestic; dancing about the Maypole; [and the] driving of cattle between two fires to ensure a good milk yield.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> *SD*, pp. 202-3

<sup>103</sup> Cunningham, *SP*, p.132

<sup>104</sup> *ES*; *SD*.

<sup>105</sup> pp. 70-1.

At first it does not appear that TOSC's ritual fits into this schema, consisting primarily of a double dance with accompanying chants. However the movements of the two circles mimics a dance around a Maypole. Originally there had been plans to have a Maypole set up in the centre of the circle, and a Maypole was present at the campsite, although due to last minute complications, it was never set up. However the Maypole dance was retained in the ritual, simply without the Maypole being present. TOSC's ritual can also find a further correspondence with Buckland's Bealtaine ritual,<sup>106</sup> wherein Buckland directs the Priest and Priestess to lead their coveners in a Maypole dace, all the while wrapping ribbons around it, symbolizing the union of the male and female. Nevertheless the similarities between rituals ends there, as Buckland's Maypole dance proceeds the invocation of the Goddess into the Priestess while TOSC's has their double dance as the bulk of the ritual.

Starhawk also utilizes a Maypole in her Bealtaine ritual.<sup>107</sup> The pole is danced around, with each colour of ribbon representing something different to each covener; health, imagination, growth, etc.<sup>108</sup> In Starhawk's ritual the dancing is used to raise magical energy that will be used to integrate what their ribbon stands for into their lives. While TOSC's dance may have had a similar purpose, i.e. to raise magical energy, any such energy raised or created was not employed towards magical ends or particularly seen as important in the context of this particular ritual.

As with TOSC's Yule, their Litha ritual was heavily influenced by the Farrars' Litha ritual of the Farrars found in *Eight Sabbats for Witches*. The most noticeable similarity between TOSC and the Farrars is their use of the Holly King and Oak King

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<sup>106</sup> p. 71.

<sup>107</sup> *SD*, pp. 204-5.

<sup>108</sup> *SD*, p. 205.



motif. While this motif is discussed by Buckland and is implied by Starhawk<sup>109</sup> only the Farrars utilize the motif within the ritual praxis they present. However, unlike the Yule ritual TOSC's Litha ritual is less heavily dependent upon the Farrars' version; most notably the ritual speeches in their Litha ritual were not derived from the Farrars' writings. Further the TOSC Litha ritual is greatly abbreviated in comparison to not only the Farrars' Summer Solstice ritual but also in comparison to their own more robust Yule ritual.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Litha ritual also has a connection to Starhawk's Litha ritual through the use of a spiral dance. The spiral dance is a grapevine-type dance popularised by Starhawk and the Reclaiming Collective when they first performed their version of it in a Halloween ritual in 1979.<sup>110</sup> In this context the dance, which loops back and forth upon itself (see diagram 3) can be used to raise magical energy.<sup>111</sup> While the High Priest has repeatedly expressed his dislike of Starhawk's politics and what he considers pseudo-history, complaining about Starhawk's feminist agenda and her reliance upon writers such as Merlin Stone and Marija Gimbutas and their ideas of an ancient, matriarchal period in Europe that was destroyed by the coming of the Indo-Europeans, he has also admitted having been influenced by the Spiral Dance and Reclaiming, which is further evinced not only in this ritual but in those rituals that have employed chants published through recordings made by the Reclaiming Collective.

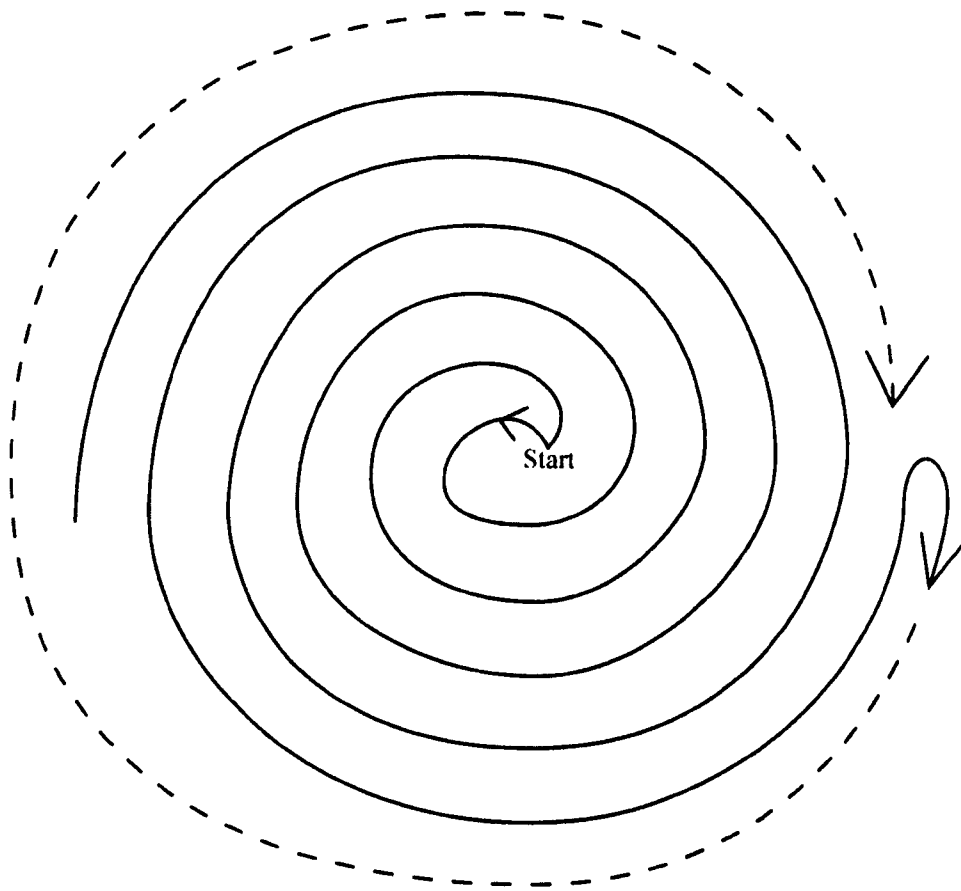
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<sup>109</sup> p. 67; *SD*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>110</sup> Starhawk, *SD*, p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Starhawk, *SD*, pp. 258-9.

Diagram 3: The Spiral Dance



TOSC's Lughnasadh ritual closely followed the pattern of their Bealtaine ritual from several months earlier while differing from the two Greater Sabbats before it. While the details differ this pattern is also found in Farrars' ritual for Lughnasadh,<sup>112</sup> which also deviates from the outline they established in the first two Greater Sabbats but recalls the events of their Bealtaine ritual. However that is the limit to which TOSC's and the Farrars' Lughnasadh rituals are similar, except for their general harvest time motif, which is but one of the motifs Buckland discusses as possible for Lughnasadh:

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<sup>112</sup> *ES*, pp. 112-120.

[The] death and rebirth of the god, leading to a great harvest; thinning of plants, toward a better harvest; strength and testing; [and the] killing of older god by younger god, with funeral games to honor the dead one.<sup>113</sup>

Similar motifs are to be found in Starhawk and Cunningham.<sup>114</sup> Beyond motif, however, there is little similarity between these rituals and TOSC's. Again this is due to personal preferences in ritual creation and, in this instance, the High Priests personal interest in the deities and mythology involved.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Mabon ritual shares common motifs with the four other Autumnal Equinox rituals here under study. Specifically, the motif of thanksgiving and harvest and, to a lesser extent, the motif of the motif of the light or summer half of the year giving away to the dark part of the year are found in some form in all of these rituals. In practice the TOSC ritual bares the most resemblance to Starhawk's Mabon ritual.<sup>115</sup> Starhawk's ritual employs a practice wherein the coveners call out a something that has hurt him or her, kept them back or otherwise some aspect of their life that they wish to be rid of in the next year. An alternative version of this appears in the second part of TOSC's ritual, where the coveners went around the circle naming something that they wished to be rid of. However, the ritual in the *Spiral Dance* only has this aspect to it and not the thanksgiving aspect found in TOSC's ritual.

The first half of TOSC's ritual, wherein the coveners spoke of those things for which they are thankful is not present in that form in the textual rituals. However the 'call-and-response' portion of TOSCs ritual, where the Unitarian liturgy was utilized, does have a parallel in Buckland's Autumnal

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<sup>113</sup> p. 73.

<sup>114</sup> *SD*, pp. 207-8; *SP*, pp. 138-9.

<sup>115</sup> *SD*, pp. 208-9.

Equinox ritual. In this ritual there is a call-and-response portion led alternatively by the Priest and Priestess with the rest of the coven making prewritten response that are generally in praise of the gods.

## V. Discussion

The original fieldwork described above, fieldwork which spanned full liturgical year of TOSC's celebratory calendar, raises some interest critical questions and calls for informed criticised comment. It may be noted, for example, that while it is at first rather surprising, given the sometimes widely varying Pagan understandings of what rituals are, the homogeneity found within the general ritual outline amongst Wiccan and Wiccan-derived Paganisms such as found amongst the members of TOSC, is simple to understand. The common heritage that speaks to the numerous Paganisms that fall under this taxonomy, including American Eclectic Wicca, explains well this commonality.<sup>116</sup> Regardless of the ultimate usefulness of applying the idea of a cultic milieu to this particular branch of Paganism, the similarities in the ritual structure between these traditions not only allows for a cross analysis of their rituals but also possibly provides an entry into how living Pagan covens develop their rituals. As e demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter the rituals of TOSC demonstrate characteristics from several of the textual sources that have already been discussed.

The first four sections of the general ritual structure, those parts that can generally be considered part of the Opening phase of a ritual, can be approached as individual segments. Such an approach is useful for gaining an understanding of specific techniques, both practical and theoretical, employed in this phase of the

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<sup>116</sup> It also suggests a possible cultic milieu, *sensu* Colin Campbell (see York, *Emerging*, p. 252), but only for such Paganisms and not Paganism *in toto*.

ritual. Such an approach also gives the researcher the impression that this ritual phase is largely mechanistic or technological in nature.<sup>117</sup> As magico-religious technologies, the individual parts of the opening phase are understood by their practitioners to serve specific purposes, both metaphysical and psychological. In one section the magical technology is used to banish negative spiritual influences from the Circle, in another a separate magical technology is used to invoke metaphysical energies such as elements or guardian spirits. It is especially interesting to note that within the literature there is no discussion of how or if these techniques may fail in their efficacy; the science of the magic appears to be considered as reliable in their effect as mixing baking soda and vinegar.<sup>118</sup>

This phase can also be approached in a more holistic manner, seeing the individual sections of the phase as part of a cohesive whole. Instead of seeing only technologies employed towards specific ends one begins to see a lived and embodied cosmology within which the practitioners interact. Herein is recalled York's and Hattab's<sup>119</sup> understanding of the *preternatural*, discussed in chapter three: the extraordinary and mysterious world that can ambush a person at any time. It was found that the ritual opening appears to recognize this and acts not to suppress the coming of the preternatural but instead to meditate and mitigate its arrival on terms chosen by the coveners in question.<sup>120</sup> Thus the individual techniques function together. While any one can be utilized individually, it is when they come together as a whole that they both signal and mediate the coming of the preternatural in the form of ritual.

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<sup>117</sup> The AHD defines 'technology' as follows: 1.a. The application of science, esp. to industrial or commercial objectives. B. The entire body of methods and materials used to achieve such objectives.

<sup>118</sup> Which, as most 4<sup>th</sup> graders in science class can tell you, will always produces in an eruption of a thick, fizzy liquid.

<sup>119</sup> *Pagan Theology*, p. 1; p.22.

<sup>120</sup> Or the authors who represent them.

The bodies of the rituals discussed in section two of the current chapter are less homogeneous, in comparison to their counterparts in the Pagan texts, than the openings and closings discussed above. The similarities are between TOSC's rituals and those rituals found in the Pagan texts are perhaps easily explained with a number of possible factors being involved. For instance in those places where ritual portions are taken verbatim from some text, some part of that ritual was seen as being attractive to the writers of TOSC's rituals, that they were employed in full. Where there are non-verbatim similarities a number of possibilities exist, including adjustment due to the personal style of the ritual's redactor. However a more complex possibility remains. While there may be great variation in the Pagan texts' rubric concerning this portion of the Sabbat rituals, the themes involved, as has been demonstrated are quite similar. There also appears to be a general acceptance as to what *types* of deities should be involved in or concerned with the season at hand. Due to similarity of themes, and the apparent, though general, influence popular Pagan texts have it is not surprising to find similarities between TOSC's rituals and those of the Pagan texts that have influenced them, even where exact ritual rubric may differ.

Differences between rituals may be more difficult to explain. Personal and stylistic differences between ritual creators may count for some, even many, of the differences between rituals. However there is a deeper reasoning behind these differences, especially in the realm of American Eclectic Wicca as practiced by TOSC and others. Scott Cunningham, in the preface to his book *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*, summarizes the reasons for this quite well: 'To be effective, rituals must speak to you,'<sup>121</sup> which is to say that Pagans are free to practice their religion in any way that makes it real to them and are not required to bow to any sort

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<sup>121</sup> p. xi.

of authority on how something must be done or thought about. This has led Wicca to become, in many instances, a religion of personal experience and choice and this idea is reiterated not only through out *Wicca* but also in the writings of RavenWolf and Buckland. Thus the Eclectic or non-traditional Wiccan is both expected and encouraged to make their rituals their own, to use what fits their personality, experiences and understandings of their religion, and to change or leave behind what does not.

At this point we will refrain from making conclusions concerning the Sabbats that have been presented here. The intention here is not to evaluate but to describe. In this manner the eight seasonal rituals may be taken as a whole, allowing motifs to be more clearly seen and analysed. This analysis will take place in the following sections and will focus upon both individual aspects of the myths and rituals employed within the rituals as well as myth and ritual combined.

## Chapter Five: Myth Revisited

### I: What Kinds of Myth?

That modern Pagans make use of myths is immediately evident from reading even the most basic of 'Pagan primers' available from the popular press and aptly demonstrated in the rituals of TOSC. From this same set of literature it further appears that different types of Pagans employ mythology differently. For instance the type of analysis of mythic themes found in Kondratiev's Celtic Reconstructionist book *The Apple Branch* or in Gundarsson's Norse Reconstructionist *magnum opus*, *Our Troth*, is completely lacking in Buckland's *Complete Book of Witchcraft* and RavenWolf's *To Ride a Silver Broomstick*. Further, the type of analysis done in Starhawk's *Spiral Dance* or the Farrar's *The Witches' Goddess* and *The Witches' God*<sup>1</sup> are different from any of the above.

Referring specifically on the practices of TOSC does not eliminate the difficulty but it does narrow the field; even though the sources have many specific differences there are also a number of thematic similarities. Before examining these mythic themes the categories of myth that appear to be common to, and inform each of, these themes will be discussed. While this discussion leaves, for the moment, the specific praxes of TOSC it is important in providing a background common to many Pagans and Pagan groups, including TOSC.

### A. Towards a Theory of Pagan Myth-Making

Much has been done in the area of ritual classification, and there has also been a great deal of work done on the classification of differing types of myth. For instance

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<sup>1</sup> Kondratiev, 2003; <http://www.thetroth.org/resources/ourtroth/> edn, 2005 vols (The Troth, Lasted Updated: 2004, Last Viewed: 2006); Buckland, 1986; RavenWolf, 1993; Starhawk, 1999; Farrar and Farrar, 1995; Farrar and Farrar, 1989.



Doty<sup>2</sup> discusses over a half dozen classes of myth, including cosmogenic, cosmological and theogenic myths. Through his field-work amongst London Pagans in the 1970s Kenneth Rees,<sup>3</sup> one of the few scholars to look specifically at Pagan uses of myth, came to identify three genres of myth that are given primacy by modern Pagans in both ritual and non-ritual contexts: personal myths, substantive myths and myths of continuity. Personal myths are seen as an ‘overall controlling image incorporating beliefs, attitudes and values’<sup>4</sup> that give an *individual* an understanding of the world in which they live in and their place in it. These personal myths include both emotive as well as rational factors and are never fully conscious. Rees<sup>5</sup> also found that such myths may be so fully integrated as to constitute the personality of the mythmaker. Substantive myths are ‘actual narrative structures as instanced by specific bodies of myth across the world.’<sup>6</sup> This is similar to part one; a., b., and c. of the dictionary definition of ‘myth’ as discussed in chapter three. Myths of continuity are narratives that groups, Pagan or otherwise, employ to connect themselves to the past; showing that there is an active continuity between their religion or organization in the present and some philosophy, religion, organization or other group that existed in the usually distant past.<sup>7</sup> Within this type of group myth there often exist substantive myths that may, for example, explain why such a group is necessary today by showing how exemplary the corresponding ancient organization was.<sup>8</sup>

Research undertaken for this thesis has shown similar results to Rees.

However, while Rees’ categories are a useful place to start, this thesis finds that they

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<sup>2</sup> pp. 16-20.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Tangled Skein: The Role of Myth in Paganism’ in *Paganism Today*, ed. by Charlotte Hardman and Graham Harvey (London: Thorsons, 1996), pp. 16-31.

<sup>4</sup> Rees, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Rees, pp. 23-6.

<sup>8</sup> Rees refers to such a myth as ‘golden age myths’ (p. 25).

are ultimately unfruitful for a number of reasons. First, with few exceptions, Rees presents his categories as being relatively distinct from one another. Contrary to Rees we find that his categories in fact frequently overlap, or are even simply macrocosmic and microcosmic versions of the same thing. For instance myths of continuity can also be seen as group versions of personal myths. Also, substantive myths appear to exist in multiple areas. Further, we suggest that mythic categories in general not only overlap but are interrelated and interdependent. Second Rees does not take into consideration non-narrative myths, such as Tara Buckland's poem 'The Warrior Queen' or Raymond Buckland's poem 'The Lord'<sup>9</sup> that while not narrative themselves lend to the overall narration of, for example, a Pagan ritual. The importance of non-narrative myths is discussed more fully in section B, below. Third, while Rees' purpose is ostensibly to answer the question of what types of myths are employed by modern Pagans, his beginning, by his own admittance, is just that: a beginning.<sup>10</sup> As such Rees' article, which at the time of this writing is a decade old, marks only a starting place for this kind of research.<sup>11</sup> Because of this Rees' work belies the complexity of the nature and use of myth within modern Paganisms. Due to this it was deemed necessary for this thesis to construct a related but still unique system of categorization of myth based upon the observations and readings undertaken in the course of this study.

Unlike Rees' distinct-seeming categories that rely primarily upon viewing myths as things utilized in legitimation strategies, this thesis examines myths through their varied uses amongst modern Pagans, thus taking a more emic approach to the subject. This has led to the idealizing myths into four categories: narrative myths,

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<sup>9</sup> Buckland, p. 219.

<sup>10</sup> p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Research that Rees himself urges us to continue: 'I therefore urge the necessity for teasing out the myths which inform the pagan and magical subcultures . . .' (p. 29).

non-narrative myths, mythemes and mythic motifs. These categories inform four interrelated mythic themes; myths of origin, seasonal cycle myths, initiatory myths and exemplary myths. These are not the only mythic themes to be found within Paganism, let alone with the entire corpus of world mythology. However these four themes will form the focus of the work at hand and are the focus of mythic discussion in the texts discussed in the introduction.

### **B. Narrative Myths, Non-Narrative Myths, Mythemes and Mythic Motifs**

This thesis defines 'narrative' in the simple manner of the AHD: 'A narrated account; story.' Specifically, Fisher's notion of narrative as 'symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequences and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them' is rejected due to its overly broad, indeed all encompassing, definition of narrative.<sup>12</sup> Narrative myths are, on the surface, those stories that one would normally refer to or think of as 'myths' and are therefore similar to Rees' substantive myths. However where a substantive myth is apparently limited to traditional corpuses of mythic stories, existing in either oral or written form,<sup>13</sup> the category of narrative myths cannot effectively be limited to any such 'traditional' corpuses. This is especially seen in numerous Pagan origin myths, which are entirely modern or 'non-traditional' in nature. Instead narrative myths are simply those myths that explicitly narrate a story. Thus narrative myths may take the form of narratives that may be considered as 'traditional' myths such as the Icelandic *Poetic Eddas* or the Hindu *Mahabharata* but may also include modern myths such as RavenWolf's

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<sup>12</sup> Fisher quoted in E. M. Griffin, *A First Look at Communication Theory* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1997), p. 324.

<sup>13</sup> i.e. Greek myth, Roman myth, Celtic myth, Ojibwa myth, etc.

adoption of the Wiccan ‘Charge of the Goddess’ into narrative form<sup>14</sup> or the ‘history of witchcraft’ that Starhawk presents in *The Spiral Dance*,<sup>15</sup> which she prefaces with ‘According to our legends . . . .’<sup>16</sup>

Conceptualising some myths as being non-narrative in nature may appear to be radical departure from the common usage of the word, as can be demonstrated by examining any of the definitions of myth presented in chapter three, and especially the final definition present there. It seems to be antithetical to the replies received when asking Pagans what myth was to them, almost all of which included the qualifier ‘story’ or ‘tale’. Yet, as discussed in chapter three, myths, as ways through which a Pagan can understand, interact and manipulate reality in a super-rational way, do not necessarily need to function on a narrative level and can be either pre- or non-narrative in nature.<sup>17</sup> Further, non-narrative myths can and do function in the same way narrative myths do; they ‘elicit the emotional conviction and participation of their audience to define for their audience the lived world of the ordinary and the world of the preternatural and point to the emergence of a thing, be it a deity, hero, place, name, tradition etc., into that world.’<sup>18</sup> They simply do not do so in story form.

A non-narrative myth is a myth that does not tell a story, nor does it necessarily presuppose an extant story. Instead non-narrative myths presupposes an event, regardless if said event is physical, mental, spiritual or of some other nature. This idea is similar in nature to Assmann’s ‘genotext’ and Lévi-Strauss’ ‘implicit

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<sup>14</sup> *Broomstick*, pp. ix-xiii. The ‘Charge’, as it exists in Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca is an example of non-narrative myth.

<sup>15</sup> *Spiral Dance*, pp. 27-32.

<sup>16</sup> *Spiral Dance*, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> The line between a myth that is ‘pre-narrative’ and ‘non-narrative’ is both fine and fluid and will vary from Pagan to Pagan. Any non-narrative myth can become pre-narrative when that myth is expanded upon in a narrative format, resulting in a pre-narrative and a narrative version of the myth in question.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from chapter three of this thesis, section two, part E.

mythology'.<sup>19</sup> In this view a non-narrative myth is the underlying mythical event that occurs within a narrative myth. Assmann denies that his genotexts constitute myths as he sees them as having no narrative coherence and as not being rooted in time and space.<sup>20</sup> However, in part based upon the new fieldwork undertaken here, this thesis finds that there is, in fact, what Goebis has translated as a 'coherence of action'<sup>21</sup> within non-narrative myths that grants them both the cohesion and rootedness that Assmann requires in his idea of myth. Further, Baines'<sup>22</sup> criticism of Assmann's limited idea of the genotext, that they are 'analytical abstractions' that would ultimately not be separated from the mythic category by those whom the myths belong to, is both convincing and astute. It also helps us to understand the phenomenon of Pagans considering myths to be only narrative in nature while simultaneously utilizing non-narrative myths. The categories are simply not separated in practice and while myth is consciously understood as being narrative in nature, in practical matters there is no actual need for a narration to exist; the cohesion of action is enough.

One example of this is the 'Charge of the Goddess' as it appears in the Farrar's standard 'opening ritual', which is used for all of their Sabbat celebrations:

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

The High Priestess says:

"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

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<sup>19</sup> Katja Goebis, 'A Functional Approach to Egyptian Myth and Mythemes', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 2 (2002), 27-59, (pp. 30-1). Assmann's equivalent to this thesis' 'narrative myth' is 'phenotext' while Lévi-Strauss' equivalent is 'explicit myth.'

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Goebis, p. 32, translating Zeidler's term 'Handlungskohärenz'.

<sup>22</sup> John Baines, 'Egyptian Myth and Discourse: Myth, Gods, and the Early Written and Iconographic Record', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 50 (1991), 81-105, (p. 88).

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 really 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 also 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."<sup>23</sup>

As the above passage from the 'Charge' suggests it is, by itself, non-narrative; it does not describe events in the form of a story and is instead here presented as a type of proclamation. However the Charge exists within its own coherence of action; it is the result of the Goddess' speech act, and it is also a part of an overall narrative from the story of Aradia and her mother, the goddess Diana.<sup>24</sup> Other such non-narratives can be found in Paganism, such as Raymond Buckland's poem 'The Lord'.<sup>25</sup> Such non-narrative segments of myth can be, as RavenWolf aptly demonstrates,<sup>26</sup> taken from their non-narrative form and converted into a narrative. Narrative myths can also be transformed into non-narrative myths.<sup>27</sup> These may take the form of non-narrative poetry such as Buckland's 'The Lord' or even be reformatted into a ritual setting where a speech is placed in the mouth of a god, goddess or hero as a proclamation or announcement, much as described above in the instance of the 'Charge of the Goddess'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Eight Sabbats*, pp. 42-3. The 'Charge' continues for a number of paragraphs.

<sup>24</sup> This is presented in Leland's *Aradia* (Charles G. Leland, *Aradia Or the Gospel of the Witches*, (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2003), pp. 19-24) through a series of short narratives and incantations.

<sup>25</sup> Buckland, p. 219.

<sup>26</sup> *Broomstick*, pp. ix-xiii.

