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# The Literature of Contemporary Witchcraft: Formalists, Feminists, and Free Spirits

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## The Literature of Contemporary Wicca: Formalists, Feminists, and Free Spirits

BY MARILYN R. PUKKILA

When spiritual feminists first began to critique religion, they focused on sexism in current Western religions. Among the problems feminist scholars identified were the use of exclusively male God-language, the damage done by dualistic modes of thinking, and the absence of women's experience in contemporary religious expressions, particularly in its theologies and liturgies. In extending the discussion beyond existing religions to seek alternatives or to create new forms of expression, they discovered a religious practice that had been active, if largely hidden and overlooked, for generations. Wicca<sup>1</sup>, called by many "Witchcraft," the "Craft of the Wise," or simply "The Craft," was for some a welcome alternative to patriarchal religions, while for others it was a source and inspiration for change within traditional religions.

Among the many varieties or traditions of Wicca today, none is in any way related to Satanism, ritual abuse, or various traditional practices (such as Voudon, Santeria, or the religions of various American Indian nations) despite popular confusion to the contrary. Some Wiccan traditions claim origins going back several centuries, with practices passed down in families for generations. Others claim inspiration from pre-

Christian religions, while still others freely confess their own creativity and originality in inventing tradition. Many point to the revival of Wicca begun in the 1930s by Gerald Gardner as the source for their religious practice; others practice in the forms developed by various disciples of Gardner. Traditions may be highly structured, with set liturgies and ritual practices, or fluid, with inspiration the only guide from gathering to gathering. Most Wiccans see this diversity as a sign of health rather than anarchy and acknowledge that certain beliefs and practices are common to all traditions of this multifaceted religion.

Wiccans everywhere recognize the image of Goddess as essential to their religion. Most also recognize some form of God as well, though some groups do not. Moreover, these images are not static; Goddess is actually a Triple Goddess—Maiden, Woman, and Crone—so that all aspects of a woman's life are honored and sacred. God may also be imaged as young and old, Oak King and Holly King, for change is seen as central to all life, and therefore to the divine as well. Even death is sacred, part of the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth; many Wiccans believe in some form of reincarnation, which affirms death as a part of the cycle rather than as something to be dreaded and overcome.

Wicca is an earth-based religious practice. It derives its ritual cycles from the seasons of the year—from the solstices, equinoxes, and new and full moons—as well as from the cross-quarter days, which have become fixed on or around February 2, May 1, August 1,

and October 31. Moreover, Wiccans find deity in nature; Goddess and God are manifest in the seasons, the creatures, the plants, and in humans. It is a religion of divine immanence, with no distinctions of sacred and secular, spirit and matter. All is sacred, because all reflects Goddess, and Goddess is in all things; She *is* the earth, the moon, the waters, the plants, the creatures, while God is the one who dances through the seasons and cycles of life. This perspective leads many Wiccans to interests in ecology, gardening, and sustainable development; recycling becomes not simply a civic duty but a religious conviction.

Wiccans may practice their faith alone or in small groups known as covens. They also celebrate at large gatherings, festivals, or conventions, in which rituals may be practiced by hundreds of celebrants. Every Wiccan is acknowledged as a priestess or priest; autonomy and authority are encouraged in all its practitioners, though elders are often sought out for teaching, advice, or mediation. All Wiccans generally practice some form of what many call "magick," to distinguish it from stage magic. The generally accepted definition of magick, coined by Dione Fortune, is "the art of changing consciousness at will." Magick is usually directed at self or at circumstances rather than at other people, since most Wiccans believe that whatever they send out, magickally or otherwise, will return to them multiplied; hence few Wiccans would want to engage in any harmful actions. Magick may be as simple as lighting a candle and meditating or as complex as a

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coven ritual, in which a circle is cast to contain energy; deities are invoked; energy is raised through chanting, dancing, or drumming and then sent to its intended goal; excess energy is grounded through eating and drinking; and deities are then thanked and "devoked," and the circle is open. Candles, incense, herbs, and various tools are all used to help practitioners focus their will and achieve their purpose. Celebration of life, of Goddess and God, of the seasons, and of each other are also key components to the rituals of this religion.

