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Representations Of Paganism, Wicca, And Witchcraft In Modern Fictional Mass Media

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation was to examine representations of Paganism by comparing recent fictional representations of Pagans and Wiccans against a “real life” model of Pagan and Wiccan practices and beliefs.

A literature review focused on forming a model of Paganism, and looked at previous works which considered the representation of Paganism in fictional media.

A crude form of content analysis was used to select an appropriate text for analysis.

A semiotic analysis, ideological consideration, and a syntagmatic analysis of the narrative were all applied to the text, an episode called “Family” from the television series “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer.” This gave an in-depth model of a fictional text featuring Witchcraft.

Paganism with particular reference to Witchcraft was portrayed positively in the text. It was discovered that the practice of magic had connotations of both power - particularly female autonomy -; and of sexuality -particularly homosexuality.

Further analyses of a wide range of texts would need to be compared to the real-life model devised to give a more complete picture of the connotations behind the representations of Pagans, Wiccans and Witches.

1. Introduction

This dissertation aims to look at representations of Paganism and in particular Wicca and Witchcraft in modern fictional mass media. Semiotic analysis in particular and other media theories will be used to look at the representations and the portrayals compared to a model of current Pagan practices and beliefs – the “realist” perspective versus the “real”.

Realism vs. the Real

Realism looks at whether a fiction shows a world we recognize and verisimilitude refers to the fact that “reality” in media is always constructed and shows that the representation is “what the dominant culture believes to be the case, to what is generally accepted as credible, suitable, proper.”¹ Cultural verisimilitude looks at the world outside the fiction. When a social change is occurring, such as the women’s movement in the 1970s, conventions of cultural verisimilitude are challenged by realism. The new or unthinkable must become shown in ways that are themselves not “real” but constructs representing this new reality. A single media text will be analysed in-depth, contrasting this constructed reality against the reality of Paganism.

Aim

- The aim of this dissertation is to examine representations of Paganism by comparing recent fictional representations of Pagans and Wiccans against a “real life” model of Pagan and Wiccan practices and beliefs

Objectives

- A search and review of relevant literature to investigate the current practices and beliefs of Pagans, and in particular Witches and Wiccans, in order to provide a model of the Pagan community
- An in-depth analysis of one particular media text using known media techniques

Justification

While much has been written about representation and gender, and representation and race, little has been written about representation and Paganism, although Pagan beliefs and Witchcraft in particular are currently the subject of a number of movies and television programmes, including:

- Practical Magic (1998)
- The Craft (1996)
- Sleepy Hollow (1999)
- The 13th Warrior (1999)

- Buffy the Vampire Slayerⁱⁱ (TV 1997- present)
- Charmed (TV 1998 – present)
- Sabrina the Teenage Witch (TV 1996 – present)
- JAG (TV series, episode “The Witches of Gulfport”, 2000)ⁱⁱⁱ
- Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone (based on the popular series of books, 2001)
- Brimstone (TV, 1998)

Additionally an interest in ancient mythology can be seen from the inclusion of mythology in science fiction and fantasy shows such as:

- Babylon 5 (1994- 1998)
- Stargate SG1 (1997 – present)
- Hercules: the Legendary Journeys (1995-1999) and Xena: Warrior Princess (1995 – 2001)
- The X-files (1999 - 2002)

O’Neil^{iv} states that the New Age movement “has impacted significantly upon the media and publishing industries and is especially visible in the movie/TV worlds”.

What of the community being represented? Numbers of Pagans and those following Pagan or related paths are notoriously difficult to quantify. An online survey^v, currently ongoing had counted 9407 pagans (8462 US, 945 Other countries) by the 8 January 2002, while the organisation “Religious Tolerance”:

“found estimates as low as 2,000 Wiccans in 1982 or 3,600 in 1996. At the other extreme, Phyllis Curott, author of Book of Shadows, estimated 5 to 10 million in 1999”.... If pressured, we would estimate something on the order of 750,000 in the U.S. and perhaps 30,000 in Canada. That would make Wicca about the 7th largest organized religion in the United States...An unidentified study in 1997 predicted that there were 100,000 practicing Neopagans in the United Kingdom. The Pagan Federation in the UK reported in 1999 that they were currently receiving 100 inquiries a month from potential new recruits.”^{vi}

There are inherent difficulties on identifying numbers of practicing Pagans the two most obvious being the lack of organisation (you cannot count attendance as you can at a church) and people’s reluctance to admit to a religion that is still often associated with devil worship. There are many accounts of discrimination^{vii} against Pagans; people have lost jobs and experienced harassment. Pagans have complained about “being labelled child abusers and cults.”^{viii} This level of discrimination is one reason so many use pseudonyms when writing books or using the Internet. Often the pseudonym will be referred to as a Craft name, a name chosen to reflect their spiritual path.