<sup>27</sup> See also Baines (p. 94) who writes: 'A myth could be mobilized in a non-narrative context, varying from short segments of ritual to more extensive texts.'

<sup>28</sup> The idea that non-narrative myths also become fully narrative by their placement within a ritual enactment will be discussed in section four.

Both narrative and non-narrative myths can be further condensed as well, taking the form of a 'mytheme' or an individual fragment that goes into the building of a myth.<sup>29</sup> The prototype of the mytheme comes from structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, discussed above in relation to non-narrative myths. In his linguistic model of myth a mytheme is a 'minimal narrative unit, which defines the level to which the other levels may be reduced.'<sup>30</sup> Lévi-Strauss's mythemes are not linguistic units and have no meaning in and of themselves, but are instead linguistic cues that cannot be separated from and explicate a given mythic motif.

However, while Lévi-Strauss's mythemeic ideal may hold true for many mythemes, within American Eclectic Wicca mythemes do appear sometimes to take on linguistic and even discursive form. These mythemes can be used not only in the development, or re-visioning, of new Pagan myths but are also found in ritual,<sup>31</sup> and as a way to more simply to understand any given mythic element such as a god or goddess and exist in the form of 'magical correspondences'. Lists of these correspondences appear in all of the books discussed in chapter one, with perhaps the most famous of these is Aleister Crowley's 777,<sup>32</sup> which is not insignificant considering the influence of Thelema, Crowley's magical religion, on Gerald Gardner. The magical correspondence takes the form of a word. By itself the word does not have any meaning beyond its non-occult context. However these words are placed in lists that are given implicit meaning based on any one of a number of different ideologies. In the case of 777, the prototype for these lists, the ideology is the Qabalah of the Order of the Golden Dawn, which separates its lists into divisions

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<sup>29</sup> Doty, p. xvii.

<sup>30</sup> Marcel Hénaff, *Claude Lévi-Strauss and the Making of Structural Anthropology*, trans. by Mary Baker, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 162.

<sup>31</sup> This suggests that in some instances a mytheme may also be a riteme. This will be explored further in chapter five of this thesis.

<sup>32</sup> *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley*, (York Beach: ME: Samuel Weiser, 1973).

according to the ten sefirot and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alef-bet, which are divided into the four occult elements (air, earth, fire, water), the seven ancient planets and the zodiacal signs.

For instance, line fourteen of 777 is associated with the planet Venus and its various occult powers. The practitioner can then look up everything else that is on line fourteen, which includes the goddesses Hathor, Freya and Aphrodite but also various colours, animals, directions, precious stones, and so forth. Such correspondences allow the Pagan to read a myth 'magically' and gain an understanding of what is 'really' going on in it through these correspondences. Thus the mytheme is a way for a particular understanding gained through the interpretation of a myth or group of myths to be employed without having to making direct reference to the myth or myths the mythemes stem from. That is, once the correspondences surrounding a particular deity are known, the magician or Pagan does not need to know the myths that Crowley and his predecessors used to develop their correspondences.

Further, mythemes can be used to correlate large amounts of mythic material, from numerous cultures, and to organize them that into groupings that the individual Pagan finds significant. While not all such correspondences have their origin in classical myths they do appear to serve as a way to connect myth and magic together. This appears to be related to Gilkey's conception of myth as '[signifying] a certain perennial mode of language, whose elements are multivalent symbols, whose referent is in some strange way the transcendent or sacred and whose meanings concern the ultimate existential issues of actual life . . . .'<sup>33</sup> However unlike Gilkey, who sees

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<sup>33</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *Religion and the Scientific Future: Reflections on Myth, Science and Theology*, (NY: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 66. It is also a possible logical extension of Frazer's conception of sympathetic magic, where the individual correspondences are seen as being in sympathy with a greater reality, thus the colour yellow is sympathetic to the element of air and anything that may be related to that element, potentially including stones, plants and even gods or goddesses.



myths as primarily existing on this level of meaning,<sup>34</sup> the mytheme appears to be utilized only under specific situations and is not always recognized as being explicitly connected to myth; narrative or otherwise. Further, any given mytheme, when taken on its own, may not have any significant meaning; meaning is instead inferred by the Pagan who has already learnt the meanings behind what the mytheme symbolizes. Yet, given the nature of American Eclectic Paganism, as discussed at the end of the previous chapter, every such Pagan may have somewhat different understandings of what exactly each correspondences means; i.e. the base interpretive paradigm of each Pagan may differ from any other Pagan. This can create a circumstance such as the one described by Sian Reid<sup>35</sup> in her own thesis work and as discussed in the introduction to this thesis; many Pagans can come together and, while speaking the same technical language, mean sometimes vastly different things by what they say. This type of mythemetic thought, which might be identified as esoteric,<sup>36</sup> is readily found in TOSC, though not exactly as it is found within texts such as 777.

For instance, relying on the theme of first harvest attached to the TOSC form of the festival of Lammas, the High Priest, who wrote the Lammas ritual, was able to go through his mental list of mythemes associated with that theme, including which gods and goddesses were appropriate to it along with all of their correspondences.

Ritually this created the interesting coincidence of Celtic and Babylonian

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<sup>34</sup> Milton Scarborough, *Myth and Modernity: Postcritical Reflections*, Margins of Literature, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> Reid, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> We are here relying upon Faivre's (pp. 10-15) four-fold criteria for esotericism. The first three of these are of particular importance to this idea: 1) All parts of the universe are, hidden and revealed, are interconnected and interdependent through the idea of correspondences, such as those that can be found in mythemes. 2) Nature is a living thing that can be 'read' and manipulated through the understanding of those correspondences. 3) Those correspondences can be understood and employed through the use of imagination. It must also be noted that Faivre's esotericism is only being used as a general model. This is necessary due to both conceptual and methodological issues at the root of this definition, which ultimately serve to limit esotericism to only what Faivre believes to be esotericism without the possibility of overlapping categories, such as esotericism and mysticism. C.f. Lehrich, pp. 160-164. The idea of esotericism will briefly be revisited in the following chapter.

correspondences. However, while the correspondences came from different cultures the mythemes behind them all related to the theme of first harvest. While this example appears to relate only to ritual, this thesis argues that there exists such a close connection between myth and ritual in TOSC's practices that the difference between myth and ritual, and consequently mytheme and riteme, disappear.

Finally, acting as a conceptual counterpart to the linguistically based mythemes are mythic motifs. Mythic motifs, which are presented in chapter four, inform, surround and interpenetrate the myth to which it belongs. Such motifs can deal with subjects such as death and resurrection, the innate nature of a season, the movement from childhood to adulthood or any number of other such themes, and multiple motifs may be found in a single myth. For instance, Buckland notes several motifs related to Samhain myths and traditions:

[L]ife – death – new life; death of the old king and crowning of the new; the turning wheel of the year; the killing-off of those animals (cattle) that would not survive the winter; return of the dead to rejoice, briefly, with the living; gathering of the harvest and storing for the winter; the creation of the world, with chaos transformed to order.<sup>37</sup>

Like myths in general, a motif may be presented in both explicit and implicit manners. Thus, while a mythic theme may be explicitly discussed, within a myth it may instead be alluded to through scenery, weather, the clothing worn by figures within the myth or even the mention of the presence of a certain plant. For instance Graves'<sup>38</sup> use of the oak tree to describe the Oak King in his eternal cyclical conflict with the Holly King, tells both Graves and the Farrars<sup>39</sup> that such a king represents the waxing half of the year and the presence of either oaks or the Oak King in any given myth may, given this hermeneutical lens, automatically suggest a summer motif to its reader. Clearly, the representations of such motifs can be extracted and compressed

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<sup>37</sup> Buckland, p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1948).

<sup>39</sup> *White Goddess*, p. 208; *ES*, pp. 24-7.

into mythemes. As demonstrated in the example concerning mythemes, mythic motifs are frequently found in TOSC's interpretation of various seasonal rituals.

That different genres of myths can be transformed between other types suggests they are not only related to, but may also be interdependent upon, and even interpenetrate into, one another. This interdependence and interpenetration is not limited only to narrative and non-narrative myths, as well as their corresponding mythemes, but, as will be demonstrated, also to the mythic themes that will be discussed below; seasonal cycle myths, myths of origin, initiatory myths and exemplary myths, all of which are related to and dependant upon one another to varying degrees. Further, these mythic themes are informed by and dependent upon both narrative and non-narrative myths.

### **C. Mythic Themes**

As previously noted, and as will be demonstrated in the following sections, mythic themes are interconnected, and inform and interpenetrate one another. This means that not only can any myth contain multiple themes, these themes cannot necessarily be separated from one another. In some instances these themes are explicit within the text of the myth itself while at other times they may only be implicit. In such instances, and even when themes are explicitly present within a myth, their readers are free to interpret those myths as they see fit, projecting onto a myth themes that may or may not be present within them.<sup>40</sup> This can further interrelate themes found within any given myth. For example the myth of the *Descent of Inanna*, a Sumerian myth that describes the descent and subsequent ascent of the goddess Inanna into and out of the underworld has been interpreted as both an initiatory and

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<sup>40</sup> See section H on the interpretive methods employed by some Pagans.

seasonal myth.<sup>41</sup> While not all of the mythic themes discussed below are present in TOSC's seasonal rituals and the myths associated with them they do represent a greater field out of which Pagans, including TOSC, draw into their overall praxes. As such it was felt important to discuss themes beyond those encountered in TOSC's Sabbat practices as they provide for a greater background for, and thus understanding of, American Eclectic Wiccan practices, including those of TOSC.

#### **D. Seasonal Myths**

As seasonal rituals, particularly as practiced by TOSC, are the focuses of this thesis it is not surprising that seasonal myths are also a major focus. Seasonal myths, those myths that explain or describe the seasons or seasonal cycles of the year, can contain a number of different components, such as the origin of the seasons, the nature of the seasons or customs that surround the seasons. Alternatively a culture or group may have one or more myths that contain some, but not all, of these components. Further, there may be distinct myths for each season or the customs surrounding them.

Some seasonal myths concerned with the origin of a season, such as the Greek myth of the *Rape of Persephone*,<sup>42</sup> are relatively explicit about their themes and purposes. In this story, for instance, we are told of the origins of winter explicated through descriptions of the weather caused by Demeter's sorrow over losing her daughter and even the length of time of the season.<sup>43</sup> Others, however, such as the

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<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, TOSC's Lammas ritual and the Gardnerian/Alexandrian second degree initiation (Farrar and Farrar, *WW*, pp. 29-30), both of which employ aspects of this myth.

<sup>42</sup> Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, (NY: Warner Books, 1942), pp. 51-

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

*Descent of Inanna*,<sup>44</sup> which has also been interpreted as a seasonal myth, are not so explicit. As has been formerly noted personal interpretation often plays a key role in how a myth and its themes are viewed.

The *Rape of Persephone*, besides having origination components in it, also has information that can be used to understand what has been referred to in previous chapters as the motif of the season, in this case winter. In this story we are given descriptions of old age, famine, misery and desolation as well as themes of the coming of abundance, flowers and life.<sup>45</sup> Similarly motifs from the Irish myth *Cath Maigh Tuireadh*, the Battle of Mag Turied, especially those sections concerning the arrival of the god Lugh and his defeat of his grandfather Balor of the Baleful Eye, can be found, such as the 'Triumph of the Light'.<sup>46</sup> These motifs, when listed, can be turned into mythemes and then utilized in ritual work. This methodology is not at all unusual; it has already been demonstrated in Buckland's writings and the above example concerning Lugh is but one of many to be found in Kondratiev's *The Apple Branch*.<sup>47</sup>

Customs surrounding either the observance of a seasonal celebration or around the season itself can also be found in seasonal myths or their mythemes. Kondratiev does this repeatedly in his book on Celtic ritual. For instance, based on the Irish texts of the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* and the *Suidigud Telaig Temra*, Kondratiev developed a ritual opening that employed magical weapons from the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* and associates them with the four cardinal directions and their social class associations

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<sup>44</sup> Samuel N. Kramer, and Diane Wolkstein, *Descent of Inanna Wolkstein - Kramer*, <http://www.piney.com/InanasDescNetherKram.html> (Piney.com, Last Updated: 2001, Last Viewed: 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Hamilton, pp. 51-5. Aspects of both sets of these motifs can be found in both of TOSC's Samhain and Yule rituals.

<sup>46</sup> Kondratiev, pp. 202-6.

<sup>47</sup> 2003.

found in the *Suidigud Tেলাig Temra*.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, using the myth of the Holly King and the Oak King, the Farrars,<sup>49</sup> developed both their Summer and Winter Solstice rituals.<sup>50</sup> The focus of this thesis being upon TOSC's seasonal rituals, numerous mythic themes will be discussed in part two of the present chapter.

### **E. Myths of Origin**

Myths of origin are those myths that show where a group, a particular religion, a tradition within a given group or a religion, or nearly anything else, came from. While myths of origin may contain provable history this is not always the case and is not a necessary component of the myths. In the case of modern Paganisms such myths may simply suggest an ideological or theological continuity with an older, pre-Christian paganism or may explicitly connect a coven or Pagan religion or tradition historically with a religion or set of teachings from the pre-Christian past. Myths of origins are not necessarily limited to the origins of a religion or coven but may also be attached to explanations for a coven's particular traditions, such as why a particular holiday is celebrated or understood in the way that it is. Origin myths are present in all of the Pagan texts described in the introduction except for RavenWolf's *To Ride a Silver Broomstick*, which deals with very little of the history of Paganism. Each book presents the myth or group of myths in different ways. Importantly all of these books present their origin myths as historical fact.

The reasons why the myth of origin of the Paganisms discussed in each of these books is presented as history is a complex matter. For instance Starhawk tells her readers that her myth-history is the result of '[m]onths and months of reading and

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<sup>48</sup> Kondratiev, pp. 81-87, 90-6.

<sup>49</sup> *ES*, pp. 93-101, 137-150.

<sup>50</sup> Both of these rituals have been described, at least in part, in the previous chapter.

research'<sup>51</sup> and that she 'happen[s] to believe it is basically true in outline if not in every detail.'<sup>52</sup> The Farrars, relying upon scholars who, at the time of their writing, were considered, at least to popular culture, to be credible sources, provide a similar history as Starhawk, as do Cunningham and Buckland as well.

There may also be political agendas and reasons of legitimacy involved as well. For instance Starhawk has an explicit feminist theological agenda that she promotes throughout *The Spiral Dance*, her other books and through *Reclaiming* itself.<sup>53</sup> All of these books, with the aforementioned exception of *To Ride a Silver Broomstick*, make connections between ancient pre-Christian religion, often a nebulously defined 'shamanism'<sup>54</sup> and modern Paganisms. This is then traced, through various interpretive lenses, through history to demonstrate how pagan religions evolved from this original religious impulse and to further demonstrate how modern Pagan religion is connected to the pre-Christian paganisms of old. While some of these texts may not overtly use this connection to legitimize their religions there is the implication that modern Paganisms should be seen as legitimate religions due to these connections; i.e. they are not simply new and made up religions but are in actuality ancient in nature and philosophy if not actual, discernable age. As James Lewis<sup>55</sup> shows, the appeal to history or tradition is a common legitimization strategy amongst New Religious Movements. Further, it is one that has been employed by modern Paganisms since the founding of Wicca.

These myth-histories are more than 'merely false histories' created through obsolete research or political motivation. They are also stories of power and

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<sup>51</sup> *SD*, p. 264.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism*, pp. 37, 293-4. See also chapter two of Salomonsen's *Enchanted Feminism*, 'Wicca revival: Starhawk and the myth of ancient origin' (pp. 67-96) which specifically treats Starhawk's use of history.

<sup>54</sup> C.f. Starhawk, *SD*, p. 27; Buckland, p. 1, Farrar and Farrar, *WW*, p. 194; Cunningham, *SP*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>55</sup> *Legitimizing New Religions*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 13-4.

inspiration for Pagans much as Torah presents stories of power and inspiration for Jews. In this they can function as group adaptations of 'personal myths', an idea developed by Stephen Larson, David Feinstein and Stanley Krippner.<sup>56</sup> They 'explain the world, guide personal development, provide social direction, and address spiritual longings.'<sup>57</sup> It is precisely this that Salomonsen found amongst Reclaiming Witches.<sup>58</sup> While the idea of Wicca as an ancient religion was generally rejected by members of TOSC there were still traces of this type of mythic thinking discernable amongst its members, such as in the wearing of a kilt-like garment by the High Priest and his (ahistorical) association of it with pre-Christian Irish garb.

## **F. Initiatory Myths**

Initiation myths are those myths that have either been interpreted as and/or employed in rituals of initiation, either actual or literary, as well as those myths that have been created to explain a pre-existing initiatory rite. As with seasonal myths the initiatory theme in any given myth may not always be explicit. For modern groups using myths that predate them in their rituals, such as many Pagan covens but also non-Pagan groups such as the Free Masons or the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn,<sup>59</sup> this may mean that myths that were not interpreted as having initiatory themes are reinterpreted as having initiatory meaning. As may be expected, different Paganisms may employ different myths in their initiation rituals. However a common theme, that of death and rebirth, may be found throughout the initiatory cycles, where

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<sup>56</sup> Rees, p. 17.

<sup>57</sup> David Feinstein and Stanley Krippner, *Personal Mythology: The Psychology of Your Evolving Self*. (Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1988), p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> *Enchanted Feminism*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, *The Perfect Ceremonies of Craft Masonry for Emulation Workers* (Unknown, (London, England: A Lewis (Masonic Publishers) Ltd., 1953), or Pike's *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Richmond, VA: L. H. Jenkins, Inc., 1944). The GD bases its initiation rituals on numerous myths. See Jeffrey S. Kupperman, *By Names and Images: Golden Dawn Egyptian Mythology*, <http://www.jwmt.org/v1n1/names.html> (Westmont, IL: Journal of the Western Mystery Tradition, Last Updated: 2003, Last Viewed: 2006).



they exist, of many different Paganisms, as well as in other initiatory groups such as those discussed above. The importance or use of this theme is either discussed or implied by Starhawk, Cunningham and the Farrars.<sup>60</sup> As seasonal rituals are the focus of this thesis, even though some seasonal and initiatory myths can be conflated, does not focus upon these types of myths.

## G. Exemplary Myths

Pagans, as well as scholars who may or may not be Pagans, appear to place much emphasis on origination myths,<sup>61</sup> and to a somewhat lesser extent seasonal and initiatory myths. Less frequently discussed is the use of myths to demonstrate proper or improper behaviour; i.e. those behaviours that are considered to exemplarise correct or incorrect ways of doing things. Such myths may also point to the origin of said behaviour, though this is not always the case. Such a myth may be found in the Irish epic the *Táin Bó Cúalnge*. In this story the Irish hero Cuchulain is forced to slay his own son because the son is killing the men of Ulster, of which Cuchulain is a protector. While Cuchulain's wife begs him not to do it for paternal reasons Cuchulain's warrior companions laud him for the brave deed, for this is the proper behaviour of the protector of Ulster when his land is being threatened.<sup>62</sup> While perhaps overshadowed by the seasonal themes found in TOSC's Yule and Litha rituals, there are exemplary themes to be found here. For instance, in TOSC's Litha<sup>63</sup> ritual the Holly King is taught by the Goddess the proper and correct way to understand death and its role in the cycle of rebirth and reincarnation.

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<sup>60</sup> *SD*, pp. 188-192; *SP*, p. 35; *WW*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>61</sup> See chapter three for examples from Pagans. Concerning scholars, see for example Eliade (*Definition*, p. 5), who says that myths are always concerned about a creation, discussing how things came into being. Hatab (p. 20) similarly discusses origination as the primary purpose of myths.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Kinsella, *The Táin*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 39-45.

<sup>63</sup> See chapter four of this thesis, part two, section F.

## H. Ricoeurian Eisegesis

As has been already proposed by this thesis the importance of interpretation in connection to how a myth is understood or employed cannot be underestimated. Modern Pagans may interpret a single myth through different, or even multiple, thematic lenses, connecting a single myth to several rituals. This can be seen in the example of the *Descent of Inanna* discussed above.

That this multiplicity of polysemy interpretation is possible suggests an interconnectedness amongst mythic themes in general. As deaths and rebirths are common themes in both initiations and seasonal stories a myth of death and rebirth may be both an initiatory and seasonal myth. In the instance of TOSC's Litha ritual, discussed above, the theme of death and rebirth was interpreted as a seasonal myth rather than an initiatory myth, yet at the same time exemplary themes are also explicated. A myth that shows the origins of a custom, whether or not the myth actually came about after the custom was in place, may also exemplarise that custom. It has also shown how seasonal myths may also be origin myths by telling the story of how a season originally came to be, a way that the *Rape of Persephone* has been interpreted.

This thesis has formerly likened the Pagan art of mythic interpretation as being similar in nature and process to the textual hermeneutical approach of Paul Ricoeur. In 'The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text'<sup>64</sup> and 'What is Text'<sup>65</sup> Ricoeur looks at text as a thing divorced from its originator. He says that when reading a text, be it a book or a description of a ritual, the reader may presume that its author or participants are dead and the text is posthumous; the author can no longer

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<sup>64</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics*, (London: Northwestern University Press, 1991).

<sup>65</sup> 1991.

enter into a dialogue with the reader, all that is left is the writing.<sup>66</sup> Because of this the mind of the author or participants, i.e. the context in which the text was written, is inaccessible to the reader. Due to this definition, Ricoeur<sup>67</sup> sees textual hermeneutics as a form of appropriation. What is appropriated is meaning; the context in which the meaning that exists within the text itself is through interpretation appropriated and made ones own. This characterization of interpretation as a type of appropriation is meant to emphasize the nature of interpretation as being something related to the present, where it seems that explanation is something that exists outside of time and indeed outside of space, existing in what Ricoeur called the 'quasi world of texts'<sup>68</sup> and deals only with the internal structure of the text.

Ricoeur<sup>69</sup> said that explaining something is to bring out the structure, the internal relationships, of a text. To interpret is to follow the train of thought opened by the text and to place oneself, the reader, towards the direction of thought displayed by the text. This direction is not necessarily the presumed intention of the author but instead what the text means for whoever reads it and works within its apparent train of thought. While scholars such as Bell<sup>70</sup> have critiqued this approach as being subjective, such critiques are not necessarily relevant to non-scholarly interpreters of text, such as many Pagans, who have their own motivations for their interpretations. Significantly, this process is similar to what is described by communication theorists, discussed further in chapter six of this thesis.

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<sup>66</sup> 'What is Text?', p. 107.

<sup>67</sup> 'What is Text?', pp. 119-20.

<sup>68</sup> As readers we can do one of two things. On the one hand we can leave the text in this void, without either world or author, without speech as it were, and then explain the text in terms of its structure. On the other hand we can interpret the text, which Ricoeur saw as placing back into the world of speech, making it again a living form of communication ('What is Text?', p. 113).

<sup>69</sup> 'What is Text?', pp. 121-2.

<sup>70</sup> *Ritual Theory*, p. 45.

Thus we find many Pagans feeling themselves free to interpret a myth, or other text, through a process of eisegesis; i.e. reading into myths meanings in a way that makes the myths make sense to them and their own lives, regardless of the original intentions of the originator of the myth. The interpretive lens of many Revivalist Paganisms, including the Pagans of TOSC, is derived largely from Wiccan theology.<sup>71</sup> This theology recognizes two principle deific figures, the Goddess and the God, of which the various goddesses and gods of the world's peoples are cultural manifestations. In turn, the Goddess and the God are sometimes seen as being manifestations of a larger transcendent deity that is more or less unknowable and inaccessible, thus the emphasis of Wiccan theology is upon its practical duotheism; upon the knowable Goddess and God.<sup>72</sup> As will be demonstrated this lens plays a significant role in determining how myths, as well as the figures within those myths, are understood and expressed within the rituals of TOSC.

Significantly, while the particular interpretive lens here discussed is derived from Wiccan theology, the methodology behind it is in not necessarily unique to Wicca or modern Paganisms. This methodology has been traced back to

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<sup>71</sup> Theology is term developed by Isaac Bonewits in 1974 and included it in the glossary of the revised edition of *Real Magic*. Herein Bonewits (Philip Emmons Isaac Bonewits, *Real Magic: An Introductory Treatise on the Basic Principles of Yellow Magic (Revised Edition)*, (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1989) defined 'theology' as 'intellectual speculations concerning the nature of the Goddess and Her relations to the world in general and humans in particular; rational explanations of religious doctrines, practices and beliefs, which may or may not bear any connection to any religion as actually conceived and practiced by the majority of its members' (p. 268).

<sup>72</sup> Cunningham, *SP*, p. 9. This thesis suggests the term 'practical duotheism' because while some forms of Wicca understand the existence of a transcendent deity, in practical application of Wiccan theology the dual forms of the Goddess and God are focused upon rather than the transcendent and unknowable deity behind them. While perhaps expressed in the simplest of manners by Buckland, the model of Wiccan duotheism, sometimes with and sometimes without the inclusion of a transcendent deity, is also found in Ravenwolf (*BS*, pp.43-4), Starhawk (*SD*, pp.27-8), Farrar and Farrar (*Witches' Goddess*, p. 7-12) and Buckland (pp. 1-2) but also in the writings of other Pagan authors such as Paul V. Beyerl (p. 2) and Caitlín Matthews (*The Elements of the Goddess*, (Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books Limited, 1989), pp. 3-24) and is discussed at length by Amber Laine Fisher (p. 45-71).