As may be seen by the description of a coven ritual, Wicca is a religion of the senses, of embodiment. Since there is no distinction between sacred and secular,

### Wicca is a religion of the senses, of embodiment.

matter and spirit, all acts become potentially sacred. For this reason, sex is viewed as a sacred activity, and while some traditions view the *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage of male and female) as a central religious image, most Wiccans are accepting toward all genders and sexual orientations, and many use rituals and myths that affirm gays, lesbians, bisexuals, cross-dressers, transgendered, and transsexuals. Some Wiccan traditions are firmly rooted in European cultures, while others draw inspiration from ethnic origins outside Europe.

This Goddess-centered, nonhierarchical, nondualistic, flexible, diverse, and creative religion attracted the attention of feminists as they began to question contemporary Western religious practices, even though it was not feminist in either its origins or its revival. Undoubtedly, though, feminism has much to do with the fact that Wicca is one of the fastest growing religions in the US today. From roughly 50,000 adherents in the 1980s,

one study estimates that by the early 1990s the number had grown to anywhere from 83,000 to 333,000<sup>2</sup>. When compared to groups such as the Quakers (40,000) or the Unitarian Universalists (180,000), it is clear that followers of The Craft are more than a minor sect. Much of the growth that occurred during the 1980s can be traced to the writings of feminists who saw in this religion a means of redressing the imbalances of patriarchal religion. But the literature of contemporary Wicca started some 30 years before the entry of feminism into religious studies. With college courses now being offered in Wicca, and anthropologists, sociologists, and scholars of religion beginning to scrutinize it, libraries must address the task of collection development. This essay will describe the major writings on contemporary Wicca by its practitioners, as well as some of the scholarly studies and the few reference works currently available.

### The Early Formalists

In 1954, a retired British civil servant published a book that would have a profound effect on the religious landscapes of both the UK and the US. *Witchcraft Today* (1954) was Gerald Gardner's attempt to introduce the religion of Wicca to the world at large in order to stave off its demise, which he believed was imminent. He had previously published *High Magic's Aid* (1949), a novel that incorporated Wiccan practices in a fictional setting to avoid violating the laws banning witchcraft, which were not repealed in England until 1951. A few years later, Gardner published a second work, *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959), in which he described the origins of the religion he had championed, and which he now believed could survive and flourish.

In *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner presented Wicca as a survival of the Old Religion, predating Christianity and going back to Neolithic times. In this, he was following the writings of

Margaret Murray, notably *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) and *The God of the Witches* (1931). Murray's thesis has been rejected by the scholarly community, and few Wiccans today accept it, but it was an attractive notion to Gardner, who wanted to establish the authenticity of the religion he claimed to have rediscovered as it was about to vanish.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not the Old Forest coven was a survival of ancient practices will probably never be determined, but it provided the inspiration for Gardner to craft a religion; Jack L. Bracelin's biography *Gerald Gardner: Witch* (1960) gives one account of these events. Wicca as Gardner shaped it was strongly influenced by ceremonial practices such as the Order of the Golden Dawn and the Freemasons. Although the inclusion of the Goddess and the importance of the High Priestess set Gardnerian Wicca apart from other contemporary religions, it could hardly be said to be feminist. Despite the fact that all Wiccans are priests or priestesses, Gardnerian tradition had a hierarchy of degrees of initiation, was fairly heterosexist in its practices, and placed great emphasis on ceremony and prescribed ritual—hence "The Formalists."