In the United States the military continues to include Wicca in its chaplains handbook despite protestations and Wicca is defined as religion for tax-exempt purposes.^{ix}

While Witchcraft is no longer outlawed in Britain, the official line on Wicca as a recognised religion is less clear; a Metro article on Paganism claimed Paganism is recognised as a religion by the Home Office and the Church of England.^x Whatever

the actual numbers or legalities however, anyone entering “Witchcraft” into an Internet search engine, or visiting the “Mind, Body, Spirit” section of a high street bookstore, cannot fail to recognise the interest in all things spiritual and occult, and in Paganism in particular.

The importance of Representation

If we have established that there are a number of media representations of pagans, and a significant number of actual pagans in society, does it matter how they are represented?

Other religions are concerned with their representation – or lack of it, as Bodi writing in the Guardian was concerned at the lack of representation of Muslims in mass media, claiming Muslims are “excluded, stereotyped and misrepresented”.^{xi}

Where the representation does exist, however, it is giving messages to the audience and Chandler looks at how media cultivates attitudes and constructs “reality”.^{xii}

“Representation refers to the construction in any medium (especially the mass media) of aspects of ‘reality’ such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts. ... a key concern is with the way in which representations are made to seem ‘natural’”

This is supported by Abercrombie who stated that television was an ideal medium to support the dominant ideology:

“through the ideological character of the text and the passive nature of the audience. In watching television, people are persuaded to accept a view of society, and of their place in it”^{xiii}

The flip side of this domination is the notion of the “active viewer”^{xiv} which recognises that people choose what to watch and bring their own values to bear against the representation. Pagans may watch a show about Witches in order to empathise with the characters, or simply to criticise the representations.

Do people really pay attention to these representations? Massimo Introvigne^{xv} speculated that:

“Movies and TV series create universes for us, in which a God called by that name is nowhere to be found, yet the ever-present suggestion is that there are creators in the shape of aliens from other planets who have created life on earth ... The X-Files, may end up suggesting just this. A daily newspaper recently noted how influential The X-Files currently is in shaping individual religion in Canada (Guly 2000); and there are reasons to believe that this may be true in other countries too. For international teenagers ... there is Buffy the Vampire Slayer Buffy is intensely disliked by Evangelicals, and has a pronounced pagan flavour (Buffy’s best friend, Willow Rosenberg, is a Wiccan)”

Berger^{xvi}, looking at popular culture genres identifies 23 uses and gratifications of media a sample of which are shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Sample Of Uses And Gratifications Of Media With Examples Of Genre.

Table adapted from Berger^{xvii}

Selected Uses and Gratifications of Media	Appropriate Genres
Satisfy curiosity, be informed	Science, Soap operas
Obtain a common frame of reference	Media events
Identify with deity, divine powers	Science fiction
Experience empathy	Soaps
Find models to imitate	Soaps, sports
See magic, marvels, the miraculous	Science Fiction
Explore taboo subjects with impunity	Soaps
Experience the ugly, grotesque	Science fiction
See moral, cultural values upheld	Sports

The genres are only suggestions and there is often difficulty in clearly identifying a genre show. One critic discusses how “Soap-opera style misery” and focus on the character's emotional lives rather than action is a new but growing emphasis even in the fantasy genre, a genre best known for its escapism.^{xviii}

Science fiction (and fantasy) shows contain the most representations of Paganism and we can conclude that this is to be expected, to see magic, divine powers and the grotesque (demons and vampires for example). However if the representations of an actual culture are misleading, then people using the media to be informed - to find models to imitate, or to shape their belief systems - are going to be left with a misleading impressions of the culture.

Seeing moral and cultural values upheld is a difficulty for representations of Paganism. Some see it as leading youngsters away from moral values: “Buffy 'prompting pupils to access the occult'”, as reported in “The Independent”^{xix}, for example, and “Warning after Sabrina casts spell on young”^{xx}. Norfolk, spokesperson of The Pagan Federation denied an upturn in interest following the publication of “Harry Potter” books but did note that “TV programmes such as Buffy and The Charmed may have had a greater effect. Stories of young women who use magic to battle bad guys could be seen as positive role models.”^{xxi} In another article he said that the Federation had appointed a youth officer to explain the principal ethic of witchcraft – harm none – and “that it’s not just an easy way to get a new boyfriend”.^{xxii} He also stressed that the Federation does not allow members under 18 years of age.