Enlightenment and Reformation thinkers such as Calvin and Zwingli.<sup>73</sup> This mode of thought was derived from the notion that the word 'religion' referred to something that was 'personal, inner and transcendentally oriented.'<sup>74</sup> Hans Frei saw in this hermeneutical approach an attempt by the interpreter to use their own life experiences to interpret scripture instead of scripture being used to interpret one's life experiences. Where Frei complains about this approach, saying that it is a historical and distorted the meaning of the texts,<sup>75</sup> this same approach well fits the Postmodernism of American Eclectic Wicca, such as practiced by members of TOSC. Concurrently, it suggests the larger relevance of the Romantic Movement beginning in same century and its influence on not only eighteenth century thought but also philosophies that are derived from that period, Christian and Pagan alike.

## **II: Myths and Mythic Motifs in the Temple of the Sacred Craft's Seasonal Rituals**

Having discussed the myths and mythic motifs found in TOSC's Sabbat rituals in the previous section of this chapter this thesis will now re-examine and expound them. Not only will the myths and themes themselves be explored but also will their origins. This examination will also demonstrate the hermeneutical approach many Wiccans, the members of TOSC especially, employ when attempting to understand or utilize myths within their rituals. When necessary this thesis will also examine the ways in which these myths have been interpreted within the TOSC ritual context and how they may have been transformed to work within TOSC's Wiccan-derived cosmology.

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<sup>73</sup> Placher in Hans Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1993). pp. 7-8 Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science and Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Placher in Frei, pp. 7-8.

There are three primary sources for the myths that inform TOSC's seasonal rituals. The first two, related, sources rely upon and combine ethnic myths in a wholly modern, anachronistic way through a process of Wiccan eisegesis. The first of these is what this thesis identifies as the 'Myth of the Lord and the Lady,' the second is the related 'Myth of the Holly King and Oak King'. While both of these myths are based upon pre-Christian mythologies from across Europe and the Middle East, they did not begin to take their present form until 1800s and owe their existence to Christian poets, anthropologists and archaeologists.<sup>76</sup> Further, while it appears that these two myths reached their final forms separately they have been connected to each other by Wiccans such as Gerald Gardner<sup>77</sup> and later Janet and Stewart Farrar<sup>78</sup> and Raymond Buckland.<sup>79</sup> This connection is a necessary and inevitable one when their subjects are interpreted through the filter of Wicca's particular form of duotheism.

The third source is that of 'ethnic myths', or myths that originated with some, usually ancient, peoples, such as the pre-Christian Celts or ancient Greeks. These ethnic myths make up the bulk of what would be commonly described as 'myths'. Continuing with the description of the rituals in chapter three, the themes found within the myths attached to TOSC's seasonal rituals will be examined, exploring the Wiccan theological interpretations that TOSC has applied to their rituals.

### **A. The Lord and Lady**

Ronald Hutton in *Triumph of the Moon* has already examined in depth the development of what this thesis has described as the 'Myth of the Lord and the

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<sup>76</sup> Hutton, *Triumph*, pp. 32-51.

<sup>77</sup> Grevel Lindop, *The White Goddess: Sources, Contexts, Meanings*, Graves and the Goddess: Essays on Robert Graves's *the White Goddess*, (Cranbury, NJ: Susquehanna University Press, 2003), p. 31.

<sup>78</sup> *ES, Witches' Goddess, Witches' God.*

<sup>79</sup> *CW.*

Lady'.<sup>80</sup> While the development of what would eventually become the Goddess and the God occurred separately, Hutton found that they were developed through quite similar interpretive processes.

Starhawk, the Farrars and Buckland<sup>81</sup> discuss the Goddess and the God as being the original gods of the ancient Europeans with the Goddess being the pre-eminent of the two, an idea much influenced by the writings of Merlin Stone and Marija Gimbutas.<sup>82</sup> Further, these Pagan authors have seen the Goddess and the God as the deities from which all other deities later descended or are merely cultural manifestations thereof. According to Hutton, however, the history of the Goddess and the God is much more recent.

Where Starhawk and others see ancient deities, Hutton instead sees a culmination of the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was eventually coupled with the writings of mythographers such as Sir James Frazer and Jane Harrison and the Cambridge ritualists. With the publication of Graves' *The White Goddess* in 1948, which we have already seen as being important to author/practitioners such as Janet and Stewart Farrar, the creation of these figures was nearly complete. The figures of the Goddess and the God are common to Wicca in general and are found, as has been shown in chapter three of this thesis, in various guises in the rituals of TOSC.

## **B. The Birth of the Goddess**

While the processes that culminated in the development of the idea of a great Goddess and great God that were once worshiped through all of Europe were similar,

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<sup>80</sup> See especially chapters two and three of *Triumph: 'Finding a Goddess' and 'Finding a God'*. The following discussion of the development of these deities stems primarily from these two chapters. It will be indicated when information comes from other sources.

<sup>81</sup> *SP, ES, CW*.

<sup>82</sup> C.f. Starhawk, *SD*, pp. 3, 264 and Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 20.

it is perhaps unnecessary to say that the deific and literary figures that went into creating those deities were not. Hutton<sup>83</sup> states that it was the goddess Diana who was, beginning around 1810, seen as the ideal Earth and Moon Goddess. Over the next seventy years the importance of 'Mother Earth' in the Romantic Movement grew and as it did so did this goddess' nature, from earth deity to earth and moon deity and from creatrix to both creatrix and redeemer. The Goddess, once Diana, had now taken over the natures of many other goddesses, especially those from Greek and Roman myth. Further, at the beginning of the twentieth century the Goddess had also become an interest of poets and scholars, and would remain an interest throughout that century. These poets and scholars attempted to show, though in Hutton's opinion ultimately failed to do so, that the Romantic idea of the Goddess was also an historical fact; a figure worshiped by early matriarchal European societies before the coming of the warlike and frequently demonized Arians. However, it was through the writings of scholars, especially Margaret Murry,<sup>84</sup> as well as extensive correspondences with Robert Graves<sup>85</sup> that the Goddess came to Gerald Gardner and Wicca

While the importance of the Earth Mother aspect of the Goddess should not be underemphasized, as this thesis has found that she acts as the eternal backdrop before which the unfolding drama of the life and death of the God take place,<sup>86</sup> her triple Maiden/Mother/Crone aspect is also of great importance and plays a significant role in the rituals here being examined. This triple aspected Goddess comes to the fore in

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<sup>83</sup> *Triumph*, p. 33-5.

<sup>84</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy*, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 334. Murry is also the source from which Gardner obtained the terms 'Old Religion' and 'Horned God' (Hutton, *Pagan*, p. 334).

<sup>85</sup> Lindop, p. 31.

<sup>86</sup> This important concept will be taken up again later in this chapter.



Wicca and other modern Paganisms after Gardner's original conception of Wicca in the 1930s and is due largely to the popularity of Graves' *The White Goddess*.<sup>87</sup>

Even though the triple Goddess was made popular in *The White Goddess* Graves appears to have developed her previously in *The Golden Fleece*.<sup>88</sup> In *The Golden Fleece* we see Graves' tendency towards comparative mythography. For instance he has the Goddess say:

I am the Triple Mother of Life, the mistress of all elements, the original Being, the Sovereign of Light and Darkness, the Queen of the Dead, to whom no God is not subject. I rule the starry skies, the boisterous green seas, the many-colored earth with all its peoples, the dark subterrene [sic] caves. I have names innumerable. In Phygia I am Cybele; in Phoenicia, Ashtaroth; in Egypt, Isis; in Cyprus, the Cyprian Queen; in Sicily, Proserpina; in Crete, Rhea; in Athens, Pallas and Athena; among the pious Hypoboreans, Samothea; Anu among their dusky serfs. Others name me Diana, Agdistis, Marianaë, Dindymene, Hera, Juno, Musa, Hecate.<sup>89</sup>

The Triple Mother has at this time a form very similar to that which she will take within Wicca. Graves will describe her as being represented through Hera, Aphrodite and Artemis. The only difference is the terminology Graves used; 'Maiden, Nymph and Mother are the eternal royal Trinity of the island [Majorca, where the "old religion" is practiced] and the Goddess, who is worshipped there in each of these aspects, as New Moon, Full Moon, and the Old Moon, is the sovereign deity.'<sup>90</sup> Thus Hera is seen as the Goddess' Mother aspect, Aphrodite is the Nymph and Artemis is Maiden. Later the Triple Goddess will<sup>91</sup> be described using the terms Maiden, Mother and Crone, but the essence remains the same. As with the Holly King and Oak King discussed below Pagan authors will, like Graves before them, find aspects of the

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<sup>87</sup> Hutton, *Pagan*, pp. 144, 335; Lindop, p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> Richard Percival Graves, 'Robert Graves and the White Goddess: An Introduction' in *Graves and the Goddess: Essays on Robert Graves's The White Goddess*, ed. by Ian Firla and Grevel Lindop, (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp., 2003), pp. 16-19.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Graves, *Robert Graves*, p. 18.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Graves, *Robert Graves*, p. 16.

<sup>91</sup> This is but one of many different aspects of the multifaceted Goddess. See the Farrars' *The Witches' Goddess* for an in depth discussion of the Goddess from a Wiccan perspective.

Goddess in the ancient past in the form of three Fates of Greek mythology, the Norns of Norse mythology, the triple Brigid of Irish lore and even in the trinity of Christianity, as well as in individual goddesses.

### **C. The Birth of the God**

While it was Diana who gave shape and form to the Goddess it was Pan, and to a certain extent Apollo, who gave shape and form to the God. Again it was poets of the Romantic Movement, such as Wordsworth and Shelly, who gave rise to the popularity of Pan as the 'personification and guardian of the English country side.'<sup>92</sup> From the early 1800s to the 1930s and '40s the image of Pan becomes both more civilized from and amalgamated with other deities, especially the god Apollo and his nature as a patron of poetry; however he retains his primary attribution of god of the land or god of nature. Today, as demonstrated by TOSC, this God has also come to envelope other horned, as well as antlered, deities, such as the Gallic Cernunnos. Unlike we have seen with the Goddess, however, scholars do not seem to have been as interested in showing that there was in fact an ancient God of all Europe.

This, however, only tells part of the story of the God, because we can see from modern Pagan sources that the God is not only an Earth God, but also a Sun God. While Hutton does not deal specifically with the God as the Sun God, his mention of the importance of Apollo in the development of the Horned God is significant. Apollo's solar aspects have apparently been retained to match the Goddess as Moon Goddess, with the Horned God acting as a counterpart of the Earth Goddess. While the God as the Sun God retains his singular nature, the Horned God is eventually separated into the Holly King and the Oak King, who represent the fertility cycle of

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<sup>92</sup> Hutton, *Triumph*, p. 44.

the land.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the Farrars describe the Horned God as being both the Holly King and the Oak King, ‘the complementary twins seen as one complete entity.’<sup>94</sup> Further, they suggest that the ‘Oak King and Holly King are a subtlety which developed in amplification of the Horned God concept as vegetation became more important to man. They did not abolish him – they merely increased our understanding of him.’<sup>95</sup> Thus the God takes on either a dualistic or triune nature: that of Sun God and Earth God or that of Sun God and the Twin Gods of Fertility. While the God is seen as having a much larger nature than just these few aspects it is the triune aspect that will play the most significant role in the rituals studied here.<sup>96</sup>

The above discussion, while describing the origins of these aspects of the Goddess and the God, later to be known in Wicca as the Lord and the Lady, does not explicate their myth. In truth there is no, and likely cannot be, any ancient story about the Goddess and the God, for we have seen that this form was developed at a relatively late date. Instead, as will be demonstrated in the case of the Holly King and the Oak King, the Myth of the Lord and the Lady is often treated as an Ur-myth-like framework for the interpretation of extant ethnic myths. This framework describes a cyclical or spiral-like conception of time. Here we find the Goddess, in her maiden form, being courted and impregnated by the Sun God. Under the care of the Goddess as crone the Sun God will die but be reborn of the Goddess as his mother. He will then rise again in strength, impregnate the Goddess once again and the cycle repeats itself. While this cycle is forever being repeated another cycle is also taking place, one that is described by the myth of the Holly King and the Oak King.

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<sup>93</sup> See section B.

<sup>94</sup> *ES*, p. 24.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> The multifaceted nature of the God is explored, from a Wiccan perspective, in depth by the Farrars in *The Witches' God*.

#### **D. The Myth of the Lord and Lady**

The myth of the Lord and Lady influences the totality of TOSC's ritual cycle. Beginning at Samhain TOSC celebrates the descent of the Sun God Lugh into Arawn, a Welsh name for the underworld. Here Lugh is seen as acting as a protector and nurturer of the dead, which ties him into the Holly King / Oak King cycle. At this time the Goddess, in her crone aspect and called the 'Dark Mother' in the ritual, takes over the duties of the God, all of which works under the motif of the approach of winter on Earth when the Sun God is dead and the Crone rules the season. Yule completes the death of the God and also brings about his rebirth as the 'Child of Promise'.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Imbolc ritual celebrates the impregnation of the Goddess, here described as Brigid. The God is described as 'the lord of the coming sun' and 'the bright god' and the motif of the celebration, that of the quickening of life within the womb of both the Goddess and the Earth, which are in fact one and the same, draws directly from the Lord and Lady cycle. Again the motifs in this ritual find completion in TOSC's Vernal Equinox ritual with the God described as the 'Bright God', the light in the 'darkness that is the resurrection from the sleep of winter.'

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's Bealtaine ritual also draws upon both the Lord and Lady motifs but also presents the God as the Horned God. It is the God as the Horned God instead of the Sun God that impregnates the Goddess at this time. However there is little more to say about this ritual as it is perhaps the least descriptive of all of TOSC's seasonal rituals with no speeches and little by way of imagery beyond the description of the Goddess as the 'Bride of Spring' and the God as the 'Horned One'. Instead it appears that the participants and observers of the ritual

were expected to already have an understanding of the season and the deities involved with it.<sup>97</sup> However at the Summer Solstice, which again replicates some aspects of the motifs from the Bealtaine ritual, while completing other, we find the Sun God in his full strength. It is at this time that the Sun God, the 'Father of All things', 'He that plants the seeds and nurtures Life', the 'God of Fertility and Fruitfulness' and the 'Blessed Lord of the blazing Sun', impregnates the Goddess with himself in his preparation for death and rebirth.

Lammas is the last of the Greater Sabbats and in this ritual we find Lugh once again, this time being simultaneously described as god of the harvest and the Sun God. The Goddess is the 'Goddess of the Grain' Inanna. However, the motifs found in TOSC's Lammas ritual are also found in their Autumnal Equinox ritual. It is these two rituals combined, with the addition of Brighid as the 'Lady of the Harvest' and 'Goddess of Transformation' and Ceridwen as 'Keeper of the Cauldron' that seems to make up the last leg of the Lord and Lady cycle; i.e. the figures necessary for the God, who is Cernunnos, Lord of the Harvest in the Autumnal Equinox ritual, to prepare himself for death at Samhain and rebirth at the Winter Solstice.

#### **E. The Myth of the Holly King and the Oak King *or* The Return of the Eniautos-Daimon?**

The second modern myth Wicca draws upon is that of the Holly King and the Oak King. This myth is derived from mythic themes found and described by Sir James Frazer in the *Golden Bough*, especially those sections dealing with death and resurrection and this themes' connection to gods, kings and the 'Corn-Spirit'. This was then built upon in Graves' *The White Goddess* and put into its more common

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<sup>97</sup> This is, in fact, of significant import and its implication will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

Wiccan form by the Farrars<sup>98</sup> by use of a comparative methodology utilized by psychiatrists such as C.G. Jung and comparative mythographers such as Joseph Campbell.<sup>99</sup> The Campbellian comparative approach to mythography, which emphasizes what it sees as overarching themes that transcend cultural differences, is a common Revivalist Pagan mythological interpretive approach, one that can be found in the writings of all of the Pagan authors discussed in the introduction as well as one utilized by TOSC's High Priest. This form also draws upon motifs of the sacrificed God from the myth of the Lord and Lady, which was likewise influenced by Frazer and Graves.

While in the myth of the Lord and Lady the God primarily takes the form of the singular Sun God, in the myth of the Holly King / Oak King the God is seen in dual forms which are representations of the God as a vegetation/fertility deity and are called by the Farrars<sup>100</sup> the 'God of the Waxing Year' or the Oak King and the 'God of the Waning Year' or the Holly King. While there is an obvious and necessary connection between these two forms of the God and that of the Sun God, the focus of these two deities is the terrestrial as opposed to solar. While it depicts the two gods as being especially influential during the Greater Sabbats, due to the connection between these two Gods and the Sun God, its motifs spill over into the Lesser Sabbats,

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<sup>98</sup> *ES*. See especially pp. 21-27, where the Farrars discuss the development of their seasonal rituals in relation to the cycle of the Holly King and the Oak King.

<sup>99</sup> One volume of Jung's *Collected Works* (1968), as well as his *Man and His Symbols* (1964) are both listed in the Farrars (*ES*) bibliography. While Campbell is not, Jung's influence on Campbell and his methodology cannot be ignored (Doty, p. 176). The Farrars' use of Campbell's Jungian influenced interpretive approach on Graves' writings is perhaps ironic as Graves was antipathetic towards Jung, writing that Jung's conception of myth was 'as a delightful timeless world-soup, thickened with innumerable tidbits, all alike reduced to a single fundamental, Germanic taste: sample one, sample the lot' (quoted in Michael Pharand, 'Greek Myths, White Goddess: Robert Graves Cleans Up a "Dreadful Mess"' in *Graves and the Goddess: Essays on Robert Graves's The White Goddess*, ed. by Ian Firla and Grevel Lindop (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2003), p. 185). The irony is furthered in that Graves' approach was not too dissimilar. All of this suggests that such concerns are not necessarily at the forefront of Revivalist Pagan thought in the process of constructing their religions.

<sup>100</sup> *ES*, p. 24.

especially those of Yule and the Summer Solstice, which mark its beginning, end and middle points.<sup>101</sup>

The myth covers the entire cycle of seasons throughout the year and describes an eternal conflict between the Holly King and the Oak King for rulership of the seasons and the hand of the Goddess, who is the embodiment of the Earth itself. A number of seasonal sub-cycles are described in this myth. The primary cycle is that of the sacrificial mating and rebirth of the Holly King and Oak King at Lughnasadh and Bealtaine respectively.<sup>102</sup> At these times of the year the God in question mates with the Goddess and both dies and is reborn. The King dies so that he may go into the ground and mate with the Earth Goddess but must be reborn because, in the words of the Farrars' Bealtaine Ritual: 'Yet if the Oak King is dead . . . all is dead; the fields bear no crops, the trees bear no fruit, and the creatures of the Great Mother bear no young.'<sup>103</sup> Similarly in the case of the sacrifice of the Holly King at Lughnasadh 'all that sleeps in [the Great Mother's] womb would sleep forever.'<sup>104</sup>

The second cycle represented in this myth is concerned with the switching of places of the Holly King and Oak King twice each year. At Yule the Holly King's reign ends and he is slain by the Oak King who in turn will be slain by the Holly King at the Summer Solstice. It is for these reasons that the Holly King is called the 'King of the Waning Year', as he rules after the Summer Solstice when the days begin to get shorter. Likewise the Oak King is the 'King of the Waxing Year' and rules while the days get longer. While one god is ascendant the other is in the underworld acting as

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

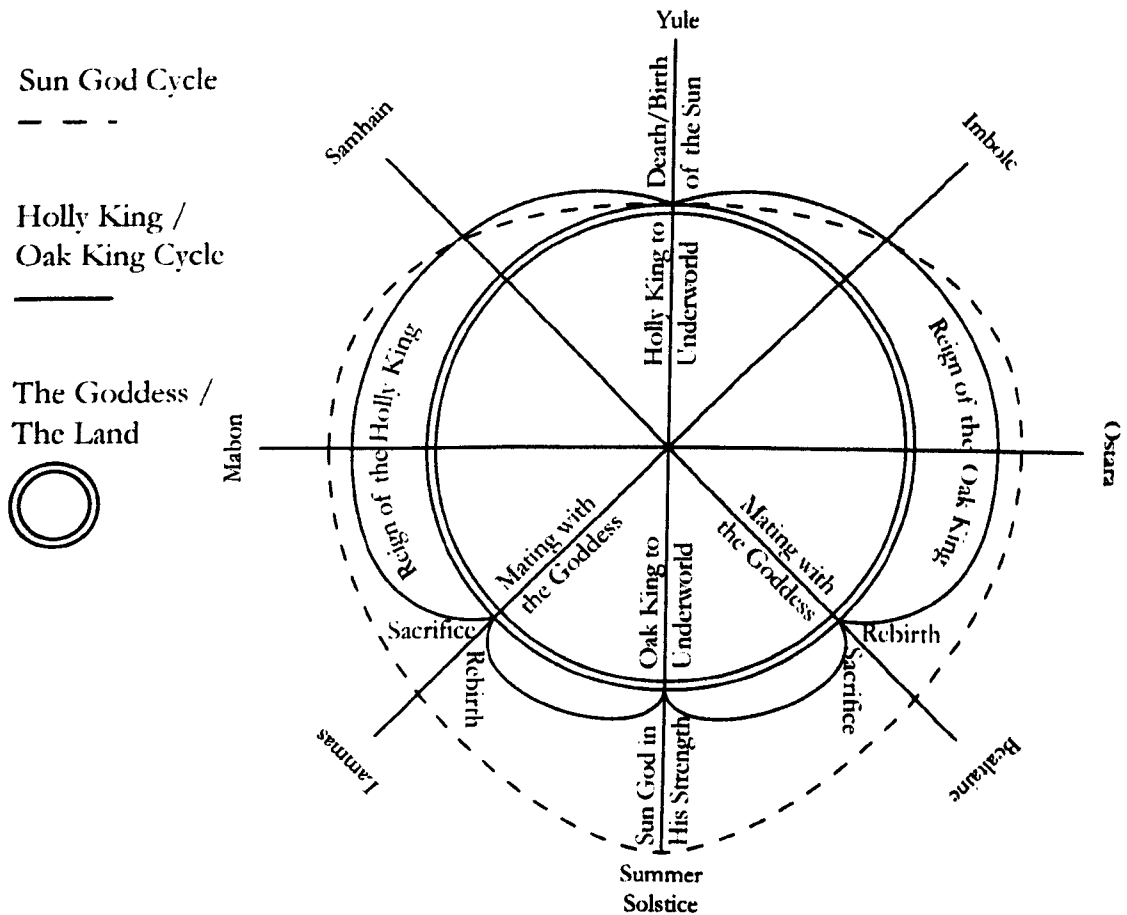
<sup>102</sup> The sacrifice of the Oak King at Bealtaine is also attested to by Graves (*White Goddess*, pp. 416-7).

<sup>103</sup> *ES*, p. 90.

<sup>104</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 114.

the Lord of Death. Diagram four, below, summarizes this cycle and depicts its close association with the cycle of the solar God:<sup>105</sup>

Diagram 4: The Holly King / Oak King / Solar Cycle



While we have been treating this myth as an extant narrative myth this is not, in fact, the case. Instead what is described here is akin to a non-extant, non-narrative Ur-myth that is utilized as a framework for interpreting other myths as well as interpreting extant rituals and designing new ones. For instance the Welsh myths *Pwyll Lord of Dyved*<sup>106</sup> and *How Culhwch Won Olwn*<sup>107</sup> have been interpreted

<sup>105</sup> C.f. Caitlin Matthews (*Mabon and the Mysteries of Britain: An Exploration of the Mabinogion*, (London: Arkana, 1987), pp. 100-3) who instead uses the terms 'Summer King' and 'Winter King'. The following diagram is based upon a diagram found in Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 26. The diagram has been altered to better reflect the cyclical nature of the Sabbats.

<sup>106</sup> In Grantz, pp. 45-65.

<sup>107</sup> In Gantz, pp. 134-176. See Matthews, *Mabon*, for these interpretations. While Matthews is not Wiccan, her and her husband's writings have been influential on Wicca and other related Paganisms (Hutton *Pagan*, pp. 143-4) and their sources are interpretive lenses are similar to those of the Farrars.



through this hermeneutic lens<sup>108</sup> and episodes from the *Táin Bó Cúalnge*<sup>109</sup> and the *Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne*,<sup>110</sup> both of which employ similar motifs and themes, might also be interpreted in such a way.

Graves<sup>111</sup> also makes great use of this 'Ur-myth', although when he does so he focuses on the Oak King aspects and does not use the term Holly King at all.

However, while Graves' use of this mythic framework is significant for Wicca and derived Paganisms, Jane Harrison's earlier work on the Eniautos-Daimon or year-spirit is even more significant. Her conception of the Eniautos-Daimon expanded upon and made larger Frazer's corn-spirit, which was essentially a vegetation spirit or deity. Instead the Eniautos-Daimon represented the complete 'world-process' of life, death, decay and rebirth,<sup>112</sup> which is precisely what the Holly King / Oak King cycle represents. Interestingly, the Farrars do not mention Harrison, though Frazer and Graves are discussed at varying lengths.

This myth is found especially within TOSC's Summer Solstice and Yule rituals and informs and influences many of their other rituals. However, unlike TOSC's employment of ethnic myths, which are here shown to be mostly used to inform and flavour the motifs of the rituals in which they are found, the Holly King / Oak King myth not only informs the motifs within the rituals in which it is found but is acted out with its figures specifically referred to within the context of this mythic cycle.