Doreen Valiente, one of Gardner's high priestesses, was instrumental in crafting many of the texts and rituals Gardner claimed were given him by the coven he discovered in the Old Forest when he was practicing ceremonial magick but seeking something more. Her book *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (1989) gives a detailed account of her encounter with Gardner and the early history of his coven and his work. Gardner himself may have chosen to use the texts from Charles G. Leland's *Aradia, or, The Gospel of the Witches* (1890) in reviving what he believed were ancient practices, but Valiente rewrote them in the forms known and loved by Wiccans today. She also maintained that some material in Gardner's Book of Shadows did not appear in any other source she knew that could have been the remnants of an ancient practice.<sup>4</sup> After Valiente left

Gardner's circle, she continued to practice Wicca, and as the movement became more widespread she began to publish her own views. *An ABC of Witchcraft Past and Present* (1973) is her encyclopedic presentation of Wiccan terms and beliefs; *Natural Magic* (1975) discusses ancient and contemporary magical practices. In 1978, Valiente wrote *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (1978) because she had grown tired of material she had written being misquoted by other books and misrepresented as ancient words from ancient sources. She also wanted to provide the opportunity for anyone who wished to be a Wiccan to do so without needing first to find a coven. In 1990, she edited and wrote a preface for Evan Jones's *Witchcraft: A Tradition Renewed*, which described the Wiccan practices of Robert Cochrane, who claimed to be a hereditary witch and whose practices differed from Gardner's. Valiente had joined Cochrane's coven after she parted company with Gardner, and this work is a good example of material that could substantiate the notion of family traditions or other Wiccan practices that predate Gardner.

Other Gardner initiates eventually split from his tradition as well and sought to establish their own. One of the better know of these is Alex Sanders, who named his practice "Alexandrian Wicca." Similar in most respects to the Gardnerian tradition, it is described in a collection of his speeches, *The Alex Sanders Lectures* (1980), but is better represented by his initiates Janet Farrar and Stewart Farrar. Stewart's *What Witches Do* (rev. ed., 1983), written in his first year as an initiated Wiccan, is a basic description of Alexandrian practices. He and Janet together wrote *Eight Sabbats for Witches* (1981) and *The Witches' Way* (1984), later published in a two-volume set entitled *A Witches' Bible* (1984), in which the basic rituals of Alexandrian Wiccans are set out. They also wrote *The Witches' Goddess* (1987) and *The Witches' God* (1989), which describe the thealogy<sup>5</sup> and theology, respectively, of Alexandrian Wicca.

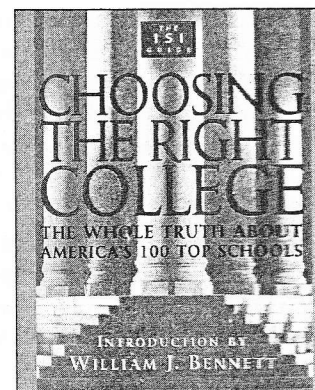
Those who remained Gardnerians were also publishing material in response to the growing interest in Wicca. One of the earliest of these, Patricia Crowther and Arnold Crowther's *The Witches Speak* (1976), is a good summary and description of basic Gardnerian beliefs, traditions, and practices. Raymond Buckland and his wife Rosemary were Gardner's first American initiates. A prolific author, Raymond's writings reflected standard Gardnerian stances, best represented by *Witchcraft from the Inside* (1971) and *Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft* (1986). Buckland also made a video, *Witchcraft: Yesterday and Today* (1989), which is an excellent introduction to Gardnerian Wicca. After he and Rosemary were divorced, Buckland began to explore other traditions, which will be discussed below.

## The Feminists

By the 1970s, the Wiccan emergence and the feminist movement, both well under way, converged when spiritual feminists—women and men seeking a religion that recognized the Divine Feminine—embraced Wicca as a welcome alternative to the patriarchal religions they could no longer practice. This stirred some controversy, both among other feminists, who saw no value in any religious practice, and among Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wiccans, who feared that the feminist emphasis on Goddess and acceptance of same-sex loving would render meaningless the gender polarity central to their ritual and beliefs. Arthur Evans must have seen the irony in this fear; *Witchcraft and the Gay Counter-culture* (1978) gives his view of the ways European society has linked the two throughout history. The feminist approach to Wicca brought new life and a much wider exposure to the religion, which was in some ways hampered by the secrecy Gardner and his followers had emphasized. It also opened Wiccan practices to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transfolk who sought religious

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expressions that mirrored their experiences and affirmed their sexual ways of being.