Meanwhile, if the media representations of Pagans are encouraging an interest in the religion, then for the both practising Pagans and interested parties alike, it is important for the portrayals to be accurate. Where accuracy is forsaken for entertainment Pagans would obviously prefer the representations be at least positive. As one Pagan wrote during an Internet discussion on “entertainment irresponsibility”, after a recent “Buffy The Vampire Slayer” episode which for the first time featured a blood sacrifice:

“I've never believed that TV influences behaviour, but it does influence thinking. How many times have you heard "It must be true, it was on TV? ...Look at what happened when Xena met Vishnu, the Hindus went ballistic... I like Buffy TVS, but it's our religion here, folks”^{xxiii}

There is strong interest in media portrayals. Some Wiccans and Pagans, individually or in an organisation, review films and television shows, particularly on their Internet home-pages.^{xxiv} Discussion boards frequently mention “Buffy The Vampire Slayer” and “Charmed” - and the “Harry Potter” debate continues. There are a number of organisations devoted to monitoring or informing the public and the media about Paganism and religious tolerance, including Alternative Religions Educational Network (AREN). Religious Tolerance, Witches Against Religious Discrimination (WARD), Witches' League for Public Awareness, Pagan Federation, CENSUR and the Yahoo e-mail discussion groups “fire”, “Pagan_Media_Society” and “PaganPR”.^{xxv}

A strong personal interest in Paganism, investigated and experienced over a number of years, and a preference for the science-fiction and fantasy genres, along with a strong belief that while media does not directly affect behaviour it can, and does, affect attitudes and reflects beliefs of society, were all factors in choosing to study this particular area. A foundation of knowledge about Paganism means there is a familiarity with the basic concepts and therefore a degree of understanding of what is a broad, diverse, and often confusing subject to newcomers.

Scope

The selection of a text for analysis was restricted to:

- English language materials
- Produced during or after 1995
- Fictional artefacts
- Material aimed at teenagers and adults

Many items proved to be of the science fiction and fantasy genre, and the search became focussed in this way.

Paganism is part of the wider New Religious Movement and due to its non-hierarchical and non-dogmatic approach is hard to quantify. However for the purposes of this dissertation:

- Paganism is a religion or set of beliefs that includes both polytheism (having more than one deity) and pantheism (belief in the divinity inherent in nature)
- Witchcraft and Wicca are particular types of religion within Paganism
- Paganism, Witchcraft and Wicca will be used with capitals, as is often used to distinguish between classical pagans (such as the Greco-Roman civilisation) and modern or Neo-Pagans
- Emphasis will be on those branches of Paganism most practised in the United Kingdom and the United States. Reference to Celtic and Anglo-Saxon beliefs and practices will be given preference. Some Egyptian deities (particularly Isis, whose cult extended into the Greco-Roman culture) and beliefs and some Norse deities and beliefs have been heavily incorporated into modern Paganism (for example the use of rune stones). However African, Aboriginal Australian and Native American beliefs, while fitting the broad description of Paganism, and while being respected and followed within the Pagan community, are to be largely or totally excluded from the analysis, as they are neither as common, nor so frequently represented in the media as examples of Paganism or Witchcraft.

2. Literature Review

Lubiano discusses the problems of realism and representation – in this case, black men – in that realism is:

“Compared to what? Compared to what is not real? Compared to things both real and unreal? Compared to whatever else exists, has existed, or might be able to exist within the present terms of cultural production....Telling the ‘truth’ demands that we consider the truth of something compared to something else....Representation refers to images that are selected from what we recognize as reality; they are tied to and have meaning within particular settings”^{xxvi}

To criticise representations of Paganism, therefore, we need to know what we are comparing the fictional texts to. The following, then, is an attempt to provide a model of Paganism; of its most common and defining characteristics, beliefs and practices.

What is Paganism

It is somewhat of an axiom in Paganism that if you ask ten Pagans the same question you will get ten different answers. This is due to the eclectic, non-dogmatic nature of the faith and to Pagans, is something to be celebrated rather than despaired of. For the outsider, or the newcomer, this seemingly haphazard approach to a belief system can be overwhelming. Each voice is important yet sometimes contradictory; Starhawk is a respected author, yet so are Vivienne Crowley, John and Caitlin Matthews, Scott Cunningham, Ronald Hutton, Stewart and Janet Farrar. The only way to fully understand is to read widely, to ask questions if you have access to other Pagans, to practise the religion and always to keep in mind questions such as:

- Does this resonate with my personal ethics and spiritual beliefs?
- Is this information given in more than one source? What do other Pagans think about this?
- Does the information seem harmful? Are cautions given, such as warnings against using magic to hurt someone?