In TOSC's Yule ritual the Holly King / Oak King and Lord / Lady myths are brought together and both the death of the Sun God and the eternal struggle between

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<sup>108</sup> See section C. See also Matthews (*Mabon*, pp. 25, 100-1) who also discusses this mythic cycle as the Fight of the Summer and Winter Kings.

<sup>109</sup> In Kinsella.

<sup>110</sup> In Cross and Slover, pp. 370-421.

<sup>111</sup> *White Goddess*.

<sup>112</sup> Harison, p. xvii.

the Holly King and Oak King, with the Holly King being slain by his brother the Oak King, are found. This, as well as the death and rebirth of the Sun God are dramatized and these figures are referred to by these names or titles. TOSC's Summer Solstice ritual celebrates the Sun God in his strength and the other half the Holly King / Oak King struggle, with the Holly King slaying his brother the Oak King and the Oak King moving 'to the realms of Annwyn [sic]' where he may 'take care of the souls resting before they move on to rebirth.'<sup>113</sup>

## **F. Ethnic Myths**

The appearances of ethnic myths, while infrequent in TOSC's seasonal rituals, are not altogether lacking. When such myths are found within their seasonal ritual they are influenced by the myth of the Lord and Lady and the myth of the Holly King and the Oak King. Ethnic myths are not found in all of TOSC's seasonal rituals, they appear in only three of the eight: their rituals for Samhain, the Vernal Equinox and Lammas.

The Irish god Lugh appears in both TOSC's Samhain and Lughnasadh rituals. His role within those rituals, as exemplified by his titles and the motifs discussed in those rituals are derived from Irish and Welsh mythology. In the Samhain ritual, while it would appear that the main mythic influence would be myths directly concerning Lugh, such as parts of the Irish *Book of Invasions*,<sup>114</sup> the main influence is instead derived from the first branch of the Welsh *Mabinogion*.<sup>115</sup> This myth concerns Pwyll, Lord of Dyved. While hunting one day Pwyll comes upon game that was being chased by white hounds with red ears. Pwyll has his hounds chase away these otherworldly hounds and kills the prey himself. He then meets Arawan, a king of

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<sup>113</sup> Temple of the Sacred Craft, Summer Solstice Ritual, 2004.

<sup>114</sup> In Cross and Slover, pp. 3-27.

<sup>115</sup> Gantz, pp. 45-65.

Annwyn, the Welsh underworld. To amend for his offence towards Arawan Pwyll agrees to take Arawan's place for a year and defeat his rival king Havgan.

As mentioned in chapter three, TOSC formerly included a rendition of the fourth branch of the *Mabinogion*. This story tells the story of Llew Llaw Gyffes, the Welsh cognate of the Irish Lugh Lamhfada. In this story the reader learns of Llew's strange birth and how, with the help of his uncle, he is able to gain a name and weapons from his mother Arianrhod, who cursed him to never gain these except by her hand. He then was able to gain a wife for himself, after a similar curse from his mother, and how his wife, Blodeuwedd ultimately betrays him to his 'death', shown in the story as a transformation into a decaying eagle and his subsequent 'resurrection', or re-embodiment in human form and his eventual slaying of his slayer, his wife's lover Garonwy and cursing of his wife into the form of an owl.

In TOSC's version, as demonstrated in their Samhain ritual, derives its themes from this myth combined with the framework of the Holly King and Oak King cycle, which is also how Graves interpreted the story of Llew Llaw Gyffes and Blodeuwedd,<sup>116</sup> are employed with the Irish god Lugh being placed in the role of the Sun God or Oak King. This is explicated in the High Priestess' explanation of the Llew Llaw Gyffes myth. In regards to Blodeuwedd we are told in TOSC's Samhain ritual that she is not simply an unfaithful wife but

[T]he earth goddess of the summer. She is the sovereign goddess of the land with whom the sacred king must join with in the sacred marriage to the earth to rule. Her two lovers are the seasonal gods who fight for the hand of the goddess.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Graves, *Robert Graves*, p. 23. Graves treats this subject at length in chapter seventeen of *The White Goddess*.

<sup>117</sup> 2004.

The Holly King/Oak King motifs are continued in part of her explanation of Arianrhod and her children;<sup>118</sup> '[t]he sons of a virgin mother are usually death and resurrection gods ... the light and dark twins who fight for rulership of the year.'<sup>119</sup> Finally we learn that Garonwy takes the role of Llew's twin, the Holly King to Llew's Oak King. As the Sun/Oak King God the story of Lugh in his Irish form is used to teach or remind us of the immortality of the soul and the process of reincarnation by identifying our own souls with the nature of Lugh. This interpretation of Lugh is also found in the writing of the Farrars, who describe him as '[t]he outstanding Irish Young God figure, supplanting the Old God.'<sup>120</sup>

Lugh's counterpart in this ritual is Ceridwen.<sup>121</sup> Ceridwen a figure from Welsh poetry and myth who is typically interpreted by Wiccans, Druids and other Pagans as an aspect of the Dark Mother Goddess, the Goddess of Death and Rebirth or the Goddess of Initiation and Wisdom/Knowledge, and frequently she appears as a combination of some or all of these.<sup>122</sup> This interpretation is derived in large from the beginning of the medieval Welsh story entitled *Hanes Taliesin*.<sup>123</sup>

In this story<sup>124</sup> Ceridwen has two children, one beautiful and loved by all and one ugly who was feared by all. To help her second child, Afagaddu, Ceridwen creates a potion or brew that will grant him wisdom and knowledge. She hires a lad

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<sup>118</sup> Llew has a twin brother who plays a small role in the extant version of the Welsh myth.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> *Withces' God*, p. 199.

<sup>121</sup> There are a number of variant spellings of this name, including Cerridwen (Farrar and Farrar, *Witches' Goddess*), Caridwen (Graves, *White Goddess*) and Kerridwen (Cunningham, *SP*).

<sup>122</sup> C.f. Fisher (p. 66), Starhawk (*SD*, p. 109), Farrar and Farrar (*Witches' Goddess*, p. 209), John Matthews and Caitlin Matthews (*British & Irish Mythology: An Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend*, (London, UK: Diamond Books, 1995), p. 46), Nichols (pp. 125, 147), and Matthews (*Mabon*, p. 119). See also Graves' (*White Goddess*, p. 98) treatment of Ceridwen as the 'White Goddess of Life-in-Death and Death-in-Life'. However, see also Hutton (*Pagan*, p. 322) who argues that Ceridwen was a figure created specifically for the *Hanes Taliesin* poem and who was later semi-deified by the Welsh *Gogynfeirdd* and then fully deified by modern Pagans.

<sup>123</sup> Dating the origins of this story has been difficult. The manuscript in which it is found dates to the sixteenth century, however its contents suggest a ninth century origin (Robert J. Wallis, *Shamans/neo-Shamans: Ecstasy, Alternative Archaeologies and Contemporary Pagans*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 115).

<sup>124</sup> This summary is derived from Graves' (*White Goddess*, pp. 27-29) synopsis of the story.

named Gwion Bach<sup>125</sup> to stir the potion in its cauldron for a year and a day. Towards the end of the year three drops of the brew boil out of the cauldron and land on Gwion's finger, which he puts in his mouth to sooth. As soon as he does this he gains all the knowledge contained within the brew; the rest of the brew turns to poison. Upon learning the Ceridwen attempts to kill Gwion and they engage in a magical shape-shifting chase until finally Gwion turns into a grain of wheat and Ceridwen turns herself into a black hen and eats him, an act which impregnates her. After nine months Gwion is reborn and eventually renamed 'Taliesin', who becomes a famous bard and magician.

The above myth is condensed a great deal by TOSC, and all that remains are conclusions or statements based upon it. For instance Kerridwen, TOSC's preferred spelling for this figure, is once described as the 'blessed mother', which may also be a simple reference to Kerridwen as a manifestation of the Goddess. There is also a single sentence, '[f]or this, we will be silent as we eat to honor [sic] those who have departed and who are preparing for rebirth in the arms of Kerridwen,'<sup>126</sup> that draws upon the death and rebirth themes that are read within the *Hanes Taliesin* story.

In TOSC's Lammas ritual Lugh makes another appearance. In this ritual TOSC's understanding of Lugh comes in part from the *Book of Invasions*,<sup>127</sup> where the origins of the festival are described. The *Book of Invasions* describes the invasion of Ireland by several different peoples, ending with the invasion by the sons of Mil, who are seen as the ancestors of the Irish people. Before this invasion was the invasion of Tuatha De Dannan<sup>128</sup> who must eventually fight the Fir Bolg, the current

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<sup>125</sup> 'Little Fair One' or 'Fair Boy'.

<sup>126</sup> Temple of the Sacred Craft, Samhain Ritual, 2004.

<sup>127</sup> Cross and Slover, pp. 13-14.

<sup>128</sup> Usually translated as 'the People of the Goddess Danu', a race of gods or god-like beings.

rulers of the land. After the battle Tailtiu, Lugh's foster-mother and a queen of the Fir Bolg,

came after the fighting of the battle of Mag Tured to Coill Chuan . . . and the wood was cleared at her command, so that it was a clovery plain at the end of a year, and she inhabited it afterwards. . . . And she desired of her foster-mother and of her friends that from her should be named that place that was cleared by her, and that she should be buried there after death. Then Tailtiu died in Tailtiu, and was buried. . . . Her mourning games used to be performed each year by Lug [sic] and by the kings after him. . . . Lughnasad [sic] is the *nasad* of *Lugh*: *nasad* is an assembly or festival in commemoration or memorial of a death.<sup>129</sup>

Through associations to Lughnasadh as first harvest, Tailtiu becomes the goddess of the land that gives that harvest. As her foster-son Lugh is interpreted by TOSC as being both the 'God of the Harvest' and even as the harvest itself, which is sacrificed for the good of the people and will come once again with the planting season, *and* the sun that begins to 'die' at harvest time, which falls after the Summer Solstice, when daylight hours become fewer and fewer.

Inanna's role in the same ritual is derived from a particular interpretation of the *Descent of Inanna* myth<sup>130</sup> that is again influenced by the myth of the Lord and the Lady. In this myth Inanna, the Sumerian 'Queen of Heaven' decides to visit her older sister Erishkigal, Queen of the Underworld. As she descends into the underworld she is stripped of her royal garments and protection. When she reaches Erishkigal she is slain and hung on a hook in her hall. Eventually she is raised from the dead and escapes the underworld. However she is told that no one can escape the underworld unmarked and that if she is to leave then someone must take her place. She chooses her husband Dumuzi, who is dragged to the underworld in her place.

Sir James Frazer's interpretation of this as a seasonal myth<sup>131</sup> has had a significant influence on Wicca and we find his interpretation within Wiccan

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Kramer and Wolkstein.

<sup>131</sup> *New Golden Bough*, pp. 284-5, 291.

writings.<sup>132</sup> Here we find Dumuzi<sup>133</sup> being interpreted as a vegetation deity while Inanna<sup>134</sup> herself is seen as ‘the great mother goddess, the embodiment of the reproductive energies of nature.’<sup>135</sup> TOSC’s interpretation of this myth draws heavily on this understanding of these deities; Inanna is seen as the great Earth Goddess and is connected to the harvest through the sacrifice of Damuzi as the sacrificed crops, though in this ritual Lugh takes the place of Damuzi.

TOSC’s Vernal Equinox ceremony likewise drew upon ethnic myth to inform it and the way its motifs were expressed. This influence is not particularly obvious in their 2004 ritual. However their 2005 ritual<sup>136</sup> unequivocally demonstrated the influence of the story of the *Rape of Persephone* by telling the story within the ritual,<sup>137</sup> much as the story of Llew was formerly told during their Llammas ritual. In this story<sup>138</sup> the god Hades, lord of the Greek underworld, abducts Persephone, ‘maiden of the spring’,<sup>139</sup> daughter of the goddess Demeter. Distraught Demeter leaves Olympus and searches for her daughter. However in her distress and grief the earth grew cold and no crops grew. Eventually Zeus, lord of the Olympic gods, steps in and has the god Hermes search out Persephone, which he does. Zeus then commanded Hades to release Persephone. He did so but had her eat a pomegranate seed so that she would be forced to return to her, as anyone who ate the food of the underworld must remain there. Zeus eventually brokers an agreement between Hades and Demeter so that Persephone must remain in the underworld for four months of the year and may be with her mother during the rest of the year.

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<sup>132</sup> For instance, see Farrar and Farrar, *Withces’ God*, p.173 and *ES*, p. 23.

<sup>133</sup> In the case of Frazer we instead find Tammuz, the Babylonian equivalent of the Sumerian Damuzi.

<sup>134</sup> Or Ishtar, her Babylonian counterpart.

<sup>135</sup> Frazer, *New Golden Bough*, p. 285.

<sup>136</sup> This was the last ritual help by TOSC.

<sup>137</sup> There was some confusion in the telling of the story, such as the the names Demeter and Persephone were switched by the High Priest. However the overall plot of the story reflected the original Greek version as found in sources such as Hamilton (pp. 51-5).

<sup>138</sup> See Hamilton (pp. 51-5) for a rendition of this Homeric Hymn.

<sup>139</sup> Hamilton, p. 51.

In TOSC's 2004 Vernal Equinox ritual the role of this myth is somewhat occultated; while Demeter was the primary goddess of the ritual little else from the story is mentioned. However motifs from this myth can be seen influencing the meditation portion of the ritual, where those present meditated upon the 'seeds' of what they wished to grow the next year. The mythic influence here draws upon their conception of Demeter<sup>140</sup> who is seen as the 'nourisher of and bringer of Spring' and who 'guides us up from the depths of Hades.'<sup>141</sup> This interpretation of Demeter plays into the visualization exercise within the ritual, where the 'seed' is nourished and hopefully brought out of the depths of mind into manifestation into the covener's life.

## **G. Conclusions**

The three myth sources, the myth of the Lord and Lady, the myth of the Holly King and the Oak King<sup>142</sup> and ethnic myths form a complex interweaving of theme and motif. The Lord and Lady myth and the Holly King / Oak King myth, while relatively new, represent a particular adaptation of themes, motifs and figures from extant ethnic myths. While it is possible for ethnic myths to stand on their own the particular interpretive lens employed by Wiccans, as well as practitioners of other related Paganisms, causes them to be read with either the Lord / Lady or Holly King / Oak King myths, and quite frequently both at once.

In this chapter it has been demonstrated how these three sources of myth have been woven together by TOSC for the purposes of their eight seasonal rituals. In every case at least two, and sometimes three of these sources was found more or less explicitly within each of their rituals. Also demonstrated was how within the context of their ritual schema, much as how the fertility of the earth cannot be separated from

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<sup>140</sup> Who, as mentioned, may have been switched for Persephone.

<sup>141</sup> Temple of the Sacred Craft, Ostara Ritual, 2004.

<sup>142</sup> These two sources represent a leitmotif in their own right as well as a type of Ur-myth.



the action of the sun upon it, these three sources cannot truly be separated from one another. In the next chapter the nature of TOSC's Sabbat rituals, and to a certain extent other related Pagan rituals, is re-examine in light of the present analysis, exploring the idea of these rituals being enacted and living myth. This examination will not only take into account the myths discussed in this chapter but will also look at the nature and role of myth within the opening and closing ritual phases.

## **Chapter Six: Embodied Myths-Rituals and a New Myth-Ritual Theory**

### **I: Hidden Myth and Embodied Myth-Rituals**

The present chapter will continue with and conclude the analysis of the last through the examination of two related topics. First to be examined will be the notion of myth existing within the opening and closing ritual segments. Second, and in relation to both this and the analysis of the previous chapter, there will be an investigation of the nature of these rituals as enacted, embodied and living myths. This examination will include a discussion of the role of magical consciousness and its association with esotericism, the linking of mytheme and rite as well as an analysis of embodied myth-rituals in light of narrative theology, which would ostensibly function well with a myth laced ritual liturgy.

Myths of various types readily and obviously present in the bodies of TOSC's Sabbat rituals, as well as in many of the seasonal rituals of the Pagan authors here examined. However, what of the opening and closing portions of these rituals? Are they completely devoid of myth or are there myths hidden within them and what are the ramifications if there are, in fact, myths hidden in both the opening and closing sections of these rituals along with the more obvious myths found within their bodies?

To answer this question we must look back at the elements that make up the category of 'myth' discussed in section two of chapter three. In that chapter myth was ultimately defined as:

those culturally important, imaginal, explanatory and/or metaphoric yet non-empirical truths that take the form of stories. Myths elicit the emotional conviction and participation of their audience. This participation allows their audience to not only delineate between the lived world of the ordinary and the world of the preternatural, but to also invoke the world of the preternatural, often by means of pointing to the emergence of a thing, be it a deity, hero, place, name, tradition etc., into that world.

While some of this definition must already be altered, such as the characterization of myth as necessarily being stories, much of the above definition is relevant to any discussion of the opening and closing ritual phases under consideration.

Before engaging in this treatment of these ritual phases let us briefly summarize them. The ritual openings consist of four parts: the Grounding and Centring of the Participants, the Purification and Consecration of the Ritual Space, the Invocation of the Elements and Calling the Quarters and the liminal Invocation of Deities.<sup>1</sup> The closing consists of Cakes and Ale,<sup>2</sup> Thanking and Releasing of Deities, Banishing and Release of the Quarters and the Grounding and Centring of the Participants. Again, these are fully described in chapter four above.

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's rituals did not employ the first and last of these segments, grounding and centring, and instead began with the purification of the ritual space. As discussed in chapter four, the purification and consecration of the ritual space has the effect of creating sacred space. The bringing forth or encountering of the sacred was a common theme in the discussion of what myths did and is included in the idea of the preternatural. To connect further this ritual segment with the realm of the preternatural is the idea that the casting of the circle places those within it either outside of or in the very centre of the realm of time and space.<sup>3</sup>

The third segment of the opening sees several invocations, prayers or conjurations, for the presence of spiritual entities from other, non-physical, realms of

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<sup>1</sup> Recall, however, that this final part may be considered liminal in nature, connecting the opening with the ritual's body.

<sup>2</sup> As with the invocation of the deities, this may be considered a liminal phase, connecting the ritual's body with its closing.

<sup>3</sup> This is not specifically mentioned in TOSC's rituals, and their High Priest has told me he understood this to be more metaphorical than metaphysical. However the metaphorical nature of myth is also made explicit within the above definition. Further, while not a part of TOSC's public rituals it is a part of some of their members' rituals. For instance, in a New Moon ritual written by Keith for TOSC's members only rituals has the ritual leader, in this case Keith, declare that once the circle is cast those present are 'between the worlds, where night and day, birth and death, joy and sorrow, meet as one' (Ritual Outline – Waning Moon 4/17/04).

existence. Beyond a further connection to the preternatural these invocations have as their underpinnings mythemes. In this particular case lists of attributes associated with the four metaphysical elements originally described by Ocellus and Aristotle<sup>4</sup> and have since been associated by Revivalist Pagans with various deities through either through invented tradition or recourse to those deities' myths. Whereas the connection to the preternatural only implies a connection to myth the use of mytheme explicates that connection.

The final, admittedly liminal, segment is the invocation of the deities. This segment frequently calls upon specific figures from ethnic myths as well as the Goddess and the God in their various forms. As illustrated in the preceding chapter, even when specific ethnic deities are invoked they are typically interpreted through the hermeneutical lens of the myth of the Lord and Lady and/or the myth of the Holly King and the Oak King.

The first, again liminal, segment of the closing phase again connects the participants to the world of the preternatural but also begins the process of coming back to the world of the ordinary. In this segment, Cakes and Ale, the ritual participants are given the chance to commune with the Goddess and the God through the act of taking food and drink, gifts of the deities, into their bodies. The closing segments continue to bring those within the circle back to the ordinary world and, as they act largely as a reversal of the opening, make the same connections to myths and the preternatural as the opening.

All of the above appear to point to only one aspect of myth, that of the preternatural. However, let us recall the importance of the role of visualization or

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Tyson, *Appendix III - the Elements*, trans. by James Freake, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2000), pp. 719-727.

imagination in magic. Not only does Cunningham<sup>5</sup> consider imagination one of the most important magical skills but also other Pagan authors denote visualizations that should take place within the rituals that they describe. This too comes into play in the opening segments. For instance the circle ritually described by the actions of the High Priestess and High Priest, and the pentagrams traced in the air by some of the ritual officers, are not simply traced but are visualized as well. Thus an imaginal component, another key element of my definition of myth, is present alongside the ordinary/extraordinary dialectic. That they elicit the participation of their audience is obvious and necessary; ritual *participants* such as the quarter officers enact the openings and closings, in fact ritual *participants* enact the entirety of any given ritual. Further, the ritual officers are not the only participants; those who are present but are not ritual officers are also part of their enactment. For instance *everyone* present at a TOSC ritual faces the quarters as they are called, everyone welcomes the spirits that are invoked through those calls and everyone who enters the circle is formally welcomed and blessed as part of the ritual.

The ritual opening/closing thus minimally possess four components of myth: they are imaginal, they elicit the participation of their audience, or in this case participants, they delineate between the natural and preternatural and they invoke the preternatural. Further, these parts of the rituals are also culturally important; the ritual format in which these mythic elements exist appear to define part of the ritual praxis of Wicca and are found, in only slightly varying forms, in multiple forms of Wicca. Additionally, as discussed with TOSC's High Priest over the course of the fieldwork, there is a metaphoric component present; while the gods and the spirits of the elements can be seen as literal they can also be understood as metaphors for natural

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<sup>5</sup> *LW*, p. 113.

processes. Finally, all of the symbols present within the circle, including those that have been traced such as pentagrams, are metaphorical, symbolic and magical at once; i.e. they are indexical symbols.<sup>6</sup>

All of the above point towards one thing: the opening and closing phases of these rituals are in some way mythic in nature. This mythic nature is not narrative for there is no audience per se. While it may appear that these rituals have an audience, as there are people who do watch the ritual, in reality this appearance is an illusion. Instead, all those present are participants in the ritual, even when they are not ritual officers. This has already been discussed in the present chapter. Further, the sense in which a read or recited story has an audience, a person or group of people to whom the reading of the story is directed, is absent from TOSC's Sabbat rituals. Even when someone is standing outside of the circle and not participating the performance of the ritual is not for them as a play would be for an audience as the ritual is not there for the audience to observe and appreciate as a play is. The performance of the ritual and its observation by non-participants are instead akin to two circles that overlap by chance, and the ritual would continue regardless of the presence, or absence, of an 'audience.' Further, and perhaps more obviously, there is no story being told in these phases of the ritual. Thus this ritual phase has the quality of non-narrative myth.

If it is true for the opening and closings of the seasonal rituals under consideration, what of the body segments of those rituals? While it is true that they contain rituals within them, do these segments themselves partake of the nature of myth? Like their openings and closings, TOSC's seasonal rituals are imaginal in

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<sup>6</sup> Salomonsen says of indexical symbols: 'The symbol becomes identical with its referent, transforming into an esoteric symbol. In this realist . . . view of language, linguistic meaning is archetypically, not arbitrarily, conferred upon the world (*Enchanted*, p. 151). See also Lehrich (pp. 119-146), who discusses the nature of signs, icons and indexes and their role in the occultism of Henry Cornelius Agrippa, whose famous *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres* have been indirectly influential on the occultism of Revivalist Paganisms.

nature. Stories are told in them and the participants are brought into those stories through not only their telling but through them being acted out. When the Holly King and Oak King, as embodied by ritual participants, engaged in mock combat those of us who were present could imagine those participants as the God Kings they were portraying.

The preternatural abounds in this portion of the seasonal rituals as well. All the preternatural forces present in their openings carried into the ritual's body. The Goddess and God are still present within the High Priestess and High Priest, the spirits of the four quarters are still present and as TOSC's rituals take place completely within the circle the rituals still occur in that nebulous place 'between the worlds'. New preternatural forces are encountered as well during this segment, figures that were not necessarily invoked in the ritual's opening such as the Holly King and the Oak King. When magic is performed again the preternatural is encountered.

Even as the imaginal and preternatural elements of myth do not stop when these rituals move from their opening to central phases neither do the other elements. Those present in the circle still participate in the ritual: they face the quarters as the elements are evoked and may feel the pain of a dying God and the joy of the Goddess giving birth. Thus they also elicit an emotional response from their participants. Beyond the above example it was found that during TOSC's Samhain ritual, when the dead are both celebrated and mourned, feelings of loss and mourning were plainly visible on several of the coveners' faces. Making up a significant portion of formal Wiccan religious observation, the rituals themselves are culturally important; their celebration appears to help define what Wicca is to its practitioners.

That TOSC's seasonal rituals, along with those other Pagan Sabbat rituals described in previous chapters, partake of the nature of myth is unmistakable.

Nevertheless, it must be asked once more ‘what kind of myths are they?’ As with the opening and closing, it is tempting to take the stance of narrative theology and describe these rituals as a type of narrative myth. However to do so we would have to show that these rituals are telling a story to someone, for this is the basic purpose of narrative. Certainly, these rituals could be approached from an etic perspective where, to an observer, they might appear to be a play to which the outside observer is the audience. Yet, to do so constitutes a break in understanding. These rituals, as they were experienced in the course of fieldwork, were never meant for mere observation from without; they were meant for participation from within. That they contain mythemes is equally unmistakable; the specifically coloured altar cloths, the antlers on the Horned God’s helmet, particular tools representing specific elements, all of these make use of mythemes. Further they are made use of in such a way that they may be indistinguishable from what might be termed ‘ritemes’, or the smallest units of meaning in a ritual. Here TOSC’s ritemes, in ways similar to how the Pagan authors employed ritemes in their own rituals, allowed ritual participants to experience, through the senses, ideas expressed those lists of correspondences with their implied meaning. Thus mytheme and riteme have the potential to become identical in TOSC’s Sabbat rituals.