Zsuzsanna Budapest, founder of the main branch of Dianic Wicca (a tradition that uses only Goddess imagery and confines its practice to women), was the first witch to publish a feminist ritual manual that focused on events specific to women's lives and concerns. *The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows* (1976) was expanded to two volumes in *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (1989), published in a revised one-volume edition in 1989. Besides her focus on women's issues, Budapest's expressions of Wicca displayed the exuberance, playfulness, and creativity that were to become characteristic of the religion as it expanded in the US. Her work *The Grandmother of Time* (1989) offers rituals, stories, and goddesses for each month of the year, as well as stories of her own experiences in Wicca and the feminist movement. *Grandmother Moon* (1991) follows the same format but uses the 13 lunations of a solar year instead of the 12 months to organize the material.

Another early feminist Wiccan is Diane Stein, whose *The Women's Spirituality Book* (1986) was well received by those who resisted the gender constraints of more traditional Wicca. In it, she offers definitions of women's spirituality, rituals (intended for the yearly festivals) that use only goddess imagery, spells for healing and self-blessing, and women-centered methods of divination. In *Casting the Circle: A Woman's Book of Ritual* (1990), Stein expands from the eight traditional rituals to include ceremonies for birth, menarche, handfasting, menopause, ending relationships, and death. Her anthology *The Goddess Celebrates* (1991) is a collection of rituals written and presented by a variety of women practicing feminist Wicca. One of those authors, Shekhinah Mountainwater, based her own guide to feminist Wicca, *Ariadne's Thread: A Workbook of Goddess Magic* (1991), on a correspondence course she

designed to introduce individuals or groups to a woman-centered version of The Craft; hence it includes exercises and questions as well as rituals. In *Wild Witches Don't Get the Blues* (1992), another well-known Dianic Wiccan, Fiona Morgan, offers women-centered astrology, tarot, rituals, and

### Probably the best known Wiccan, feminist or otherwise, is Starhawk.

lunar magic to correct patriarchal imbalances in those practices. John Rowan offers the perspective of a male feminist and his response to the Goddess in *The Horned God: Feminism and Men as Wounding and Healing* (1987).

Probably the best known Wiccan, feminist or otherwise, is Starhawk. Her *The Spiral Dance* (rev. ed., 1989) was a watershed in the history of Wicca. Initiated in the Faery tradition, Starhawk brought a unique combination of feminism, political concern, and social awareness to the Faery practice. She recognized that men could also be feminists, and she challenged the patriarchal aspects of Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca in ways that were liberating for all genders. The revised text was virtually unchanged, setting forth the thea/ology, rituals, and spells of The Craft and reflecting on the evolution it had seen in the ten years since the first edition. *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics* (1982; 1997) set forth Starhawk's analysis of the ways that magic, politics, and the erotic combine in Wicca to empower its practitioners to challenge the wounds of society: racism, sexism, violence, poverty, war, and pollution. *Truth or Dare* (1987), a work of theory and practice, contains rituals, exercises, and stories to aid Wiccans to challenge "power over" ways in themselves and society and replace them with "power from within." "Power over" is

Starhawk's term for the way in which power is perceived and exercised in a patriarchy: hierarchically, with the goal of controlling. "Power from within" emphasizes a different approach: when we all know our own power and feel safe and free to express it independently or in concert with others, we have no need to control or be controlled but are empowered and are our own authorities. *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993), a futuristic novel that shows covens at work in the ways Starhawk outlines in her earlier books, is not unlike Gardner's *High Magic's Aid* in setting out the methods of Wicca in a work of fiction.

### Free Spirits

Starhawk's work transformed the world of Wicca. A few members of The Craft from traditions other than Gardner's had made themselves known to him and to the larger world at the time he wrote, but most who practised family traditions or other paths preferred to keep to themselves and avoid public awareness. As Wicca became known and better understood in society, more Wiccans came forward to let it be known that other traditions than Gardner's were flourishing. At the same time, other practitioners began to develop their own approaches to Wicca, often based on a particular ethnic background. Still others took an eclectic approach, using inspiration from a variety of traditions and cultures, refusing to be bound by notions of "one best way" to practice The Craft.

Starhawk's visibility created a new awareness of the Faery (or Feri) tradition in which she was trained. Her teacher, Victor H. Anderson, had published *Thorns of the Blood Rose* (1970), a collection of his poetry, but nothing was written about the tradition itself until Victor's wife Cora published *Fifty Years in the Feri Tradition* (1994) to describe this variant of Craft practice. Cora Anderson claimed many ethnicities as origins for her husband's tradition, Celtic

being one. Among the many authors who write about Celtic forms of Wicca, Pattalee Glass-Koentop, in *Year of Moons, Season of Trees* (1991), explains the connections between the lunar calendar, the Ogham alphabet, and the sacred trees. D. J. Conway's *Celtic Magic* (1990), a good example of the "cookbook" approach, gives all the basics needed for practicing Wicca with a Celtic bent. Kisma K. Stepanich's *Faery Wicca* (1994-1995) describes the Irish oral Faery tradition, similar to but distinct from Anderson's. Laurie Cabot, well known as the official Witch of Salem, MA, practices Wicca with a Celtic flavor; her *Celebrate the Earth* (1994) offers rituals, recipes, and spells around the eight traditional Wiccan festivals.

Strega, another Craft tradition, has attracted many adherents. Charles Leland's *Aradia*, which includes the texts Valiente rewrote for Gardner's Book of Shadows, was presented as material gathered from an Italian woman who practiced the Strega tradition. Leo Louis Martello's *Witchcraft: The Old Religion* (1973) also mentions *Aradia* and discusses Wicca in the context of several traditions—Sicilian, Welsh, York, and Gardnerian. Raven Grimassi has written several books on Strega, the most recent of which, *Ways of the Strega* (1995), gives an overview of Strega and the ways it interacted with other paths of The Craft, and provides another cookbook of rituals, practices, and sacred stories of the tradition.

In addition to his works on Gardnerian Wicca, Buckland made his own explorations of ethnic paths. *The Tree: The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft* (1974) is one result; another, *Scottish Witchcraft* (1991), describes the solitary tradition taught by Aidan Breac, and named by him PectiWita. Freya Aswynn has worked to reconstruct a Nordic tradition extrapolated from a variety of sources. *Leaves of Yggdrasil* (1990) gives Aswynn's understanding of the runic system known as *futhark* and describes ways of using the runes for divination, magic, and ritual. *Northern Mysteries and*

*Magick* (1998), the second revised edition of *Leaves*, delves more deeply into the matriarchal aspects of Northern religion to further emphasize its feminine perspective and the magickal practices of women. The second edition also includes a CD-ROM with Aswynn chanting runes and telling tales of the ancient scripts.

In contrast to those who focus on a particular ethnic path, the eclectics create ritual based on a variety of traditions. Pauline Campanelli's *Wheel of the Year* (1989) describes rituals, recipes, charms, spells, and crafts from a variety of cultures that can be used month by month. In *Ancient Ways* (1991), Campanelli presents the same sort of information but follows the eight great Wiccan festivals instead of the 12 solar months, while her *Rites of Passage* (1994) describes rituals for birth, initiation, handfasting, elderhood, and the like. All her books draw on a wide sweep of world traditions. Other examples of eclectic works are Stanley J. A. Modrzyk's *Turning of the Wheel* (1993), a "Book of Shadows for the First Temple of the Craft of W.I.C.A.," which combines ceremonial, Gardnerian, and Alexandrian traditions; and Ed Fitch and Janine Renee's *Magical Rites from the Crystal Well* (1984), which describes rituals and spells drawn from a variety of traditions (all were originally published in *Crystal Well* magazine).