However the rituals themselves are neither simply mythemes nor ritemes. The mythemic/ritemic elements present within them are often fully extrapolated into speeches and invocations or gestures, colours and movement in appropriate directions. Thus, as in these rituals openings and closings, it would appear that the rituals themselves are a type of non-narrative myths. Yet these rituals are more than simply non-narrative myths as they are not simply being spoken; they are being enacted. So, as the TOSC’s Sabbat rituals contain indexical mythemes and ritemes, i.e., mythemes



and rites that correlate to one another to such an extent that they become, or at least have the potential to become, identical, the rituals themselves may be said to be indexical with the myths they are enacting or, more appropriately, embodying. Therefore the Sabbat rituals of TOSC may become, when fully experienced by their participants, embodied myth-rituals.

## **II: Characteristics of Embodied Myth-Rituals**

As enactments containing both the nature of myths and rituals, embodied myth-rituals, such as TOSC's seasonal rituals, must by their very nature have some of the characteristics of both myths and rituals. Beyond this they also appear, based on both TOSC's rituals as well as those rituals found in the Pagan texts examined for this thesis, to have five primary characteristics. The first characteristic of embodied myth-rituals is that they are embodied through a collapse the categories of myth and ritual in the bodies of the practitioners and their ritual surroundings. Second they are neither ahistoric nor merely historic but immanently historic. Third, embodied myth-rituals are participatory in nature. Fourth they are essentially non-explanatory and finally they are non-narrative. The five aspects of embodied myth-rituals also suggest important ramifications for American Eclectic Wiccan theology. All of this will lead to a tentative definition of embodied myth-rituals.

### **A: Embodiment**

Embodied myth-rituals are such that they necessarily collapse the categories of 'myth' and 'ritual' into a single entity; they are both myths *and* rituals. To ask whether the myth portion or ritual portion comes first or which holds primacy not only suggests that such questions are important but also that there is necessarily

reification of the categories of 'myth' and 'ritual'. Where Nye,<sup>7</sup> Bell,<sup>8</sup> Grimes<sup>9</sup> have all questioned and criticized the reification of 'ritual' as a distinct category, this thesis questions such a reification of 'myth' as well. The embodied nature of rituals in general indicates that under certain circumstances the difference between rituals and myths is in no way clear and suggests that 'myth', like 'ritual', is not only a noun but a verb as well. As utopic or heterotopic forms of embodied communication this should not be surprising as such are associated with non-Euclidian or 'crumpled' topologies where incongruous relations are the norm.<sup>10</sup>

The collapse of myth and ritual occurs within the body of the ritualists and their ritualized surrounding which are 'enspirited' through their ritualization. On a basic level, of course, these types of rituals are performed in bodies and are thus embodied, an idea that has been frequently used to transcend the perceived Cartesian dualism of past theories<sup>11</sup>. Beyond this, however, the understood realities constructed and/or evoked by embodied myth-rituals are given body and physicality, even if only temporarily. Thus the utopic universe described by the symbolism of the circle becomes embodied in the circle itself; in becoming self-indexing the map becomes the territory. The potentiality for this to occur is true not only for the ritual space but for the participants as well.

This suggests a second aspect of embodiment. The participants are able to give body and expression to the realities they are expressing, which are frequently

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<sup>7</sup> Malory Nye, 'Religion is Religion? Anthropology and the Cultural Study of Religion', *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, 20 (1999), pp. 193-234; Malory Nye, 'Religion, Post-Religionism, and Religioning: Religious Studies and Contemporary Cultural Debates', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 12 (2000), pp. 447-476.

<sup>8</sup> *Ritual Theory; Ritual*

<sup>9</sup> *Defining*.

<sup>10</sup> Kevin Hetherington, *Expressions of Identity*, (London: Sage Publications, 1998), pp. 126-7, 128-31. This also speaks to the possible nature of Pagan rituals a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic activity (ibid).

<sup>11</sup> Catherine Bell, 'Embodiment', in *Theorizing Rituals*, ed. By J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Strausberg (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2006), pp. 533-43 (p. 533).

understood to be non-physical intelligences. There is an irony to this expression of embodiment, however. While discarding the idea of Cartesian dualism there yet remains the idea of intelligences that exist distinct from bodies but that can be, and in some circumstances should be, embodied. It may then be more accurate to say that such rituals do not discard Cartesian dualism but embrace it in order to correct it.

These embodied myth-rituals point to a theology of embodiment. Such a theology, in contradistinction to narrative theology, emphasizes not only intellectual knowledge but also, and equally, bodily knowledge and experience. This embodied theology can then be said to either represent an attempt to heal the perceived mind/body divide emphasized by Cartesian dualism or implicitly denies such a split actually exists, or both at once, a liminal situation that may be appealing to many Pagans.

The embodied utopic of Wiccan rituals, however, points to a struggle between the magical world view held by many Wiccan and the ecological world view held by an equal many. Ritual phrases such as ‘between the worlds, where night and day, birth and death, joy and sorrow, meet as one,’ found in the member’s only ritual previously mentioned,<sup>12</sup> or the Farrars’ ‘a boundary between the worlds’<sup>13</sup> embrace utopic stances placing the circle, the magical representation of reality, outside of mundane reality. Such utopic statements, as well as other similar ones that can be found in various Pagan writings, can suggest an idealizing and/or romanticizing of nature and place which may even lead to non- or anti-ecological practices which might logically be antithetical to a religion that refers to itself as a ‘nature religion’.<sup>14</sup> Thus the

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<sup>12</sup> A slight variation of this is found in Starhawk, *SD*, p. 82.

<sup>13</sup> *ES*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> The relationship between nature, ecology and nature religions has been discussed at length by Greenwood (*Nature*) and Bowman.

embodying of metaphysical reality may be at odds with the already embodied world around us.

Practitioners take an opposing view to this conclusion. For instance Starhawk sees the circle as a 'symbol of ecological interconnectedness, having a separating as well as integrating function'<sup>15</sup> and 'kerry'<sup>16</sup> maintains that even though the circle separates the mundane world from the sacred world that it is still important to worship out of doors and in 'nature' thus allowing her to be connected to nature in a sacred manner.<sup>17</sup> Yet these explanations do not directly address or resolve the potential problem and the very idea of 'nature' itself is a construct that has helped to undervalue and undermined the importance of that which it was constructed to replace.<sup>18</sup> Further, such a romanticizing of nature appears similar to the Romantic reaction against the Enlightenment's mechanistic view of nature, which is itself based on Cartesian dualism.<sup>19</sup>

Wicca's embodied theology's apparent contention with Cartesian dualism is challenged in other ways. This can be seen in the Farrar's<sup>20</sup> explanation of why the High Priestess should be the ultimate head of any coven. The Farrar's assert that while men are perhaps more suited to rational thought and logic women are more intuitive and psychic, which they term the 'gifts of the Goddess'.<sup>21</sup> Because magic such as is found in Wicca is ultimately dependant upon this intuitive and psychic faculty that women possess in greater quality and quantity than men, women should lead covens. Yet this assertion is based on an idea developed from Cartesian dualism

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<sup>15</sup> Carpenter, *Practitioners*, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey S. Kupperman, et al., *in a place that is not a place . . .*, <http://community.livejournal.com/paganmythritual/2202.html>, (paganmythritual LiveJournal.com, Last Updated: 2006, Last Viewed: 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Others, such as TOSC's High Priest find it to be simply a dead metaphor that is included, when it is included, more for the sake of tradition than because it has any real meaning to him.

<sup>18</sup> Greenwood, *Nature*, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ES*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

that connected men with logic and the mind and women with emotion and the body. The Farrar's explanation has simply reversed which aspect is seen more positively; during the Enlightenment the mind, and therefore men, were seen as superior but now emotion and its corresponding psychic ability is superior and with it so are women. This is despite protestations that women and men are equal within Wicca.<sup>22</sup>

Yet contradictions within embodied theology and related philosophies are not unique to Wicca. For example, in *She Who Changes*, Carol Christ<sup>23</sup> discusses her own understanding of embodied knowledge from the perspective of feminist process philosophy. In this discussion Christ stereotypes religious revelations, especially those of the Abrahamic religions, as always being infallible and those religions and their revelations as never being subject to inquiry.<sup>24</sup> This is significant as many Pagans hold similar views of Abrahamic scriptural traditions. Because of this, and because it is *possible* that the authority that someone with a (infallible) revelation is sometimes abused, Christ declares that it is better to assume that this will always be the case and therefore one should never submit oneself to the authority of such a religion or religious figure.<sup>25</sup> Christ then talks about how personal experience and not the revelations of another should be what we should all rely upon. Christ is conscious of the fact that we may fool ourselves into believing that our experiences are more than what they actually are and so also says that reason should be applied to our interpretations of our experiences.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Similar views, and protestations to the contrary can be found in the feminist Pagan writings of Starhawk and amongst the Reclaiming Witches (Starhawk, *SD*, pp. 3, 30. c.f. Salomonsen, *Enchanted*, pp. 82-4).

<sup>23</sup> NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, Chapter 6.

<sup>24</sup> pp. 143-4.

<sup>25</sup> p. 145.

<sup>26</sup> pp. 157-9.

While Christ, a proponent of process philosophy, is generally supportive of what she calls ‘embodied and embedded knowing’<sup>27</sup> the heavy reliance upon internet demagoguery that Cowan<sup>28</sup> writes of would be of concern to Christ as it suggests that these Pagans are taking their insights and revelations uncritically and as infallible truths, even in the face of contrary information. Without applying rationality to those revelations and by ignoring the possibility of our own fallibility and ability to misinterpret even those things occurring within our own bodies, Christ believes that such people are making the mistake of placing their whole trust in something that is fragmentary and limited. It is only when ‘we do not expect certainty or infallibility from any source, not even from our inner selves’<sup>29</sup> that embodied knowing can be truly useful and safe. Concurrently, notes Christ,<sup>30</sup> that even those Paganisms that stress the importance of not relying on external sources for authority still effectively do so. For an example of this she cites Doreen Valiente’s rendition of the ‘Charge of the Goddess’ which for years she presented, possibly under Gerald Gardner’s guidance, it as an ancient charge and therefore authoritative. Further, says Christ, some Wiccan covens, as well as other Paganisms who employ the Charge, still teach their members that the Charge was revealed by the Goddess or is an ancient secret, handed down from a hoary, and therefore legitimising past, even though Valiente has since taken credit for the Charge as it is known today.

In this discussion Christ cleverly refrains from referring to ones own experiences, even if they are experiences that we might believe come from God, or the gods, as revelations. Neither does she indicate why one might be incapable of applying reason to the teachings of revealed religions. Both of these issues appear to

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<sup>27</sup> p. 169.

<sup>28</sup> *Cyberhenge*

<sup>29</sup> p. 163.

<sup>30</sup> p. 152.

stem from Christ's notion that all revelations are considered by their adherents to be infallible and inarguable. Thus as we will use reason in interpreting our experiences we shall not call them revelations as we will understand our experiences not to be infallible or universal nor can we apply reason to infallible revelations because they are infallible and thus not subject to outside reason. Yet Christ is either unable or unwilling to demonstrate that revelations are always considered to be infallible nor does she tell us why reason will not lead me to believe that my experiences are neither infallible nor universal, leaving her process philosophy in as much as a conundrum as a nature religionist who romanticizes nature.

Christ's conundrum aside, she demonstrates two important points. First, the idea of embodiment, though becoming more popular in numerous fields of study, including ritual studies, can be easily agendized. Importantly, Christ's apparent anti-revelatory agenda is one that is echoed by many revivalist Pagans who may never the less not only hold their personal experiences but personal revelations from the gods to be hegemonically true. This may, in turn, feed the frequently political agendas behind both utopic and heterotypic ideologies such as can be found buried within Wiccan ritual processes.

Second, though equally important, Christ's work suggests that one does not need to be a Pagan<sup>31</sup> to have an embodied way of knowing about the world. Therefore we may posit that embodied myth-rituals are also not necessarily specific to TOSC, Wicca or modern Paganisms in general. Instead they should be looked for in numerous religious traditions, possibly, as has already been suggested, not as an attempt to deny Cartesian dualism but to heal it. Embodied myth-rituals can theoretically also be found outside of religion, such as in the initiation rituals of the

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<sup>31</sup> Even though Christ herself identifies as a feminist Goddess worshiper (ibid, p. 168).

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn or Freemasonry, though it must be admitted that in both instances these rituals have significant religious overtones. However, it is equally true that not all rituals will necessarily become embodied myth-rituals; every ritual, along with its enactors, must be approached and examined separately and within its own context. Given the mythic nature of embodied myth-rituals it is also possible that they, like other types of myths, may go through different phases. For instance what might at one time be an embodied myth-ritual may later become play for the enjoyment of an audience and a performance that was originally a play may at some point become an embodied myth-ritual.

### **B: Immanently Historic**

In embodying the disembodied eternal, which cannot have a body, a temporal thing, these rituals function to transcend lineal time through a utopic discourse. By describing embodied myth-rituals as being immanently historic it is understood that they do not exist either out of time or some time in the distant past but exist in the continuous here and now while simultaneously existing in mythical space/time.<sup>32</sup> While this is true of all TOSC's seasonal embodied myth-rituals it can be demonstrated best through their solstice rituals that employ the Myth of the Holly King and the Oak King. While this myth may appear to exist in what Eliade called 'primordial time',<sup>33</sup> the time of the gods that somehow existed before the time of humanity or 'historical time', this is not entirely the case. Rather, as this myth encompasses the whole of the seasonal year, it is continuously being played out all around us. Even though this myth is immanent it also exists in the realm of mythical

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<sup>32</sup> As Armstrong put it, '[a] myth . . . is an event that . . . happened once, but which also happens all the time' (Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, (NY: Canongate, 2005), p. 106). C.f. the myth of Attis in Neoplatonic ideology (Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 226).

<sup>33</sup> *Myth and Reality*, p. 5.



time as it points its participants not only to the present but also to the past and the future by referring to previous and future seasons. By embodying this myth, as well as the similarly immanent and eternal myth of the Lord and the Lady,<sup>34</sup> TOSC's seasonal embodied myth-rituals, as well as those of other Wiccans and Revivalist Pagans such as the Farrars, Buckland and Starhawk, partake of this characteristic. Beyond this, as a type of ritual, these embodied myth-rituals *must* take place in both the here and now. As they may also be said to take place in mythical time and space they suggest an interesting form of space/time liminality.

That embodied myth-rituals are non-narrative in nature is not only significant in its own right but is also contradictory to the assumptions of narrative theology. This relatively new form of theological inquiry affirms that narratives make up the underpinnings of theology and rituals.<sup>35</sup> Anderson and Foley affirm,<sup>36</sup> though give no evidence to support, that narratives underpin all rituals and that the purpose of ritual is the creation and *dissemination* of meaning. The views of narrative theology can in this light be seen as being representative of more orthodox understandings of what myths are; i.e. stories, and therefore in direct opposition to the findings of this thesis and must therefore be more deeply examined.

The above understanding of narrative myth as the foundation of ritual is elaborated in the narrative theologian's idea that the self is constructed through narrative, which is seen as the primary way through which self-reflexivity, and thus

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<sup>34</sup> Recall that it has been demonstrated that both of these myths to act as interpretive lenses through which other, ethnic, seasonal myths are interpreted.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction*, (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, 'Ritual and Narrative, Worship and Pastoral Care, and the Work of Pastoral Supervision', *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry*, 19 (1998-1999), 13-24, pp. 16, 18.

self-knowledge, can be achieved.<sup>37</sup> However this focuses on a mind/body divide, the existence of which is denied by many Pagans. This is reflected in the non-explanatory nature of TOSC's seasonal embodied myth-rituals. Rather than focusing on explanation and knowledge, their embodied myth-rituals focus upon experience to encompass both the mind and the body as a single entity.<sup>38</sup>

By being immanently historical these seasonal embodied myth-rituals challenge the primacy of time accorded by narrative theology.<sup>39</sup> They do this by showing the importance of not only time but also space. By taking place at all, place, or space, is implicitly alluded to, for to take place is to exist not only in time but also in space. Further, there is a deep emphasis on space within these embodied myth-rituals; nearly the whole of the openings and closings of the ritual outline focus on preparing sacred *space*. By focusing on space as well as time Pagans thus also focus on the body that exists in and interacts with the space it occupies and lives in.

### **C. Participation and Magical Consciousness**

The second characteristic of these embodied myth-rituals is that they are participatory in nature. This recalls Grimes' 'animated person' and 'enspirited' performances.<sup>40</sup> However here the myths are not only animated and enspirited but also embodied and enlivened. These embodied myth-rituals are given life by those who are engaged with them as part of what this thesis calls the 'lived world of the preternatural,' which is brought into, and in some manner even temporarily conjoined to, the lived world of the ordinary.

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<sup>37</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, 'Of Words the Speaker, of Deeds the Doer', *The Journal of Religion*, 66 (1989), 1-17, p. 10. This idea is also present in Rees' understanding of 'personal myths'; see section I, part A of chapter five above.

<sup>38</sup> Such a reliance upon experiencing myths through rituals further connects TOSC's practices to those of esoteric spirituality, wherein '[t]he revealed narrative of myth, on which [the theosophic or esoteric mindset] rests is there to be relived, under penalty of dissipating in abstract notions. . . . it is the experience . . . that assures the grasp of the mythic experience' (Faivre, p. 29).

<sup>39</sup> Goldberg; Grimes, *Of Words*.

<sup>40</sup> *Defining*, p. 544.

Entry into the world of TOSC's Sabbat embodied myth-rituals comes through enactments that are employed towards allowing the practitioners to enter a state of magical consciousness. Magical consciousness, an idea developed by anthropologist Susan Greenwood,<sup>41</sup> represents but a single aspect of human cognition, one that relies on and can be associated with Lévy-Bruhl's 'law of participation'. This is significant as embodied myth-rituals are participatory in nature. This view not only holds the common notion of 'participation' within its boundaries but also Lévy-Bruhl's. In this mode of thought 'participation' is seen as a holistic and psychic unity that includes not only individuals and society but also the living and the dead<sup>42</sup> and may be expanded to include the gods themselves.

Furthermore, magical consciousness represents a type of abductive and analogical thought that involves a web of corresponding ideas, symbols and apparent coincidences that are given meaning through participation in this web.<sup>43</sup> This participatory mode of thinking incorporates ideas similar to Frazer's<sup>44</sup> idea of 'Homoeopathic Magic'<sup>45</sup> as well as one of the most common form that mythemes take, lists of magical correspondences, such as those found in Crowley's 777 or Pagan author Eileen Holland's *Holland's Grimoire of Magickal Correspondences*.<sup>46</sup> We see this in the invocation of the East found in the written version of TOSC's Beltaine ritual, which reads:

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<sup>41</sup> Susan Greenwood, *The Nature of Magic: An Anthropology of Consciousness*, (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science and Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Greenwood, *Nature*, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> Frazer defined Homoeopathic Magic as magical practices based on the 'Law of Similarity' which simply states that 'like produces like, effect resembling cause' (*New Golden Bough*, p. 7, emphasis in the original).

<sup>45</sup> Greenwood, *Nature*, p. 93.

<sup>46</sup> Eileen Holland, *Holland's Grimoire of Magickal Correspondences: A Ritual Handbook*, (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2005). Holland is also the author of three other books on popular Wicca and Pagan witchcraft.

Priestess: Here in the East I bring in Light and Air to illuminate our Temple and bring it the Breath of Life. Guardians of the East do I summon you to attend this Holy Rite and guard our Sacred Circle.

[Officer of the] East: I am the Air around you. I am the Breath of Life within you. I am the Wind blowing through you. I am All that I am.

The common correspondences of the element of air include the cardinal direction of east and, through Hermetic Qabalistic sources, the *ruach*, which translates as 'wind' and 'spirit' or 'soul'; i.e. the 'Breath of Life' in the above quotation. Whether or not these three particular correspondences, air, east and the Breath of Life, when taken individually, actually correspond to any particular myth is now irrelevant; they are mythemes through their employment within an embodied myth-ritual.

Such mythemes are not only found in speeches. Colours, such as the use of a red altar cloth in the south and a black or green altar cloth in the north, directions that correspond to the elements of fire and earth respectively, also either make use of pre-extant mythemes, or in this case rites that will also become mythemes through their use in embodied myth-rituals. Gestures, too, can be included in as mythemic correspondences. For instance the Farrars<sup>47</sup> discuss the 'Osiris position' wherein the High Priestess stands with her back to the altar and with her wand in her right hand and a scourge in the left with her wrists crossed. This bodily gesture is associated with the Goddess during the Drawing Down the Moon invocation.

The presence and employment of mythemes in magical consciousness should not be surprising. It is through mythemes, which might, from a modern perspective, be said to underpin Frazer's idea of homeopathic magic, that many Revivalist Pagans, such as those of TOSC, make their interpretive connections in life. It is these connections that are at the heart of magical consciousness and participation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *ES*, p. 40.

<sup>48</sup> Greenwood, *Nature*, pp. 96-7.

Though embodied myth-rituals evoke and involve magical consciousness they should in no way be considered to be primarily a mental rather than a physical phenomenon. This is again demonstrable in TOSC's Sabbat embodied myth-rituals. For example, we can point to the liminal stage of the invocation of the deities. As this thesis has indicated, those in whom the gods have been invoked; i.e. the High Priestess and High Priest, are seen as embodying the invoked gods; that is to say they have become, to a certain extent, or *embody*, the god or goddess they are identifying with, at least for the course of the ritual. Contrary to expectations, though, this does not necessarily include a loss of self; the High Priestess can *simultaneously* be herself and the Goddess.<sup>49</sup> Contra-wise the Goddess can be both herself and the High Priestess. While this state of being is considered to be 'merely' psychological by some Revivalist Pagans this is not true of all such Pagans, who understand the gods to be real, external beings. Thus, such experiences are not only mental or physical but both, and so move to unify the mind and body, or perhaps to obviate the idea that there is a mind/body divide in the first place.

It now becomes clear that to make use of a non-holistic split between mind and body, or myth and ritual, and to give into a hegemony of myth as many have done in the past<sup>50</sup> would be to undervalue the role of rituals that help to embody their myths. Further, as TOSC's Sabbat embodied myth-rituals can function on psychological and mental planes,<sup>51</sup> as do myths through their evocation of emotion,<sup>52</sup> the popular Western conception of the divide between mind and body must be seen as

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<sup>49</sup> This is not dissimilar to a mild state of possession experienced by some Ankoie diviners (Welbourn, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/books/atoms/CP5.html>, Last Updated: 2000, Last Viewed: 2007).

<sup>50</sup> Ivan Strenski, *The Rise of Ritual and the Hegemony of Myth: Sylvain Lévi, the Durkheimians, and Max Müller*, 1st edn, (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> C.f. Humphrey and Laidlaw, pp. 3-4.

<sup>52</sup> While commonly conceived as a psychological state, emotions are instead the product of a dialectic between bodily arousal and the interpretation of that arousal, (Schultz and Levenda 2005, p.126) breaching the illusory gap between mind and body.

being distinctly false. It is for this reason that the appellation of ‘embodied myth-rituals’, myths which are embodied through ritual participation, or rituals that live through their embodying of myth, is so important as it limits, and ultimately aims to remove, the mind/body divide that has been normative in the West since Descartes thought and was.<sup>53</sup>

#### **D. Non-Explanatory**

The third characteristic of embodied myth-rituals is that they are not essentially explanatory in nature. The occurrence of explanations within embodied myth-rituals is, by itself, irrefutable. For instance in one version of TOSC’s Lammas ritual the nature of the relationship between Llew Llaw Gyffes and Blodeuwdd is explained to the ritual’s participants. Further, there are speeches present with TOSC’s rituals that its conveners can use to understand the motifs present within a given ritual. One can even come to envision an entire embodied myth-ritual as an explanation; for instance one might view TOSC’s Yule ritual as an explanation of the why life begins to be visible on the earth again after the winter solstice; because the Fall/Winter-ruling Holly King is slain and the Spring/Summer ruling Oak King now reigns on the earth.

Yet it does not appear to be true that this meaning is inherent within the embodied myth-ritual. Instead, a process hinted at by Bell,<sup>54</sup> and as explicitly found in Ricoeurian hermeneutics, is engaged in wherein the ritual participants engaged in a hermeneutical circle, entering the experience of the embodied myth-ritual and then returning with meaning. However it is not a meaning that is not ontologically present

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<sup>53</sup> Susanne Langer referred to this ‘new epoch [of philosophy]’ as ‘the dichotomy of all reality into *inner experience and outer world*’ and, citing Whitehead, the ‘bifurcation of nature’ (*Philosophy in a New Key*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 22). Langer also predicts the demise of this philosophy and the eventual rise of a new one (p. 23).

<sup>54</sup> *Ritual Theory*, pp. 35-7.

in the ritual. Instead the participants create meaning out of their experience of the embodied myth-ritual, as well as whatever information and beliefs they may have before that experience, drawn through Greenwood's web of correspondences discussed above.<sup>55</sup> This meaning is created through the means of the psycho-semantic indoctrination that Pagans go through when they are learning to 'become' Pagans, mistakenly identified by Luhrmann<sup>56</sup> as 'interpretive-drift', a method whereby occultists of varying sorts, including Pagans delude themselves into believing in magic. Thus it may be a consequence of participation within an embodied myth-ritual to take meaning from it, but this is not its purpose. Rather, its purpose is to enact and embody and through enactment embodiment its participants are able to experience the myth in the first person and present tense rather than as a story about someone else in a different time and place. It is through this embodiment and experience that meaning is to be found, not through narration or instruction.