Scott Cunningham, probably the best known and certainly one of the best loved of the eclectics, was initiated in a tradition created by an American teenager called the Standing Stones tradition. Cunningham believed in a simple, flexible Wiccan practice drawn from nature. This approach is made clear in his *Earth Power: Techniques of Natural Magic* (1983). A number of titles about herbs and incense followed. *The Truth about Witchcraft Today* (1988) is one of the best descriptions of contemporary Wicca for general readers; *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* (1988) had a profound effect on the Wiccan community, since it affirmed that solitary practice was viable and sometimes

preferable to the group experience; *Living Wicca: A Further Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* (1993) demonstrated ways in which a solitary Wiccan could live the faith on a daily basis, not simply when in a ritual space. After Cunningham's death in 1993, David Harrington and DeTraci Regula, friends and colleagues of Cunningham's, wrote *Whispers of the Moon: The Life and Work of Scott Cunningham* (1996), a useful guide to Cunningham's life and work and an interesting examination of the ways Wicca is shaped by its practitioners.

Another proponent of solitary practice is Rae Beth, whose *The Wiccan Path* (1995), published in England as *Hedge Witch* (1990) (a term many of her followers have appropriated for themselves), describes a simple solitary practice in a series of letters to two apprentices. In *Lamp of the Goddess* (1995), published in England as *Reincarnation and the Dark Goddess* (1994), Beth writes of her understanding and experience of the theology of reincarnation and the reclaiming of the dark aspects of Goddess. Silver RavenWolf also wrote for solitary practitioners in *To Ride a Silver Broomstick: New Generation Witchcraft* (1993). Raven Wolf combines threads of the solitary and eclectic, deliberately following no specific tradition or teacher. Likewise, Jennifer Hunter's *21st Century Wicca: A Young Witch's Guide to Living the Magical Life* (1997) emphasizes Wicca as a spiritual path rather than a specific tradition, focusing on common denominators while considering energy, work, rituals, magic, and being a Wiccan in all aspects of life.

Coming full circle from solitary to group practice, the Reclaiming tradition began in the late 1970s and 1980s as a collective approach to Wicca. Rooted in the Feri tradition and a variety of ethnic practices, Reclaiming includes Starhawk as a member, and much of her work has emerged from the collective. Starhawk's *The Pagan Book of Living and Dying* (1997), the first title to reflect that collective approach, is a powerful and

moving collection of rituals, myths, prayers, and blessings for those dealing with death.

As contemporary Wiccans entered the 1990s, their writings began to expand from the basics of ritual practice, festivals, and spells. Amber K's *True Magick* (1990) presents a detailed discussion of the theory of magick and the ways ritual is created, rather than simply giving instructions to follow. In a similar spirit, Robin Wood's *When, Why—If* (1996) covers issues of honesty, self, love, help, harm, sex, will, and ethics in the Wiccan manner by requiring readers to develop their own answers to questions of ethical behavior. Edain McCoy's *Inside a Witches' Coven* (1997) offers seekers some valuable suggestions on how to find, evaluate, or create a coven. Ashleen O'Gaea addresses concerns of parents raising Wiccan children in *The Family Wicca Book* (1993) and offers suggestions on rituals that can include children. Patricia Telesco treats the needs of city-dwelling Wiccans in *The Urban Pagan: Magical Living in a 9-to-5 World* (1993), reassuring them that practicing a nature-based religion in an environment of concrete and crowds is not a contradiction. And finally, two brief books are excellent for conveying basic information about contemporary Wicca. Teresa Moorey's *Witchcraft: A Beginner's Guide* (1996) presents the material in a question and answer format with good illustrations. *Pocket Guide to Wicca* (1998), by Paul Tuitéan and Estelle Daniels, may be inconvenient in size for some libraries, but it is well worth obtaining for its clear, concise, and informative coverage of The Craft.

## Scholarship about and by Wiccans

Only a handful of scholarly studies of Wicca appeared before the 1970s. Two works published in 1979 had far-reaching effects. Naomi R. Goldenberg, feminist theologian, speculated concerning the end of traditional

religions in *Changing of the Gods* (1979). Feminist Wicca, according to Goldenberg, was the logical outcome of feminism's effects on patriarchal religions, and she gave a concise and cogent description of the religion and its practices. Margot Adler took a deeper approach; *Drawing Down the Moon* (1986; 1997) was the result of extensive research and of interviews with a variety of pagan groups. Her work devotes several chapters to Wiccans and is essential to any study of the religion.

## Any titles that deal with religions ... will now include entries on Wicca

One of the major challenges is to distinguish works on contemporary Wicca from those dealing with historical witchcraft. Jeffrey B. Russell's broad historical overview of the occult, *A History of Witchcraft, Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans* (1980), distinguishes witchcraft, sorcery, and diabolism, then discusses the history of each in Europe from Roman times to the present. He provides clarity in a confusing area and shows the connections, real and imagined, between events of the 15th and 16th centuries and the Wicca of today. His description of contemporary Wicca and its emergence from 19th-century ceremonial practices is a good adjunct to Adler.

In the 1980s, PhD candidates began to look to contemporary Wicca as a viable and interesting research topic. Joan Carole Ludeke's "Wicca as a Revitalization Movement among Post-Industrial, Urban, American Women" (Illiff School of Theology, Univ. of Denver, 1989) has yet to be published, but T. M. Luhrmann's thesis in anthropology, published as *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (1989), seeks to understand how members of the British middle class could accept a religion that

espoused a magickal worldview. Loretta Orion used ethnographic methods to study several groups of Wiccans in the US; *Never Again the Burning Times: Paganism Revived* (1995) describes well the origins and practices of contemporary Wicca, with a focus on healing. Allen Scarboro joined two other scholars to study the Ravenwood Coven, a teaching community in Georgia. *Living Witchcraft* (1994) considers Craft life in a residential and extended Wiccan community from a sociological perspective. Lynne Hume (Department of Religion, Univ. of Queensland) considers Wicca and paganism as they have developed in Australia in her work *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia* (1997).

At the same time, Wiccans themselves were studying their religion, with varying results. Isaac Bonewits's useful treatise on his views of magick itself, separate from any particular religion or tradition, *Real Magic* (1989), outlined various types of magick and how they are used. One of the most controversial works by a practitioner of The Craft is Aidan Kelly's *Crafting the Art of Magic* (1991), a study of Gerald Gardner, his writings, and the origins of contemporary Wicca. Some in the Wiccan community have accused Kelly of breaking vows and violating confidentiality in the material he presented; at least one Wiccan scholar accuses him of falsifying his material in his attempts to analyze Gerald Gardner's writings and establish their origins.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, Kelly's work is of major significance to those who study Wicca, provided it is kept in context.

"Witchcraft Today" is a series of anthologies of essays by various Wiccans; the series editor is Chas. Clifton. *The Modern Craft Movement* (1992) offers a cross-section of the practices and beliefs of contemporary Wiccans; *Modern Rites of Passage*, ed. by Clifton (1993), discusses and offers rituals for significant life events; *Shamanism and Witchcraft* (1994) contains essays on the links between contemporary Wicca and ancient shamanic practices; and Joel Goldsmith's *Living between Two Worlds*, ed. by Lorraine



Sinkler (1996), allows authors to reflect on the experiences and challenges of living a magical world view in a technological, postmodern society. Such thea/ological reflection by practitioners is a welcome development; James R. Lewis took advantage of it, and of the large numbers of Wiccans who have themselves entered the scholarly community, in his compilation *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* (1996), an anthology of essays by scholars (most of whom are Wiccans) investigating the worldview, praxis, history, and ethics of the religion, as well as its intersections with Christianity and the ways in which it has been studied in the past.