The above focus on the body and the corresponding focus on experiences suggests an embodied theology, or perhaps theology, given the Pagan context in which this discussion is couched, quite different from the narrative theology that has been discussed. This embodied theology suggests a way of knowing that does not give primacy to the mind but instead includes both the mind and body by means of

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<sup>55</sup> C.f. Lehigh, p. 176.

<sup>56</sup> P. 312. Here Luhrmann believes that when new Pagans become Pagans they slowly begin to interpret the world around them differently. However, studies on Pagan conversion (c.f. Harrington; Harvey), have found that people come into Paganism already believing in magic, the gods, the sacredness of nature, etc. Rather than 'interpretive-drift', i.e., a change in interpretation, what one instead finds is a change in the language used to express those interpretations. Thus this thesis employs the term 'psycho-semantic indoctrination', which occurs as the new Pagan learns the language of their religion and to interpret their experiences through that language, as well as to evolve their theological and cosmological understandings through the utilization of a larger technical vocabulary. This is in no way limited to Pagan conversion but may be found in non-religious contexts, such as a person in a new retail job learning that what was called 're-shelving' a product in their old job is now called 'zoning' in their new one.

experience. Judy Harrow<sup>57</sup> and Ronald Hutton<sup>58</sup> have commented on the experiential nature of Wicca, and its correspondingly high level of import. The importance of experience, indeed it's acquiring of a regnant level of importance, within American Eclectic Paganisms was one of the primary topics of Cowan's *Cyberhenge*.

The focus on experience is reflected in the non-explanatory nature of TOSC's embodied myth-rituals; one should not have the Goddess or God explained in a ritual, one should experience the Goddess and God first hand and come to know them through that experience and through the web of correspondences already known to the practitioner that allows for the experience in the first place. These correspondences that are so important to participation not only allow the participant their experience through a shift into magical consciousness but also simultaneously elucidate the experience to the participant. As Greenwood<sup>59</sup> showed if there is still a gap in the participants understanding of an experience, explanations, sometimes through the introduction of new correspondences, can be sought for after the ritual.

As ways through which the self, the gods and the world can be qualified, the idea of experience, especially in its connection to participation, is related to Faivre's fourth criteria for esotericism.<sup>60</sup> This states that within esoteric mindsets, such as could be found amongst the members of TOSC, there can be no distinction between

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<sup>57</sup> Harrow is a Gardnerian High Priestess and the Chair of the Pastoral Counselling program at Cherry Hill Seminary, a Pagan oriented seminary.

<sup>58</sup> Judy Harrow, *Looking Backward: Gardner's Sources*, Witchcraft Today, (NY: Citadel Press Books, 2004), pp. 177-188; Ronald Hutton, *A Starting Point*, Witchcraft Today, (NY: Citadel Press Books, 2004), pp. 161-164.

<sup>59</sup> *Nature*, p.106.

<sup>60</sup> Faivre's first three criteria are found in note 187 of the previous chapter. The first of the final two criteria is equally important in this discussed and are as follows: 5) An attempt to demonstrate common denominator between different traditions to demonstrate their spiritual unity [such as in the Golden Dawn's and Aleister Crowley's attempts to define as many religious, spiritual and/or magical traditions through the framework of post-Christian Qabalah or TOSC's simultaneous utilization of deities from multiple and diverse cultures]. The sixth criteria is that of transmission or the need for esoteric knowledge to be transmitted in a particular way, precluding the idea of self-initiation. With the exception of the sixth, and as Faivre notes 'relative', (p.14) criteria All of these criteria are met within the context of TOSC and appear in various form in the Pagan texts, with the sixth criterion being present to a certain extent in the Farrars' *A Witches' Bible* (1996). See also note chapter five. note 42.



gnosis, experience, intellect and imagination.<sup>61</sup> Thus an embodied theology, in the words of Bado-Fralick, may be said to:

counteract the idea that religion is *only* or even *primarily* about “belief systems,” sets of abstract concepts, or texts. It marks the beginning of a kind of “paradigm shift,” moving the student into a frame within which practices – i.e., practice that centrally includes the physical body *as the doer of learning* – emerges as equally important to belief or intellectual knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

It is a theology of life, death and rebirth, of dancing and singing, of magical rituals; it is a theology of embodied knowing and embodied practice.

The above points are well demonstrated in each of the seasonal celebrations that have been previously discussed but are perhaps most easily seen in TOSC's Winter and Summer solstice celebrations. Through the embodiment of the Goddess and the Holly King and the Oak King by some of the members of the coven the cycle of life, death and rebirth may be experienced first hand. This experience is shared not only with the principle ritual officers but by the whole coven who not only witness the events as they unfold but are also given the opportunity to experience the emotions that come with those experiences. It also relies on the participation, *sensu Lévy-Bruhl*, of the coveners with nature: as nature goes through a cycle of life, death and birth around us, so to will we. Thus their experience is an embodied one, which in turn explicates and realizes the embodied theology with which it is in a constant dialogue.

## **E. Non-Narrative**

The final primary characteristic of embodied myth-rituals is that they are non-narrative in nature. This means that embodied myth-rituals, when experienced first

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<sup>61</sup> Faivre, pp. 13-14. C.f. Greenwood, *Nature*, p. 29.

<sup>62</sup> P. 119. This is in contradistinction to York in his *Pagan Theology*, which sees pagan religions, in which he includes but does not limit to modern Paganisms, as things that are primarily done and not thought about, placing himself on the opposite side of the mind/body divide. York's view is similar to Bell's (*Ritual Theory*) view of ritualisation as something of the body and not the mind. Critiques of this view can be found in chapter three of this study.

hand, which is indeed the only way they can be experienced, do not tell a story. It is, in fact, impossible for embodied myth-rituals to be narratives as narrations are in the third person.<sup>63</sup> In the words of narrative theologian Michael Goldberg it is a '*telling of a story whose meaning unfolds through the interplay of characters and action over time*'.<sup>64</sup> Yet embodied myth-rituals are not told in the third person but are experienced in the first as an embodied experience, which is characteristic of the non-narrative rather than the narrative.<sup>65</sup> Also, while a Pagan may certainly find meaning in their embodied myth-ritual the explanatory unfolding of meaning is not their purpose.

It is also true that an outside observer could turn the embodied myth-ritual they are observing into a narration. Thus after participating in and/or observing an embodied myth-ritual an observer can tell others the story of what they saw and experienced, and this is in fact precisely what has been done in chapter four of this thesis: i.e. there are written descriptions of TOSC's embodied myth-rituals, purposefully written in a narrative manner to an audience, the readers of this thesis. However these narrations were not the embodied myth-rituals that were experienced but merely textual recordings of them. Such a fixed, textual recording is, following Ricoeur<sup>66</sup> a by-product of the authors' experiences; it represents experiences but, ultimately, they are not *actually* experiences, but merely a by-product of speech.

## **F. Towards a Definition of Embodied Myth-Rituals**

To form a definition of embodied myth-rituals the above discussion, coupled with the definitions of myth and rituals explored in chapter three, must be employed. Thus, we can say that embodied myth-rituals are:

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<sup>63</sup> Baines, p. 87.

<sup>64</sup> p. 45, emphasis added.

<sup>65</sup> Baines, p. 87.

<sup>66</sup> 'What is Text?', p. 106.

those culturally important, imaginal, metaphoric, symbolic and real non-narrative, non-explanatory enactments that are participatory within a ritual context and which elicit the emotional conviction and response of their participants. This participation allows the enactors, those who actively enliven and embody the myth(s) they are engaged with, to simultaneously experience both the lived worlds of the natural and the preternatural, by invoking that world through word, action, imagination, thought and emotion.

However, as the first of its kind, this definition is tentative at best. It will be only through supplementary research in the area of embodied myth-rituals will show how useful this definition is. Further, such research should extend beyond the realm of American Eclectic Wicca or even modern Paganisms. By doing so the universality, or lack there of, of this theory and definition can be tested fully. It must also be kept in mind that not all rituals involving myth in some manner are necessarily embodied myth-rituals, as embodied myth-rituals rely upon the participation of its enactors. Because of the requirement of participation, *sensu Lévy-Bruhl*, it is also true that what one person experiences as an embodied myth-ritual another person may not; where one practitioner may viscerally experience the slaying of the Holly King by the Oak King and the death of part of the year another may only see to men pretending to fight and kill one another. Without a corresponding shift into magical consciousness rituals may remain rituals and myths, myths.

## **G. Conclusions**

The obvious presence of mythic content in parts of TOSC's Sabbat rituals, as well as in parts of the Sabbat rituals of many of the Pagan texts consulted, given the opportunity for a wider examination of the whole of these rituals for mythic content, both narrative and non-narrative. Through this exploration mythic content was found existing in all levels of these rituals, suggesting they are not only a species of ritual

but a species of myth as well, though non-narrative. These hybrids of rituals and myths, or myths and rituals, have been given the name 'embodied myth-rituals.'

The Temple of the Sacred Craft's seasonal rituals are embodied myth-rituals, or at least have the ability to be embodied myth-rituals depending on the level of participation of the participants and their shifting into magical consciousness. Moreover these embodied myth-rituals comprise a complete embodied myth-ritual cycle. While taken separately each embodied myth-ritual explains and enlivens the underlying metaphysics of the season being celebrated and ritualised through the lens of Wiccan-derived cosmogony. However, as the phrase 'eight-fold wheel of the year' suggests these embodied myth-rituals are connected to one another and constitute a unitive and cyclical whole. This is therefore a non-narrative, non-explanatory embodied myth-ritual cycle that fully engages with the Wiccan theology and cosmology employed by members of TOSC.

### **III: Myth and Ritual Theory Revisited**

This discussion concerning embodied myth-rituals appears to beg the 'myth and ritual question' that was introduced in chapter three. Here the theories of the classical myth-ritual schools will be applied and critiqued in light of TOSC's seasonal embodied myth-rituals, along with reference to the seasonal rituals of the various textual sources that have previously been described.

#### **A. William Robertson Smith**

The first point of Robertson Smith's theory is concerned with the non-explanatory nature of myths in relation to the rituals they are attached to. When examining TOSC's embodied myth-rituals, as well as the written rituals found in the Farrars, Starhawk, etc., two approaches to his first point can be made. First, the myths

and rituals can be separated from one another and scrutinized. If this is done we must agree with Robertson Smith, the myths employed either do not necessarily explain the ritual or are of secondary importance. This should not be greatly surprising as the myths involved frequently pre-date the Pagan rituals by centuries or millennia. As has been previously discussed the ritual outline employed by many Wiccans is derived from Freemasonry and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn whereas the ethnic myths, even in their literary form, are much older than either of these organizations. When they do explain aspects of their corresponding ritual, such as in the case of one of TOSC's Lammas embodied myth-rituals, it is because the rituals have been designed with the myth in mind.

This directly contradicts Robertson Smith's second point; that myths are always derived from rituals. In the case of TOSC, as well as the Pagan texts consulted, many myths predated the rituals they were associated with. This can readily be observed in TOSC's use of ethnic myths and even the mythic cycle of the Holly King and the Oak King, appearing after Gardner's formation of Wicca, which was not developed in response to extant Wiccan rituals. Even if the rituals are considered to date from the time of Freemasonry in the mid seventeenth century, thus predating the work of Graves for instance, it cannot be said that Graves' development of the Holly King / Oak King myth was in response to or created from those rituals.

Robertson Smith's assertion that rituals were never derived from myths is somewhat more difficult. While it does not appear that TOSC never created a ritual based entirely on a myth, it did base the bodies of its rituals on pre-extant myths. However the rituals were not simply created from the myths; the outlines of the rituals were already present with only the specific content needing to be filled in. This will be examined again more fully below.

Robertson Smith's final assertion was that rituals were unchanging while their accompanying myths will vary over time. TOSC's seasonal rituals show this to be at least partly true. Over the years TOSC's seasonal celebrations would employ different myths, sometimes depending solely on who prepared the ritual in question. However when the myths changed so did the content of the ritual, though the ritual outline generally remained the same. This simultaneously falsifies and confirms the first half of Robertson Smith's assertion, as while the rituals changed they also remained the same.

### **B. Sir James Frazer**

When applied to TOSC Frazer's first contention is as problematic as Robertson Smith's second. If we take the view that the content of TOSC's rituals were created from pre-extant myths it could be said that this is true, at least to a certain degree. This becomes apparent in TOSC's use of ethnic myths or the myth of the Lord and the Lady or the Holly King / Oak King. However this view does not fully represent Frazer's conviction, which like Tylor<sup>67</sup> and Robertson Smith<sup>68</sup> equates myth with belief. While it is true that the content of a given ritual may be supplied by a pre-extant myth, it is not true that TOSC's beliefs concerning Lammas, for instance, are necessarily derived from the myths it employed in the celebration of that holiday. Instead, the myth of Llew Llaw Gyffes and Blodeuwedd was employed in such a way as to fit it into TOSC's understanding of the holiday, and not the reverse. Thus, in this instance, it is more appropriate to say that both a ritual's mythic content as well as the ritual outline are moulded to fit the group's understanding of the holiday at hand. This will be a key concept in the myth-ritual theory developed from TOSC's ritual praxes.

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<sup>67</sup> Segal, *Myth and Ritual*, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> 1901, p. 16.

Frazer's second contention, that when myths and rituals are conjoined becomes a type of magic, is more problematic than his first statement. This is due largely to Frazer's pejorative understanding of the term 'magic' and his reification of the categories of magic and religion.<sup>69</sup> As discussed in previous chapters, this is a contention that is not necessarily held by many modern Pagans, and within TOSC it was found that magical acts were understood to be simultaneously religious acts. From this emic perspective it is in no way clear whether or not any given 'magical' act is magical, religious or both. The matter is no less complex when taken from Frazer's etic perspective. For instance, in TOSC's 2004 Yule celebration part of the Holly King / Oak King cycle is enacted. However it is not possible to say that this enactment was for the purpose of magically bringing about the 'Child of Promise', the return of the sun or the lengthening of the days. According to TOSC's High Priest that is *not* what the enactment was about at all: it was instead about worship and celebration, as the days will get longer regardless of the performance of the ritual. However, there are times when what Frazer would have considered magic was practiced during TOSC's seasonal celebrations and those practices frequently employed understandings of the season at hand as expressed through myth, again forcing the question as to whether magic and religion can be so reified.

The presence and importance of the sacred king is the third part of Frazer's myth and ritual theory. This part of Frazer's theory is less difficult than the first two. Both TOSC's and Janet and Stewart Farrar's seasonal rituals make use of the language of divine or sacral kingship and employ the myth of the Holy King and the Oak King. Both Frazer's first and second version of the sacred king can be found in

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<sup>69</sup> For instance see Frazer, *New Golden Bough*, pp. 283-4.

Wiccan practice and within all of the rituals here under consideration, whether or not the myth of the Holly King / Oak King is employed.<sup>70</sup>

Frazer's fourth myth-ritual theory characteristic is related to the third and is the presence of the dying and reviving god or king. This is related to the above point in that the Holly King and Oak King, who are represented as both kings and deities, are also dying and resurrecting deities. The Sun God can also be considered a type of dying and reviving god<sup>71</sup> and while a number of holidays within the overall Wiccan 'wheel of the year' ritual cycle deals with the death and reincarnation of the Sun God not every seasonal ritual necessarily deals with this theme, though many of TOSC's did. Even when this was the case, Frazer idealized the dying/reviving god as a vegetative deity. While the Holly King and Oak King do have vegetative aspects, these deities are much more than vegetative and serve to represent all life on earth through their connection to the Horned God discussed in chapter five. The Sun God, while obviously having an effect on the seasonal growth and death of crops and other plant life cannot be said to be truly a 'corn-spirit', Frazer's main metaphor for the vegetative deity.

### **C. Jane Harrison and the Ritual Dominant School**

The first part of the Ritual Dominant Schools' myth-ritual theory, as the school's name suggests, focuses upon rituals as being of primary over myths and thus echoes, at least in part, Robertson Smith's. It goes beyond Robertson Smith as well, by granting that there may be times when myths and rituals arise simultaneously, though this is not a feature found amongst TOSC's or my textual sources' seasonal rituals. This aspect of Robertson Smith's myth and ritual theory has already been

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<sup>70</sup> This is because 'Drawing Down the Sun', or the invocation of the God into the High Priest, is present within all of TOSC's seasonal rituals.

<sup>71</sup> See chapter five, diagram four: The Holly King / Oak King / Solar Cycle.



critiqued above. The Ritual Dominant School's second myth and ritual theory feature is identical to the second feature of Frazer's theory, which has also already been discussed above.

The third feature of this school's myth and ritual theory allows for myths to have efficacy without the benefit of an accompanying ritual. As the focus of this thesis was specifically on TOSC's seasonal rituals this was not a situation that was encountered during the course of fieldwork. The use of some forms of spoken magic in Wicca and other Paganism and as found in the writings of Cunningham and RavenWolf, as well as the non-Wiccan writings of Starhawk<sup>72</sup> suggest a similar ideology of a potency of speech. However these same authors explain that chants and other spoken words are merely the symbolic aspect of the spoken spell and not the spell itself. On this Starhawk wrote:

A spell is a symbolic act done in an altered state of consciousness, in order to cause a desired change. To cast a spell is to project energy through a symbol. But the symbols are too often mistaken for the spell. "Burn a green candle to attract money," we are told. The Candle itself, however, does nothing – it is merely a lens, an object of focus, a mnemonic device, the "thing" that embodies our idea. Props may be useful, but it is the mind that works magic.<sup>73</sup>

Through this way of thinking the spoken word is merely a tool, something that helps the spell caster access 'an altered state of consciousness,' a state of magical and participatory consciousness.

The final feature of the myth and ritual theory of the Cambridge Ritualists is the Eniautos-Daimon or year-cycle spirit. This aspect of the myth and ritual theory holds an interesting place in the study of Wiccan seasonal rituals. As noted in chapter five the writings of Jane Harrison and the other Cambridge Ritualists, unlike Frazer's

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<sup>72</sup> *SP; BS; SD.*

<sup>73</sup> *SD*, p. 137.

*Golden Bough*, are not to be found in any of my Pagan textual sources, nor were the members of TOSC who I spoke with familiar with them. Nevertheless Harrison's Eniautos-Daimon, though not the name she gave to it, is not only present in Graves but is also found in Pagan writings and rituals concerning the Holly King and the Oak King as well as the cycle of the Sun God. Like Harrison, these writings and rituals use the idea of the Eniaustos-Daimon as a type of Ur-spirit; the primal spirit of the year-cycle that manifests in many forms and deities. The complete cycle of TOSC's seasonal rituals demonstrate this well, as through it we can trace the lives and deaths of various gods as they take their turn in the eternal role of the Eniautos-Daimon.

#### **D. A Missing Piece – The Goddess**

The above theories focus on a number of specific details; whether myths or rituals came first and which is more important, the consequences of myths being enacted through rituals, the role of the sacred king, the importance of the typically male corn- or year-cycle spirit, etc. Yet while both Frazer<sup>74</sup> and Harrison<sup>75</sup> make mention of the importance of goddesses or even the Goddess, both ultimately place more emphasis on the role of gods in their myth and ritual theories. At a glance this might also appear to be true of TOSC's seasonal rituals since the *action* of these rituals seem to focus on male deities; we see the fighting between the Holly King and the Oak King, we see the birth of the Sun God and his growth into manhood and his defeat of the darkness of winter, we see the god Llew giving up his life for the sake of

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<sup>74</sup> Frazer (1959, pp. 301-2, 322) notes that at least some goddesses, such as Isis and Juno, were originally superior to the gods they were paired with and that this was at one time reflected in the stations of priest and priestess, whom Frazer said were married and that the priest gained his authority by marriage to the priestess.

<sup>75</sup> In the early 1900s Harrison posited a Great Goddess who was honoured in three roles, the most important of which were the Maiden who ruled the living, and the Mother who ruled the dead, the third remained unnamed. Like Frazer she posited the superiority of goddesses over gods who were originally her children and lovers (Hutton, *Triumph*, p. 37).

the harvest, etc. Certainly there is Imbolc, which is dedicated to the goddess Brighid, but this is a single holiday out of eight.

Yet the Wiccan theology from which TOSC's is derived, as the descriptor 'theology' suggests, gives primacy to the Goddess over the God. This is made explicit in the writings of Gerald Gardner and the Farrars, as well as Cunningham, Buckland, Ravenwolf, and the non-Wiccan works of Starhawk. This is further reflected in the Gardnerian and Alexandrian tradition of the High Priestess being *prima inter pares*, 'first amongst equals' with the High Priest being the 'Prince Consort'.<sup>76</sup> It is also reflected in the seasonal rituals examined in chapter four, though if one does not approach these rituals with foreknowledge of the primacy of the Goddess this subtle fact could be missed.

The Goddess serves as the eternal stage upon which the God in his various forms lives through the drama of life death and rebirth. It is for the sake of the love of the Goddess that the Holly King and Oak King fight and kill one another; through her impregnation life is given to the Earth, which is her body. It is also through this impregnation and through the body of the Goddess that the God is reborn every year. While the God is born, grows up, becomes strong, weakens and dies the Goddess remains eternal; she may sleep for a time and be active for a time but she is forever alive for her death would mean the death of life on earth or perhaps everywhere.<sup>77</sup> It would seem, then, that any Wicca-focused theory of myth and ritual must include not only the God but the Goddess upon whom he so depends as well. This has the effect of making such embodied myth-rituals not 'the beginning of our existence, just as a

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<sup>76</sup> Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 17. The Farrars (*ibid*) go on to say that while the High Priestess and High Priest are co-equal that the High Priestess is the leader of the Coven. It must, however, be noted that this was not the practice of TOSC where, at least during rituals, the High Priest generally took a dominant position to the High Priestess.

<sup>77</sup> C.f. Farrar and Farrar, *ES*, p. 23.

father,' as both Roger Bacon and J. Z. Smith suggest,<sup>78</sup> but the beginning of our existence, just as the Mother.

What, then, is the apparently obfuscated role of the Goddess in TOSC's seasonal rituals? The role of the Goddess is of a primary, though hidden, importance. While the role of the God is surrounded by action and the drama of life, death and rebirth the Goddess is the place where this drama takes place; without the Goddess the drama of the God cannot occur. In this role the Goddess may take many forms. The most common forms are that of the Earth Goddess and the Triple Moon Goddess, both of whom are subsumed, like all goddesses are, in the Great Goddess. These two figures, the Earth Goddess and the Moon Goddess, take the forms of not only the Earth and moon but also the forms of specific cultural goddesses who are frequently interpreted through the lenses of these primary figures.

This drama, however, must occur and makes up the fourth part of our theory. While the Goddess is the stage upon which life is played out, it is through the God that humanity is connected to that stage; the drama of the God is, within Wiccan theology, and as demonstrated by TOSC's seasonal ritual, the drama of our lives. Like the Goddess, the God, who appears identical to Harrison's Eniautos-Daimon, takes on many forms to help carry out his role as the Daimon; the three primary forms of the God are the Sun God and the Holly King and the Oak King. These three figures can, in turn, take the forms of not only the sun and these two kingly figures but also the forms of specific deities who are frequently interpreted through the lenses of these primary figures.

The final portion of this theory takes into account the possibly embodied natures of TOSC's seasonal rituals, as well as Wiccan seasonal rituals in general. This

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<sup>78</sup> Smith, pp. 24, 46.

may be seen as an advancement of the first two forms of Frazer's sacred king. Where Frazer saw the possibility of the 'sacred king' taking on the role of a god during ritual or even being possessed by a god, here we must go further. The High Priest does not simply play the role of a god, nor is he simply possessed by a god, but instead he may *embody* the god in question, becoming the god while simultaneously remaining himself. Further still it is not only the High Priest who may embody a deity; 'Drawing Down the Moon', the invocation and embodiment of the Goddess by the High Priestess, is an integral part of many Wiccan rituals, including TOSC's. Beyond this, other coveners may take on the roles of, and embody, other deific figures as necessary. Finally, moving yet another step forward, it is possible that every person present at TOSC's seasonal ritual may, through a magical and participatory state of consciousness, bring about the embodiment of the ritual's associated myths, transforming it into an embodied myth-ritual.

### **E. A TOSC-Based Myth and Ritual Theory**

The first and primary characteristic of a TOSC-focused myth and ritual theory is that it is meant to describe their Wiccan-based praxes, in this case specifically Wiccan-derived seasonal rituals, and is not a general theory meant to explain all myths and rituals or even the myths and rituals of all modern Paganisms or even all Wiccan rituals.<sup>79</sup> This thesis does not propose to create such a theory, even for all modern Paganisms, because to do so would require a broad comparative approach that would force the researcher to ignore or discount differences in order to create a theory of similarity, much in the vein of Frazer, Harrison, Jung, Campbell and Graves.

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<sup>79</sup> In this it will have a focus akin to, though more narrow than, Robertson Smith's which focused on pre-Christian Semitic peoples and not Frazer's who through a broad comparative approach purported to describe the practices and beliefs of all pre-Christian societies. Further, it must be accepted that it is possible that there are Wiccans whose rituals fall completely outside the scope of what has been found amongst popular authors and a single group. That this group's rituals correspond closely with the writings of popular Pagan authors does not indicate that all groups will.

Therefore a more narrow and descriptive theory has been favoured. However we will consider some *possibilities* of an expanded theory in the next chapter.

The second aspect of this theory responds to the initial 'myth and ritual questions', i.e., which came first and which is primary? The answers to these questions are deceptively simple, for while in all instances the myths employed in Wiccan rituals predate the rituals themselves<sup>80</sup> it is not so clear whether one is primary over the other. If we take the origination of Wiccan rituals to be with Freemasonry, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn or the Ordo Templi Orientis, then it is true that some of the myths were developed later than the rituals, though may be based upon or derived from pre-extant and often ancient myths. Further it must be noted that it is a general ritual outline and not the rituals themselves that find their origination from within those of Freemasonry.

This makes the waters of enquiry that much more murky because the ages of the rituals themselves change dramatically depending on whether they are considered to date from the time of early Masonry, the Golden Dawn a century later or Gerald Gardner in the 1930s and '40s. Due to the fact that Wiccans, such as the members of TOSC, may create new rituals for every Sabbat every year it is also possible to date each ritual from its particular origination date and not from the origination of the general ritual outline. This is significant in light of Robertson Smith's theory that ritual forms were relatively static with only their interpretations changing with time. From this ideology it follows that a ritual's origination date would stem from its original performance, something that cannot necessarily be done with the ever-changing forms of Wiccan seasonal rituals.

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<sup>80</sup> Though a myth may be re-written or edited to fit a particular ritual.

The question of primacy is more difficult and it must be concluded that ultimately neither the ritual nor the myth is of greater import. While myths and corresponding sets of mythemes inform the contents of the seasonal rituals studied, different myths can be utilized, over the years, for the same seasonal ritual. Unlike in Robertson Smith's hypothesis, which posits unchanging rituals regardless of the myths used to explain them, the contents of TOSC's rituals, for instance, also change when their associated myths change. It would appear, then, that both the primary contents of these seasonal rituals and their associated myths are secondary to the goals the ritual creators have in mind, suggesting neither a ritual primary nor a myth primary ritual development but a task-primary ritual development. In light of this we must agree with Kluckhohn who, as noted in chapter three, wrote '[t]o a considerable degree, the whole question of the primacy of ceremonial or mythology is as meaningless as all questions of "the hen or the egg" form'.<sup>81</sup>

#### **IV. Not Myth-Ritual Theory but Performance and Communication Theories**

##### **A. Performance Theory**

If the ideas of the myth-ritual schools are not the point, the question then becomes 'what is?'. Theories relating rituals to performance and communication attempt to fill in the gap left by the no longer relevant myth-ritual question but left by the theory of embodied myth-rituals. The idea of rituals as kinds of performances has been suggested as a way to reduce the difficulties of defining ritual previously discussed as well as explore the connections between religious rituals and other realms of human activity.<sup>82</sup> It also has the advantage that it recognizes rituals as something that is done, something that is active and not only thought about as well as

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<sup>81</sup> P. 320.

<sup>82</sup> Catherine Bell, 'Performance', in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. by M. Taylor (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), pp. 205-224 (p. 205).

to help move away from the idea of life as simply being a type of text to be read<sup>83</sup>

Through its etymology it implies formal behaviour and this, according to Grimes, is the connotation of performance invoked when speaking of rituals.<sup>84</sup> As has already been demonstrated, this notion of performance appears to fit well with TOSC's Sabbat rituals, as well as those of the textual sources considered, especially those with dramatic elements such as the slaying of the Holly or Oak King. This connection between rituals and theatre is, of course, nothing new.<sup>85</sup>

The idea of performance, however, must be criticized in a number of areas. Generically, it has been criticized for not taking into consideration the ways in which many cultures understand their rituals to be somehow distinct from other types of cultural practices.<sup>86</sup> Bell has further pointed out that the language used in those theories not only suggests no more agreement concerning performance than there is ritual but also falls into the same categorical traps as theories of ritual.<sup>87</sup> Letcher<sup>88</sup> has also found that some Pagans object to the idea of performance as being, as posited by Erving Goffman,<sup>89</sup> an ultimately duplicitous act where the actor may be fooling the audience, him or herself, or both into believing the act. As Letcher has found,<sup>90</sup> Pagans understand their actions with magic, gods and spirits to be very real and that simply etically excusing them as being non-existent is a theoretically weak approach.

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<sup>83</sup> Letcher, p. 17; Eric W. Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 7. C.f. Staal who writes that '[r]itual . . . is primarily activity,' in Richard Schechner, 'Living A Double Consciousness', in *Teaching Ritual*, ed. by C. Bell (NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 15-28 (p. 18).

<sup>84</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, 'Performance', in *Theorizing Rituals*, ed. by J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Strausberg (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2006), pp. 378-394 (p. 381).

<sup>85</sup> See, for instance, Letcher, 'Bardism', p.17, Grimes, 'Performance', p. 381 and Bell, 'Performance', p. 205.

<sup>86</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, p. 56.

<sup>87</sup> Catherine Bell, "'Performance" and Other Analogies', in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. By H. Bial (NY: Routledge, 2004), pp. 88-96 (pp. 88-9).

<sup>88</sup> pp. 17, 30.

<sup>89</sup> 'Performances: Belief in the part one is playing', in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. By H. Bial (NY: Routledge, 2004) pp. 59-63 (pp. 59-61).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



A further problem, which is well demonstrated by TOSC's Sabbat rituals, is the idea of audience inherent to theories of performance, as seen in Goffman above.<sup>91</sup> While some Pagan rituals, such as Letcher's bardic performances, have an explicit audience the question as to who the audience might be is not always easily answered. In covens, such as TOSC, where everyone attending a Sabbat ritual is expected to participate we may rightfully ask who is the audience? Theories of performance posit an audience separate from the performers, even when they suggest that the audience participates in the performance simply by observing it.

It is possible to perhaps emically argue that the rituals are performed for the gods. Yet frequently the ritualists understand themselves to become the gods, who then become ritualists themselves. Those not engaged in some form of divine possession appear to take on the role of a witness to the events occurring rather than the audience of a staged performance. This appears to be especially true in the case of embodied myth-rituals. On a basic level TOSC engaged in their Sabbat rituals for themselves, suggesting that the practitioners are their own audience, even if they are not aware of their own dual roles. As there is not necessarily going to be an audience, in the usual sense of the term, this might satisfactorily answer the question. Yet this *unusual* use of the term seems to stretch the performance metaphor too far.

## **B. Communication Theory**

Instead of performance it is the idea of rituals as a type of communication that more accurately describes the embodied myth-ritual. The idea of communication has many of the same strengths that performance has. For instance communication can be understood as a thing done, in both linguistic and non-linguistic modalities. Further, it

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<sup>91</sup> See also Bauman who defines performance as something that is 'put on display for an audience' (in Rothenbuhler, pp. 8-9).

allows one to understand communication as both a mental *and* physical activity, without necessarily giving preference to one over the other. Unlike performance, though, there is no concept of communication being ‘just’ communication or a potential denial of the realness of what is occurring. As Sabbat rituals might be viewed as a type of communication between the practitioners and deities, the metaphor is even more attractive. Further, this fits in well with the ‘where’ theory of rituals discussed in chapter three. As a metaphor communication allows us to look at ritual as a thing, be it a text to be read or a particular activity or practice. It also, however, requires us to look at how rituals exist and are developed in the cultures that produce them. Here we find aspects of ritualisation, for the individual Pagan must learn how to communicate ‘correctly’ within their magico-religious context. This, however, takes into consideration the fact that the practitioners themselves understand their communication as a particular type of practice distinct from other types of communication. As rituals as communication require both cognition and activity, neither of which is necessarily more important than the other, it also helps to overcome the Cartesian divide that has been so frequently criticized in relations to particular theories of ritual.

Communication theory holds that all forms of ritual are communicative and that ritual is thus a *form* of communication.<sup>92</sup> This, at first, appears to be contrary to the idea that embodied myth-rituals are non-explanatory in nature. These are not, however, mutually exclusive concepts. The communication theory of Niklas Luhmann, which well describes embodied myth-rituals rituals as a form of communication, demonstrates that communication is ‘not a transmission of units of information but the *emergent unity* of . . . information . . . utterance . . . and

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<sup>92</sup> Günther Thomas, ‘Communication’, in *Theorizing Rituals*, ed. By J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Strausberg (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2006), pp. 321-343 (pp. 321, 322); Rothenbuhler, p. 53.

understanding'.<sup>93</sup> It is through the perception of these three selections that communication occurs, thus making possible for communication, and therefore rituals, to be meaningless in and of itself due to the polysemy of the rituals.<sup>94</sup> In this way it is possible for one practitioner to understand the same ritual differently from a fellow practitioner, even during the same ritual.

Communication occurs through the perceptions of those involved with the communication. Perception is an active, not passive, process that analyzes and synthesizes various and numerous impressions into a smaller perceived unity.<sup>95</sup> Without the perception of the utterance, the medium or mediums of communication, no communication can occur as the receiver will not be receiving.

Luhmann holds that all communication has within it three types of risks: 1) it is unlikely that the emergent unity of information, utterance and understanding will occur, 2) non face-to-face communication has the problem of reaching its recipients and 3) reaching the recipients isn't necessarily enough, as understanding a communication can cause disagreement.<sup>96</sup> All three of these are dealt with, in varying ways, by rituals in general and thus, by extension, in embodied myth-rituals.

One of the ways that ritual attempt to deal with the first problem is through a large variety of 'utterances'. An utterance does not need to be verbal; it is instead any medium that is used in communication. Rituals can be vastly multi-media in nature, which recalls Grimes' 'animated persons', discussed in chapter three, who need not be humans and further allows this form of communication theory to act as a link between 'what' and 'how' schools of ritual theory. TOSC's rituals, and those of other Pagans, use words, symbolic postures, dance, dramatizations, chants, music, colours, smells

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<sup>93</sup> Thomas, p. 328.

<sup>94</sup> Axel Michaels, 'Ritual and Meaning', in *Theorizing Rituals*, ed. By J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Strausberg (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2006), pp. 247-261 (p. 261).

<sup>95</sup> Thomas, p. 329.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas, p. 331.

and more as types of utterances. In a given Sabbat ritual these utterances are designed around a symbol system that the practitioners have more or less access to depending on their experience, knowledge of the system, etc. Though the meanings of the symbols, colours, words, etc., are not explicitly explained, through the repetition of seasonal rituals their meanings will be learned. Thus TOSC's seasonal rituals are able to reduce the risk in the selection of information and the selection of utterances by the fact that they *are* seasonal rituals, with certain kinds of information being understood as being appropriate to the season at hand with certain symbols being seen as representative of that season.<sup>97</sup> When these condensed symbols are understood by the ritualists they may 'explode with meaning' allowing for greater participation as the participant is flooded with the 'flow of meaning'.<sup>98</sup>

Rituals can still fail to communicate, however, if misunderstanding occurs. While TOSC's rituals do not require identical understanding amongst practitioners for participation to occur, there must be some level of mutual understanding as a group. However an individual misunderstanding does not stop the ritual. Also, as the ritual does not control the understanding of the individual it allows for a multiplicity of understandings and thus a possibility for a multiplicity of participations that will, if ritualization has successfully occurred, be interrelated and interconnected through the collective, social nature of rituals,<sup>99</sup> with the symbols used within the ritual being part of a greater, frequently implicit, network of Pagans and Pagan literature. Through repetition, too, can individuals unfamiliar with the utterances of a ritual gain the necessary understanding. This is at the heart of the process of ritualization. There is a further attempt to increase understanding by having the symbols of any given Sabbat point towards the same thing, i.e. multiple utterances attempting to convey the same

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<sup>97</sup> C.f. Thomas, p. 332-3

<sup>98</sup> Rothenbuhler, pp. 17-8.

<sup>99</sup> Rothenbuhler, p. 13.

**information. As the practitioners become more experienced with their rituals, and as ritualization continues, this can increase their understanding of the ritual, even if they do not agree on that understanding.**

**The question of reaching the recipients is an interesting one, and may not be obvious to the outside observer or one who ignores what the practitioners perceive to be occurring. On the surface there is only face-to-face communication occurring in TOSC's Sabbat rituals or, for the most part, most Pagan seasonal rituals, as they are conducted in person and not through some personal medium such as text messaging or the internet, though this may occur in some situation.**

**Many Pagans and non-Pagans, however, understand there to be non-physical beings; spirits, gods, etc., who are important participants and/or witnesses to the rituals at hand. From this perspective the rituals must reach these recipients as well as those who are physically present. Thomas shows that rituals are a form of not just communication but mass communication, drawing participants to its message. From the magico-religious perspective of many theistic Pagans this is precisely what their rituals do. Through the use of indexical symbols as a type of utterance the gods become present because they are one and the same as the symbols used to represent them, including, possibly, the practitioners themselves. It is the transforming of symbols into indexical symbols that allows the utterances to reach their recipients, which is another reason for the many and varied forms of utterances that can be found. Through numerous symbols the eastern section of the circle, frequently representative of the element and elemental realm of air, becomes what it symbolizes. Whether or not this is true for anyone not fully participating in the ritual, or for a complete outsider approaching the ritual etically, is perhaps irrelevant. As Rothenbuhler points out, socially constructed reality *is* reality and must be adapted to**

just as much as any physical reality and to dichotomize image and substance enfeeble our understandings of both ritual and communication<sup>100</sup> as well as suggest a methodologically weak stance.<sup>101</sup>

The final problem rituals serve to mediate is that of the acceptance of the information, which includes both acting in accordance with the directives involved as well as working on the assumption that a particular piece of information is correct. The more understanding there is of the information the greater chance there is that there will be disagreement concerning the correctness of the information.<sup>102</sup> This has already been demonstrated in TOSC's rituals, where there is disagreement over the sphere of influence a particular deity has; while the participant in question understood TOSC's interpretation of the god Lugh as being related to the sun and grain, they disagreed with that interpretation. Such a failure can, and this instance, did result not in miscommunication but failed communication and with that a failure of participation to occur for that participant.

While all disagreement cannot necessarily be removed, according to Thomas' interpretation of Luhmann, there are four ways in which rituals attempt to minimize this: naturalization through the use of artificial settings, self-reference by employing material objects as utterances, embodiment as a medium for communication and the use of public linguistic forms, such as oaths or confessions, that serve to exclude the logical 'no' by use of a performed 'yes'.<sup>103</sup> All of these methods are employed within TOSC's Sabbat rituals and can be found in other Pagan rituals, both within and without Wicca, as well. For example the circle or ritual space employed in many Pagan ceremonies is an artificially construed space involving the employment a

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<sup>100</sup> pp. 57, 58.

<sup>101</sup> Letcher, p. 31. C.f. Salomonsen's notion of methodological compassion (2004).

<sup>102</sup> Thomas, pp. 336-7.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp.337-8.

utopic or heterotopic ideology wherein a living room or other common living space is transformed into an ordered, subjunctive representation of reality or 'nature'.<sup>104</sup> This is accomplished through the recourse to the other three minimalization approaches: ritual items such as altars in particular areas, candles of specific colours, wands, helmets, swords and brooms are used; there are ritual gestures, dances, and other forms of bodily movement as well as the understanding that the High Priestess and High Priest come to embody a deity and proclamations concerning the accomplishment of an act, such as 'So mote it be!' are frequently made and repeated. It is through the successful mediation of these risks through that allows for proper, or at least felicitous,<sup>105</sup> participation or magical consciousness to occur and it is through participation that these mythically rich rituals collapse into embodied mythrituals.

#### **IV. Concluding Thoughts**

The classical myth and ritual theories, those that were proposed by William Robertson Smith and especially those later developed by Sir James Frazer and Jane Ellen Harrison and the Cambridge ritualists, have formed part of the foundation of both TOSC's and modern Wiccan ritual praxes. While each theory has elements that work towards describing TOSC's seasonal ritual practices and ideologies none of them completely or accurately describe these practices. While this might not seem surprising, as they all predate TOSC and Wicca by many decades, theories such as Frazer's were meant to describe the magico-religious practices of all peoples who had such practices. Robert Graves, who further influenced Gerald Gardner and Wicca, would later adopt this broad comparative approach.

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<sup>104</sup> See note 11 above; Rothenbuhler, p. 15.

<sup>105</sup> C.f. Rothenbuhler, p. 62.

While these three myth-ritual theories do successfully describe *some* aspects of TOSC's seasonal rituals all of them are devoid of one important aspect, that of the role of the Goddess. While both Frazer and Harrison deal at varying lengths with the importance and role of the gods, goddesses are generally relegated to a secondary role. In Wiccan-derived theologies such as TOSC's, however, the Goddess must take a place of primary importance for she constitutes the timeless milieu whereupon the action of the God takes place.

Because of the inability of the classical myth and ritual theories to describe accurately TOSC's ritual praxes they so influenced, a new theory, one developed specifically to describe TOSC's seasonal rituals, must be developed. Such a theory has five principal attributes. The first of these is its specificity; it is designed to contend with TOSC's seasonal rituals, and by extension, some other Wiccan seasonal rituals and possibly other rituals that employ myths, but not all myths and rituals. Second it suggests that the question as to whether myths or rituals came first and which is more important is, ultimately, unimportant. Instead it shows that the creation of TOSC's seasonal rituals is neither a myth-primary nor a ritual-primary development process but a task-primary development process. That is, both myth and ritual are subordinate to the goal the ritual creators have in mind. Third and fourth, the role of the Goddess, and then the God, are explicated, showing how the later is dependant upon the former. Finally this theory takes into account the possibility for TOSC's Sabbat rituals to become fully embodied myth-rituals where the ritual is transformed in such a way that it is simultaneously a myth and a ritual with the coveners fully participating in and embodying the myth-ritual in question. The second and fifth parts of the theory also call into question the nature of myth as being only belief and lend to a critique of the reification of the category of myth. Importantly, the



**theory of embodied myth-rituals is not disassociated from other theories of ritual activity. The metaphor of ritual as a form of communication does accurately describe many aspects of embodied myth-rituals. Instead, the theory of the embodied myth-ritual serves as an additional modality through which certain rituals may be viewed in order to more fully understand their praxes.**

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusions**

This thesis began with what was ostensibly a simple question: when Pagans put myths and rituals together, how do they do so? This, in turn, led to a myriad of other related questions such as ‘what is a Pagan?’, ‘what are rituals?’, and ‘what are myths?’ These final two questions then begged the (in)famous ‘myth and ritual question,’ which asks which came first, myth or ritual, and which is more important. So, from one question arose four more which, when answered together, would serve as a solution the original, as it turns out, not so simple, question. In an attempt to gain answers to these questions, one particular Pagan group, or ‘coven’, the Temple of the Sacred Craft, was observed. It is acknowledged, of course, that while the specific will not necessarily determine the general, the general must be able to explain the specific. This is to say that while the generation of an all-encompassing myth-ritual theory may not be possible based on a study of one group, and such a theory that does claim universality must be able to explain the group. It has been argued that none of the existent theories do. In an effort to extend the study further several popular Pagan texts were consulted in combination with this anthropological approach. The texts were those that Pagans consider to be influential upon their own practices. This not only allowed for a general education concerning Pagan practices and beliefs outside of TOSC but also made it possible to compare living Pagan practices with the textual sources that inspired them. Hence two important sets of data lie at the basis of this study together: a detailed study of actual TOSC practices, and a survey of what may be identified as among the most important Pagan ritual texts. To this was added an important caveat: texts, even when written by ‘insiders’, do not always completely or accurately describe actual practice.

## I. Definitions

The definition of Paganism needed to be addressed as, little by way of significant research has been conducted on the subject. Instead, aside from a sentence or two concerning polytheism or supposed connections to ancient religions, who or what a Pagan is seems to have been taken for granted by scholars of the subject, many of whom are themselves Pagans. In order to define Paganism, and thus what, or who, is a Pagan, as well as what a Pagan is not, we engaged in a history of the term. It was found that while scholars generally agreed that ‘Pagan’ comes from the Latin ‘*paganus*’, the exact meaning of *paganus* is under much dispute. While the typical dictionary etymology, relating pagans to uneducated country dwellers, is rejected it appears to still be debatable whether *paganus* referred to those who did not join the army of God,<sup>1</sup> or acted as an equivalent to the Greek *Hellene*.<sup>2</sup> It was concluded, however, that while all of these definitions may hold kernels of how modern Pagans define themselves, none of them sufficiently defined the term in the context of modern Paganisms. Because of the general nature of the term ‘pagan,’ this thesis differentiated between pagan, referring to a particular type of worldview, *sensu* York,<sup>3</sup> as well as pre-/non-Abrahamic religions in general, and ‘Pagan,’ which would be used to refer to the modern New Religious Movements typically encapsulated under this heading.

Paganism, then, loosely defines a group of modern Western religions that have their immediate origins in the twentieth century. It was found that Paganisms share two general characteristics: an orientation towards ‘nature’ and an understanding that these religions are somehow connected to the ancient pre-Christian religions of

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<sup>1</sup> Fox, pp. 30-1.

<sup>2</sup> York, *Pagan Theology*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Defining Paganism*, p. 6.

Europe and occasionally the Middle East. Beyond this, however, two general types of Paganisms, existing as a continuum rather than as distinct categories, were found: Revivalist Paganisms and Reconstructionist Paganisms.

Revivalist Paganisms were defined as those Pagan religions that consider themselves to be historically, spiritually or mythically connected to pre-Christian paganisms. The Romantic Movement, including scholars, occultisms and fraternal orders, such as Sir James Frazer, Freemasonry and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, has demonstrably influenced such Paganisms. Further, Revivalist Paganisms frequently combine and engage with the religious or spiritual practices and beliefs of numerous cultures while interpreting those practices and beliefs through their own modern perspectives. Alternatively, Reconstructionist Paganisms recognize themselves as being modern religions with no *historical* connections to the pre-Christian religions they attempt to reconstruct. Such Paganisms are heavily influenced by, and explicitly rely upon, academic fields such as linguistics, history, archaeology, religious studies and others. Reconstructionist Paganisms generally focus upon a single culture and historical time period. Employing this continuum TOSC, whose members self-identified as either simply 'Pagan' or 'eclectic Pagan' or 'Wiccan,' was placed on the Revivalist side of that continuum and was found to not be atypical of American Eclectic Revivalist Paganisms when compared to the Pagan textual sources discussed above and engaged in the type of Ricoeurian eisegesis common to such Paganisms. This approach to Paganism is found in other areas of Pagan practice and connects the Revivalist approach to Paganism with its approach to both myths and rituals. Having thus arrived at a working definition of what a Pagan is, the question of what they do, as related to the question of how they bring myths and rituals together, could now be addressed.

While the study of modern Paganisms has been an interest of scholars only recently, the areas of myth and ritual have been a focus of philosophical and scholarly discourse for, in some instances, millennia. This thesis did not attempt to redefine the fields of ritual theory or myth theory. Instead it employed both fields towards a particular goal; the understanding of myths and rituals within the Paganism of TOSC, which can perhaps be used to understand these topics in the broader area of Revivalist American Eclectic Paganisms. In order to do this both fields were examined taking note not only of the various academic debates within them but also the thoughts of Pagans on the subject. It is this latter inquiry that is the more original here and, it is argued, the attempt to ‘get inside’ the group that one is studying is valuable and brings important new insights.

According to ritual theorists such as Bell<sup>4</sup> and Salmonsens<sup>5</sup> theories of ritual fall into one of two camps or schools, what are referred here as being the ‘what’ school and ‘how’ school. The ‘what’ school views ‘ritual’ as discrete things that can, to varying extents, be approached on their own as individual units. The ‘how’ school is much more recent and attempts to not talk about ‘ritual’ as a class unto itself but to instead discuss the idea of ‘ritualisation’ or the social contexts within which people learn what rituals are in their own cultures. Individually these two schools read as though they were individual parts of a single definition; one half being exclusionary and the other half being encompassing. Modified and taken together, in what this thesis named the ‘where’ school of ritual theory, these theories provide a useful approach to the study of ritual and rituals.

Through this approach we were forced to narrow our enquiry concerning rituals. This is because any given ritual exists only amongst the people who are

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Ritual’, p. 7849.

<sup>5</sup> *Enchanted Feminism*, pp. 160-165.

performing it, when they are performing it. In this case we did not simply look at rituals, or seasonal rituals or even Pagan rituals, but specific Sabbat rituals performed by TOSC. Only after understanding these rituals and their context within TOSC can a more expanded theory be developed, and then only in relation to its original context; i.e. TOSC, an example of Revivalist American Eclectic Wicca, which is itself an example of Wicca, that is in turn an example of Revivalist Paganism, etc. All the while it must be remembered that as each contextual circle is crossed any theory so developed must become less and less specific.

As in the processes to understand Paganism and ritual above, this thesis approached the category of mythology from an historical and linguistic perspective. It was found that, etymologically speaking, the English word 'mythology' originally meant 'words about words' and contained notions regarding both non-empirical truths as well as empirical truths. This understanding does, in fact, remain important to this thesis' understanding of myth, especially when applied to TOSC.

Theorists of myth studied for this thesis included scholars such as Eliade, Doty, Dodds, Hatab, and Lévi-Strauss in later chapters. The above theorists, with the exception of Lévi-Strauss, all approach myth in similar manners, but have nuanced their understandings in importantly different ways. Eliade's and Doty's definitions were used as the bases for this thesis' own definition of myth. This definition includes a number of important factors that specifically took into consideration the thoughts of Pagans on the subject.