## Reference Works and Other Resources

Wicca has come of age so far as major religious reference works are concerned. Any titles that deal with religions or religious individuals (an excellent example is J. Gordon Melton's *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 1996) will now include entries on Wicca and its best-known practitioners. One source devoted exclusively to the topic is Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft* (1989), which covers traditional and modern Wicca, discussing topics as well as individuals. Bibliographies are also available; e.g., Melton's *Magic, Witchcraft, and Paganism in America* (1982; 2d ed., 1992) and Anne Carson's two annotated bibliographies, *Feminist Spirituality and the Feminine Divine* (1986) and *Goddesses and Wise Women* (1992), all contain extensive sections on Wicca.

Despite the emphasis by some Wiccans on secrecy, others have attempted to assemble directories of groups, individuals, and providers of goods and services relevant to The Craft. *Circle Guide to Pagan Groups*, comp. by the Circle Sanctuary Staff (1990), is one such attempt, currently in its eighth edition. Gerina Dunwich's *The Wicca Source Book* (1996) includes lists of groups, publishers, schools, periodicals,

services, and individuals in The Craft. Currency is an issue for these titles as it is for all directories.

Web sites are also prey to currency, but the enormous importance of the Web to Wiccans cannot be overstated. For this reason, two of the more stable sites must be mentioned. *CoGweb: Covenant of the Goddess* <<http://www.cog.org/>> is the site for a national federation of Wiccan groups, covens, and solitaries, and *Reclaiming Home Page* <<http://www.reclaiming.org/>> is the site for the Reclaiming Collective. Both these sites maintain links to a variety of Wiccan and other pagan sources.

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Wicca is not the religion of a book, but of hundreds of books. Its practitioners are generally voracious readers, and many learned their craft from some of the sources listed here. With the rising public interest in earth-based spirituality and increased scholarly study of The Craft, academic libraries can no longer afford to overlook this vital, dynamic religion and its writings.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I use the terms "Wicca" and "Wiccan" throughout to refer to the religion of contemporary witchcraft as renewed and revisioned chiefly by Anglo-American practitioners. I choose not to use the terms "Witchcraft" and "Witch" because many cultures today recognize something rather different in those terms, and I wish to maintain the distinction between the two, out of respect for cultural differences.

<sup>2</sup> Aidan A. Kelly, "An Update on Neopagan Witchcraft in America," in *Perspectives on the New Age*, ed. James R. Lewis & J. Gordon Melton (New York: SUNY Press, 1992). All the statistics in this paragraph are taken from this source.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Gardner and his influence, see Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) pp. 60-66.

<sup>4</sup> Valiente identified a variety of sources for Gardner's rituals, including Rudyard Kipling, Aleister Crowley, Freemasonry, the *Key of Solomon*, and the ceremonial practices of the Order of the Golden Dawn. She also believed that there was a basic structure to Gardner's writings, which were compiled in his *Book of Shadows* (a term he coined for a collection of spells, rituals, and herb lore), that was unique to him, and that the origin of this structure was the Old Forest coven material (*The Rebirth of Witchcraft*, p. 63-64).

<sup>5</sup> "Thealogy" is a term coined by feminist scholar Naomi Goldenberg to refer to the study of Goddess and of the religious doctrines which come from faiths that grow from Divine Feminine imagery. When discussing Wiccan beliefs in general, I use the term "thea/ology" to reflect the fact that Wicca encompasses both Goddess and God in its conception of Divine.

<sup>6</sup> Personal communication with Donald H. Frew, 6 July 1997. Frew owns slides he said he took from the Gardner manuscript Kelly worked from; they imply Kelly had both omitted and added phrases not present in the text. Frew presented his analysis at the 1995 Pantheacon in San Jose, CA: one hopes he will publish his research soon.

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## ■ Internet Sites

CoGWeb: *Covenant of the Goddess*.  
<http://www.cog.org/>

Reclaiming Home Page.  
<http://www.reclaiming.org/>

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