Perhaps most significant is the idea that myths both delineate between the world of the ordinary and the world of the preternatural and also can grant access to the world of the preternatural. This is significant because it recalls Grimes' idea of ritual having enspirited actors who are not necessarily human and is also an important

link to the idea of participation discussed in chapter six. These ideas link myths and rituals together in important ways that will be discussed below.

This thesis has focused on three classical forms of myth and ritual theory: those from its originator William Robertson Smith and those by Sir James Frazer and Jane Harrison and the Cambridge Ritualists. These theories attempt to discover which came first, the myth or the ritual. Robertson Smith's theory is discussed because it is the first, with Frazer's in many ways being a reaction against it. Frazer's theory, as reported in the several editions of *The Golden Bough*, exerts the most explicit influence upon Revivalist Paganisms, and his writings were known to have been read by Gerald Gardner, the founder, or at least first public figure, of Wicca. Additionally, as examined in chapters five and six, Harrison's idea of the Eniautos-Daimon, or year-spirit, found its way into Wiccan-derived hermeneutics, even if Harrison herself has not.

While some individual parts of these three theories were found to be at least partially representative of TOSC's own collusion of myth and ritual no single theory was sufficient to explain how their rituals were developed or understood. Due to this, chapter six revisited the myth-ritual question and discovered an answer both similar to and distinctly different from those explored in chapter three. This will be discussed further below.

Before continuing to areas examined in chapters four, five and six of this thesis, which expounds upon the topics of chapter three, there are two important points generated from the first three definitions that need to be discussed. The first point concerns the overall methodology employed above. This methodology is based on the approach of definition theory. This theory states that any academic definition must a) reflect as much as possible the common use of the word being defined and b)

consist of descriptors that are not only excluding but are also including so that the definition reflects the broad usage of any complex idea seen across cultures.

These two criteria are significant due to the types of theories that can be derived from any such definition. Such theories must take into consideration the views of those being studied and therefore cannot, at least initially, be universal theories. This has been the underpinning ideology of this thesis, which purports to describe and understand the practices of a single Pagan coven: the Temple of the Sacred Craft. It does not mean, however, that a wider theory cannot be generated from the more specific theory, but it does mean that one must show how a wider theory connects to its originating idea. This thesis does, in fact, suggest connections between TOSC's practices and those of the wider area of Revivalist Paganisms, which will be discussed below.

The second point is derived from the first; when definitions are developed through the above approach a balance between emic and etic perspectives should be achieved. This thesis proposes that such a view allows the scholar to make legitimate connections between definitions from within a single culture or group more readily. Such connections allow the researcher to better see the principles underlying the practices and beliefs of those they are studying, or at least this researcher found this to be true during his study of TOSC. Such an understanding was invaluable to the development of the theory of embodied myth-rituals.

## **II. Exploration**

Chapters four, five and six each examine one of the issues discussed in chapter three, but from the specific context of first TOSC and second the textual sources



influential upon both TOSC and Revivalist Paganism in general.<sup>6</sup> Chapter four is an ethnography of one complete cycle of TOSC's Sabbat rituals. The chapter began by exploring the structure of Revivalist Pagan rituals, which are loosely based on the ritual format of Freemasonry. This general structure<sup>7</sup> was found in several of the textual sources examined for this thesis and within TOSC's own rituals. Cheal and Leverick as well as Magliocco<sup>8</sup> found similar ritual structures in the courses of their own research.

Next, the chapter examined each of the segments of TOSC's ritual opening and compared it to those in the Pagan texts. The four parts of their ritual opening, which includes the liminal 'Invocation of the Deities' phase, contained a number of significant similarities to those of the Pagan texts. Where there were differences it appeared that these were due to the personal preferences of TOSC's ritual writer, which was usually the High Priest. The closing, which is a reversal of the process of opening a ritual, was also discussed.

This was followed by descriptions of the body or central section of all eight of TOSC's Sabbat rituals, which were also compared to the corresponding rituals in the Pagan texts. Because this chapter described not only the TOSC's rituals, but also the mythic components present within them, it served as a gateway for examining those myths in greater depth in chapter five as well as the theories developed in chapter six. Significantly, many similarities, and in some instances direct borrowing on the part of TOSC's ritual writers, were found between TOSC's rituals and those of the Pagan texts. This further embeds TOSC and its practices in the greater world of Wiccan-derived Revivalist Paganisms.

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<sup>6</sup> This has been discussed in chapter one.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter four, pp. 121-123.

<sup>8</sup> P. 10; *Ritual*, p. 101.

Finally, the reasons for differences between TOSC's rituals and those of the Pagan texts were more fully explored. It was found that this was likely due to the nature of American Eclectic Wicca itself. As summarized by Scott Cunningham,<sup>9</sup> Wicca is a religion whose practices must speak to its practitioners. If something does not feel right to the Wiccan, then it should be substituted with something that does.

The fifth chapter of this thesis reports on several related topics. It began by taking the definition of myth derived at in chapter three as a base and exploring both mythic components and different types of myth employed by Pagans in both their religious practices and secular lives. This led to modifications of the original definition to include the possibility of non-narrative myths. Non-narrative myths are myth that do not take the form of stories. For instance, a non-narrative myth may take the form of proclamations put into the mouths of mythic or divine figures, such as the 'Charge of the Goddess', which is common to Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca. It was further found that narrative myths could be deconstructed and transformed into non-narrative myths and that non-narrative myths could be expanded into narratives.

This discussion led to a consideration of mythemes as a base component of myths. However, unlike Lévi-Strauss' mythemes, Revivalist Pagan mythemes can take on specific linguistic units called 'correspondences', which link the corresponding word into a larger web of meaning. TOSC's mythemic thought was specifically cited as an example of *esoteric* mythemic thought, as it fit well into Faivre's definition of esoteric. It was also this esotericism of TOSC's mythemic thought that would serve to further connect myths with rituals.

Wiccan hermeneutical approaches were discussed in chapter five. It was found that both TOSC and the Pagan texts applied a Ricoeurian-like eisegesis when

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<sup>9</sup> *SP*, p. xi.

approaching the myths of ancient cultures. Accordingly, both members of TOSC and the authors of the Pagan texts freely interpreted the myths they employed according to a Wiccan-derived hermeneutics, without necessarily considering the contexts within which the myths were originally developed or the meanings that they might have held for those to whom they were originally important.

With this in mind, an analysis of the myths employed as well as how those myths were employed in TOSC's rituals revealed two Ur-myths that were used as the underpinnings of TOSC's mythic hermeneutics. This thesis dubbed these thematically linked Ur-myths the 'Myth of the Lord and the Lady,' the 'Myth of the Holly King and the Oak King,' both of which came to exist in their present form within the religion of Wicca and were heavily influenced by the writings of poet Robert Graves. It was found that these two myths were used to understand all of the ethnic myths TOSC used in its seasonal rituals. Together, these two myths defined a dual mythic cycle that encompassed the whole of the year and defined it in terms of life, death and rebirth. As was seen in chapter four, these are precisely the themes found, celebrated and enacted in TOSC's rituals.

Chapter six connected the preceding chapters together by focusing on three topics: myths hidden within TOSC's Sabbat rituals, TOSC's Sabbat rituals as embodied myth-rituals in relation to outmoded myth-ritual theories and modern communication theory. After describing TOSC's seasonal rituals in chapter four and discussing how myths are utilized in chapter five, the first section of chapter six explored how these are connected. By relying upon the findings of the previous chapters was discovered that both the ritual openings and closings and the bodies of the rituals share nearly all of the features of myth found in chapter three, with the exception of rituals necessarily being narrative in nature. This in turn was dealt with

in chapter five, which showed that myths could be non-narrative as existing in narrative form. This suggested two consequences; under certain circumstances mythemes and ritesmes can be the same thing and, related to this first point, when fully experienced by their participants TOSC's Sabbat rituals can become what this thesis has designated as embodied myth-rituals.

TOSC's embodied myth-rituals were found to have five general characteristics. The first of these is that they are embodied. This means that they are not only performed in bodies but give body to the disembodied. Not only is this true for the participants but through the use of utopic and heterotopic landscapes it is also true for the ritual space and everything within it.

The second feature of embodied myth-rituals is that they are immanently historical. This means that instead of being ahistorical or only existing in mythic time, these embodied myth-rituals embody time in the here and now and represent the movement of the seasons as they move on earth. Thus they are not disconnected to the here and now nor exist only in the mythic past or even the mythic now but represent the immanent now.

Third, they are rituals are participatory in nature. Through Lévy-Bruhl's 'law of participation' and Greenwood's 'magical consciousness,' participants in TOSC's Sabbat rituals, which included not just the ritual officers but everyone who was present, were able to engage in the lived world of the preternatural, which is conjoined with the world of the ordinary. This was accomplished through the means of mythemes/ritesmes which are able to connect the rituals' participants into a greater world of meaning through abductive and analogical thought and emotional and intellectual participation. Importantly, this type of participation was not found to be

primarily mental nor primarily physical but both at once, thus obviating the mind/body divide and Cartesian split.

The fourth feature of TOSC's embodied myth-rituals is that they are non-explanatory in nature. It was found that meaning within these rituals was not stated within the rituals themselves. While participants may very well have found meaning in those rituals, and perhaps even learned something, those meanings were derived from the experiences of the individual participants and through their connection to the ritual by means of a web of correspondences necessary for participation and magical consciousness.

The final aspect of embodied myth-rituals as found in TOSC's Sabbat rituals is that they are non-narrative. Embodied myth-rituals do not tell a story or simply relate a myth because this implies that there is an audience outside of the myth-ritual to which to tell the story. As discussed in chapter six, this is not the case; there is no audience, only participants. Those participants range from the humans present in the ritual to the spirits and gods who are evoked. Instead of telling a story, embodied myth-rituals allows its participant to participate actively in the myth embodied within the ritual.

All five of these characteristics, which act as monothetic descriptors limiting the overall definitions of myths and rituals, suggest at least four important ramifications for those engaging in embodied myth-rituals. The first of these is that there must be an emphasis on place as well as time; rituals do not just occur, signifying time, but occur somewhere. Within TOSC's embedded myth-rituals the importance of place is doubly important, as the place is the body of the Goddess herself.

Second, the use of magical consciousness, along with the non-narrative nature of embodied myth-rituals, allows the participants to participate fully in the embodied myth-ritual. This means not simply a mental connection but a connection that can exist on mental, spiritual, emotional and physical levels. As a full participant in one of TOSC's embodied myth-rituals a covener is able not simply to watch two others engage in mock combat but to be present at fight between the Holly King and the Oak King and to witness the death of a god. Such participation removes the mind/body divide and no longer gives prevalence to either ritual, as a thing one does, or myth, as a thing one believes, but conjoins them into a single unit.

Third, the embodied nature of TOSC's myth-rituals suggests a theology of a similar nature. Such a theology, as Faivre's fourth criteria of esotericism suggests, has the potential to remove the distinction between gnosis and experience. A covener gains knowledge of the gods and the metaphysical foundations of the world through participating with them in the unfolding drama of life, death and rebirth.

Thus, TOSC's embodied myth-rituals can be seen as a species of both myth and ritual. They allow its participants simultaneously to engage in both the world of the preternatural and the world of the ordinary through the medium of ritual space. They give their participants an opportunity to gain both experience of and meaning from such an engagement.

The second half of chapter six revisits the myth and ritual theories of the third chapter. Significantly, while it was found that individual parts of those theories did have some correlation with what was found concerning the nature of TOSC's rituals, not only did no one theory truly work but all three were missing the same vital component; the presence of the Goddess upon whom the actions of the Holly King and Oak King or the Sun God take place. This discussion also brought to light the

difficulty in establishing just when a ritual, or a myth, actually came into being; making part of the myth-ritual question impossible to answer. To obviate further this question it was found that in the development of TOSC's Sabbat rituals neither myth nor ritual took precedence. Rather it was the purpose for which people were gathering that influenced both the form of the ritual and the contents of the myths employed. Finally, when one of TOSC's rituals became an embodied myth-ritual it was found that neither myth nor ritual *could* take precedence as the categories completely collapse upon one another.

Instead of myth-ritual theory being able to describe embodied myth-rituals it is the metaphor of communication that proved useful. Communication theory allows us to understand rituals as an action that is both cognitive and physical without focusing on one over the other while simultaneously evoking the notion of ritualization, placing such a theory, especially those that insist on communication as not necessarily containing meaning such as Luhman's, within the 'where' category of theories of ritual discussed in chapter two. As a type of communication embodied myth-rituals are able to employ a massively multi-media methodology, including words, sounds, scents, colours, images, movements, clothing and more to evoke a shared meaning between communicator and communicatee. It is through this massively multi-media approach that the type of participation embodied myth-rituals attempt to achieve is accomplished by reducing misunderstanding and thereby eliciting the felicitous response necessary for participation or magical consciousness to occur.

### **III. Embodied Myth-Ritual Theory in a Wider Context**

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the seasonal rituals of a single Pagan coven. Due to the contents of such rituals certain theoretical questions had to be

asked, such as 'what are rituals?' or 'what is myth?' and the 'myth-ritual question'. In the course of research and field work for this study many further questions were raised and, importantly, old universal, theories, were challenged when there was an attempt to apply them to the beliefs and practices of a single Pagan coven: the Temple of the Sacred Craft. Of these challenges the most unique has been the questioning of the reification of the category 'myth' and the necessity of understanding myths and rituals as existing as distinct, if somehow related, categories. This thesis suggests that under certain circumstances myths and rituals can become a single, living, entity: an embodied myth-ritual.

This further implied a failing in the general approach the Academy has taken to the area of myth, which ultimately fails the criteria of definition theory. In order to rectify this issue, this thesis suggests applying the approach of modern ritual studies. Instead of considering myths alone, the cultural processes that help to determine how myths are understood within that culture, must also be taken into consideration; a mythologising process that compliment the process of ritualisation. Such a theory of mythologisation has the potential of satisfying the polythetic and fuzzy or inclusive elements required by definition theory that are heretofore absent.

Generally, this thesis has not attempted to generate a wider theory of embodied myth-rituals and is relatively content to restrict its musings to TOSC rituals. However it has been repeatedly demonstrated that TOSC is fully embedded in Wiccan practices and beliefs in the context of American Eclectic Wicca. This suggests that this theory of embedded myth-rituals may have a larger context than just TOSC. The similarities between TOSC and other Wiccan-derived Paganisms, as well as related Paganisms such as Druidry, imply that this theory is applicable to the general realm of Revivalist Paganisms. Further, the similarities between TOSC's practices and Faivre's



understanding of esotericism implies a potential correlation between embodied myth-rituals and the larger world of esoteric rituals. As esoteric practices are found outside of Wicca there is a potential for finding embodied myth-rituals in other religious, and non-religious, contexts. Beyond this, as myths are employed not only in Pagan and related esoteric rituals but also in, for instance, Abrahamic religious rituals, such as the Christian Eucharist and the Muslim Hajj, both of which employ multiple utterances and attempt to elicit the participation, *sensu* Lévy-Bruhl, of their participants, this theory may be applicable outside of Pagan and esoteric studies.

Be that as it may, the most important point to be made about embodied myth-rituals is that they *may* be found and experienced, but there is no assurance that they *will* be. This refers not only to ritual praxes outside of TOSC but within TOSC as well. This is because embodied myth-rituals rely upon the participation of the coveners to transform a ritual into an embodied myth-ritual. Failure to elicit the participation of the ritualists can occur when communication fails to effectively cope with the risks inherent to it. Further, this implies that what might become an embodied myth-ritual for one covener may fail to become so for another. Thus embodied myth-ritual is not a distinct category; it is a potential that exists not within the rituals and their associated myth (or the myths and their associated rituals), but within the practitioners themselves.

This should in no way be surprising; as suggested by the discussions of myth and ritual in chapter three, this holds true for both rituals and myths. Due to their enculturated natures, both myths and rituals may fail to take on those statuses if they fail to become culturally important, in the case of myths, or meet the criteria learned in the process of ritualisation. For American Eclectic Wiccans, such as the members of TOSC, the reasons as to why this may or may not occur seem to be rooted in its

**personalized nature discussed in chapter four. Such personalization will necessarily lead to varying knowledge, acceptance and use of the correspondences that are so important for magical consciousness to occur.**

## Appendix: Pagan Recommended Reading Lists<sup>1</sup>

*A Pagan Reading List* – PhilBear

<http://www.mindspring.com/~pmarsh/pbread.htm>

*Bronze Cauldron Project: Beginners Level Pagan Reading List* – Bronze Cauldron Club<sup>2</sup>

<http://www.geocities.com/atropa755/beginners.html>

*Bronze Cauldron Project: Advanced Level Pagan Reading List* – Bronze Cauldron Club

<http://www.geocities.com/atropa755/advanced.html>

*Bronze Cauldron Project: Clergy Level Pagan Reading List* – Bronze Cauldron Club

<http://www.geocities.com/atropa755/clergy.html>

*Ceisiwr Serith's Homepage: Suggested Reading* – Ceisiwr Serith

<http://www.ceisiwrserith.com/suggread.htm>

*CollegeWicca.com: Basic Books* – Rhaevyn Sunrise

<http://www.collegewicca.com/books/books.html>

*CUUPS<sup>3</sup> Recommended Reading – Classics, Perennials & Favorites*

<http://www.cuups.org/content/resources/books/classicbooks.html>

*CUUPS Recommended Reading – Teens & Young Adults*

<http://www.cuups.org/content/resources/books/teensnyngadults.html>

*Daven's Journal: Daven's Top Ten Reading List* – Daven (aka. Eric Landrum)

<http://davensjournal.com/index.htm?DTTL.xhtml&2>

*Hearthfires: Recommended Reading - Wiccan/Pagan Reading List* – Twilight

<http://www.hearthfires.com/readwicca.html>

*Intermediate Reading List* – The Church of Y Tylwyth Teg

<http://www.tylwythteg.com/bookstore/intermediate.html>

*Introductory Reading List and Online Bookstore* – The Church of Y Tylwyth Teg<sup>4</sup>

<http://www.tylwythteg.com/bookstore/introductory.html>

*Listmania!<sup>5</sup> Eclectic Pagan Broom Closet v.2*

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<sup>1</sup> The following sites were last viewed 21 September, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The Bronze Cauldron Club is a now defunct Yahoo.com on-line discussion group.

<sup>3</sup> Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans

<sup>4</sup> Y Tylwyth Teg purports to teach “Welsh Witchcraft”. It is based in Marietta, Georgia.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/listmania/list-browse/-/YU8OITWB9ZU2/102-8328489-4435327>

*Listmania! Eclectic Basic Pagan References* – “neowayland, pagan [sic] philosopher”<sup>6</sup>

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/listmania/list-browse/-/3V2QG2ZTA4TEY/102-8328489-4435327>

*Listmania! Introductory Reading list, Temple of the Tree of Life Coven*<sup>7</sup> – “zorya-starwoman, Coven Elder”

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/listmania/list-browse/-/2X4SYBT5FMNJ2/102-8328489-4435327>

*Listmania! Sibylline*<sup>8</sup> *Reading List* – “sigyn-aeon, a Pagan bookworm”

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/listmania/list-browse/-/RNJ0FA10WTB/102-8328489-4435327>

*Listmania! My Books on Wicca and Witchcraft, “101” style* – “caeridwyn, Wiccan, Priestess of Cerridwen”

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/listmania/list-browse/-/3BZZ4M5HSZ7X6/102-8328489-4435327>

*Listmania! Wicca: Beyond Cunningham and Ravenwolf* – “Katwoman, California witch”

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/listmania/list-browse/-/CF24YEJRO22B/102-8328489-4435327>

*NYC Pagan Resource Guide: Recommended Reading List*

<http://www.waningmoon.com/guide/readlist.shtml>

*Pagan and Neo-Pagan Religion Study Courses:* – Jerome Bauer

[http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~jhbauer/pagan\\_religion\\_study.htm](http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~jhbauer/pagan_religion_study.htm)

*Pagan Non-Fiction* – Beth’s Pagan Stuff

<http://www.soulrebels.com/beth/pagnon.html>

*Pagan Reading List* – Reverend Geoffrey L. Johnson, Wiccan Priest<sup>9</sup>

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/1536/rdnglst.html>

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<sup>5</sup> Listmania is a service of Amazon.com booksellers that allows people or organizations to create recommended reading lists that are linked through Amazon.com for easy purchase. A portion of the proceeds goes to the list-owner(s).

<sup>6</sup> The names and title given in quotes are those that the creators of the Listmania! Lists have entered for themselves.

<sup>7</sup> The Temple of the Tree of Life Coven is a “small group of Eclectic Wiccans located in Dayton, Ohio” (Temple of the Tree of Life Coven unknown last update, Online).

<sup>8</sup> The Sibylline Order of Wicca in Huston, Texas. The Sibylline Order has members throughout Europe, Mexico and the United States (Sibylline Order of Wicca 2005, Online).

<sup>9</sup> “Witta” is a creation of popular Pagan author Edain McCoy, which she presented as a form of so-called “ancient Irish witchcraft”.

*Pagan Reading List@Everything2.com* – sleeping wolf  
[http://www.everything2.com/index.pl?node\\_id=1156551](http://www.everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1156551)

*PEN:*<sup>10</sup> *Recommended Reading List*  
<http://www.bloomington.in.us/~pen/reading1.html>

*Recommended Reading: Magdalene's Big Three* – Magdalene  
<http://www.msu.edu/user/rohdemar/earth/three.html>

*Recommended Reading about Witchcraft, Paganism, Wicca and related subjects* – PaganPath.com  
<http://www.paganpath.com/know.html>

*Recommended Reading List* – PanGaia: A Pagan Journal for Thinking People  
[http://www.pangaia.com/gaian\\_reading\\_list.htm](http://www.pangaia.com/gaian_reading_list.htm)

*Recommended Titles* – Raven  
<http://bbs.annex.com/raven/readhear.htm>

*Reference Reading List and Online Bookstore* – The Church of Y Tylwyth Teg  
<http://www.tylwythteg.com/bookstore/reference.html>

*Sacred Triskele: Celtic & Pagan Info* – ierne LloerCariad  
<http://www.sacredtriskele.net/reading.html>

*Suggested Reading Lists* – Iseum of the Green World<sup>11</sup>  
<http://greenworld.spiritualitea.net/booklists.html>

*Talespinner's Neopagan Reading List* – J. Brad (Talespinner) Hicks  
[http://www.paganlibrary.com/reference/talespinner\\_neopagan\\_reading\\_list.php](http://www.paganlibrary.com/reference/talespinner_neopagan_reading_list.php)

*~\*The Literary Pagan\*~: Recommended Reading* – Whitestar  
<http://members.aol.com/Whitestr18/literary.html>

*TWPT Reading List – The Wiccan/Pagan Times* - TWPT  
<http://www.twpt.com/readinglist.htm>

*Wicca 101 @ Red Deer's & Elenya's: Recommended Reading, Essential Pagan* – Red Deer and Elenya  
[http://www.unc.edu/~reddeer/index/00\\_reading.index.frameset.html](http://www.unc.edu/~reddeer/index/00_reading.index.frameset.html)

*Wicca 101 @ Red Deer's & Elenya's: Recommended Reading, More Pagan Reading* – Red Deer and Elenya  
[http://www.unc.edu/~reddeer/index/00\\_reading.index.frameset.html](http://www.unc.edu/~reddeer/index/00_reading.index.frameset.html)

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<sup>10</sup> Pagan Educational Network

<sup>11</sup> Iseum of the Green World is an eclectic Wiccan organization affiliated with the larger Pagan organizations known as the Fellowship of Isis and the Temple of Isis.

*Wicca Resources* – George@Controversial.com  
<http://www.controversial.com/Wicca%20Resources.htm>

*WiccaNet – Pagan Book List* – WiccaNet.net  
<http://www.wiccanet.net/wicca/bookstore/rrpaganbook.shtml>

*Wiccan and Pagan Reading Resources* – Jehana Silverwing  
<http://www.candledark.net/silver/wiccabk.html>

*Wiccan Books* – Various<sup>12</sup>  
<http://www.pagans.org/wicca/books/books.html>

*Witchcraft and Wicca Reading Advanced List – The Church of Y Tylwyth Teg*  
<http://www.tylwythteg.com/bookstore/advanced.html>

*Witchcraft Bibliography – NCLC Home Page: Basic Craft Reading List* – Northern California Local Council of the Covenant of the Goddess<sup>13</sup>  
<http://www.conjure.com/COG/ibibli.html>

*Books on Witchcraft & Magic* – Peg Aloï<sup>14</sup>  
[http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt\\_va.html?a=usma&c=books&id=1892](http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=usma&c=books&id=1892)

*Where can I find out about.....?: Reading List* – Lady Bridget  
<http://www.ladybridget.com/wread1.html>

*Where can I find out about.....?: Wicca Beyond the Basics* – Lady Bridget  
<http://www.ladybridget.com/wread2.html>

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<sup>12</sup> This site contains nine separate reading lists by 'Yemanja,' Susan Walenta Hunt, 'Xina,' Per-Erik Johanson, 'Taja,' 'Gollum, the Dark Hobbit,' 'Pagan,' 'Archangel,' and Chris Kummer.

<sup>13</sup> The Covenant of the Goddess (COG) is a nation-wide Pagan umbrella organization located in Berkeley, California.

<sup>14</sup> Media Coordinator of Witchvox.

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