Eventually with patience and practice the newcomer will be able to take what they need, discard what they do not want and adapt rituals and spells for their own purpose. This is one of the essences of Paganism. Even within various Traditions which may have strict rules or formal rituals they follow, there is always the right to question and debate, and no-one should be discouraged from studying other paths within Paganism, or even other religions. In fact, broadly speaking, Pagans believe all paths lead to Truth and therefore all religions have some value within them.

Paganism is a broad and diverse system of nature-based beliefs and practices. Within the Pagan framework there are a number of subgroups who choose particular designations for themselves such as Witches or Wiccans. Within these larger groups are a number of sub-groups such as hereditaries who claim to be following a family tradition (specific beliefs and practices handed down from their ancestors and covens from pre-Christian times); eclectics who choose from, a number of systems, those elements which feel right; and initiates of covens some of which are named after their

founders such as the Gardnerian tradition (Gerald Gardner) or Alexandrian tradition (Alex Sanders). It was Gardner who produced the “Book of Shadows” peculiar to his tradition and claimed Witchcraft was not a revival but a continuation of ancient practices.

To be more specific about Pagan beliefs and practices means identifying common themes that define the faith. The Pagan Federation has attempted to encapsulate these as a set of three principles^{xxvii} as seen in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 The three principles of the Pagan Federation

<i>The three principles of the Pagan Federation</i>	
i.	Love and Kinship with Nature. Reverence for the life force and its ever-renewing cycles of life and death.
ii.	The Pagan Ethic: <i>"If it harm none, Do what thou wilt."</i> This is a positive morality, expressing the belief in individual responsibility for discovering ones own true nature and developing it fully, in harmony with the outer world and community.
iii.	Honouring the Totality of Divine Reality, which transcends gender, without suppressing either the female or male aspect of Deity.

These principles encapsulate what the majority of Pagans, whatever their path, believe. Wiccans most often simply follow the rule “If it harm none, do what thou wilt” which is commonly referred to as the Wiccan Rede. However the respect/reverence for nature, the cyclical nature of all things and the belief in both male and female divinities are themes found throughout the Pagan mythology, beliefs and practices. Each of these themes shall be looked at in turn, followed by a look at the vocabulary used and its particular meanings within the Pagan community. Finally an examination of the most relevant texts on similar subjects (media representation of Paganism) will be made.

Love and Kinship with Nature

Reverence for the life force

Paganism is an earth-based religion. This means respect for the earth with an emphasis on living in harmony with nature. Pagans may be involved in ecological movements; the protection of the rainforests or local woodlands, the preservation of

endangered species, or simply reducing the amount of pollution or being committed to recycling. Some, but not all, Pagans are vegetarians or vegans.

This love for nature should not be confused with a desire to live in pre-technological times. The majority of Pagans live in urban areas and work at bringing nature into their lives – for example by tending houseplants if they have no garden, by walking in local parks or woodlands.

Pagans adopt new technology quickly; Walker^{xxviii} believes this is because of the emphasis on the cyclical nature of life which means change is normal and natural, not to be feared but embraced. The use of the Internet by Pagans cannot be overstated. Walker draws the connection between the individualistic nature of Pagans and the desire to be autonomous with the necessity of a support system that does not take away autonomy. Thompson's "The Craft and the 'Web; An illustrative study into the use of Internet services by the pagan community"^{xxix} looked at other reasons for Pagan use of the Internet such as anonymity. The Pagan Dawn article "CYBERPAGANS! The Old Religions Meet the New Technology"^{xxx} also looked at this issue in-depth.

New technology can benefit everyone and generally Pagans accept this, for as Galenorn points out:

"A new fuel-efficient car is easier on the environment than an old hippie van that guzzles gas....A well-insulated house reduces the amount of electricity, gas, or wood that we consume...If we lived like our ancestors you wouldn't be reading this book. You probably couldn't read at all. Education was a privilege...Forty was considered old...modern technology has the potential to be fatal, lethal, and horrendous...But it can also be life-saving, time-efficient, and can give us the luxury to explore other realms and other realities."

Recognition of the cycles of life and death

***"We all come from the Goddess
And to Her we shall return
Like a drop of rain***

Flowing to the ocean"^{xxxi}

This is the underlying ethos of Paganism, though not unique to it. The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is seen to apply on every level. This can be through one year, from the harvest, through the sowing and nurturing, to the harvest again; it can be through a person's life and subsequent reincarnation; it can be applied to the gods themselves.

The Wheel of the Year

This cycle is known as the Wheel of the Year. At Samhain (Halloween) the Celtic New Year begins. The Goddess is in the underworld, mourning her husband, but at the Winter Solstice she gives birth to his child, who is the God. The Goddess is seen to be youthful again and throughout the year they will court each other, marry (at Beltaine), until he sacrifices himself (the harvest) and pregnant with the God, the Goddess mourns.

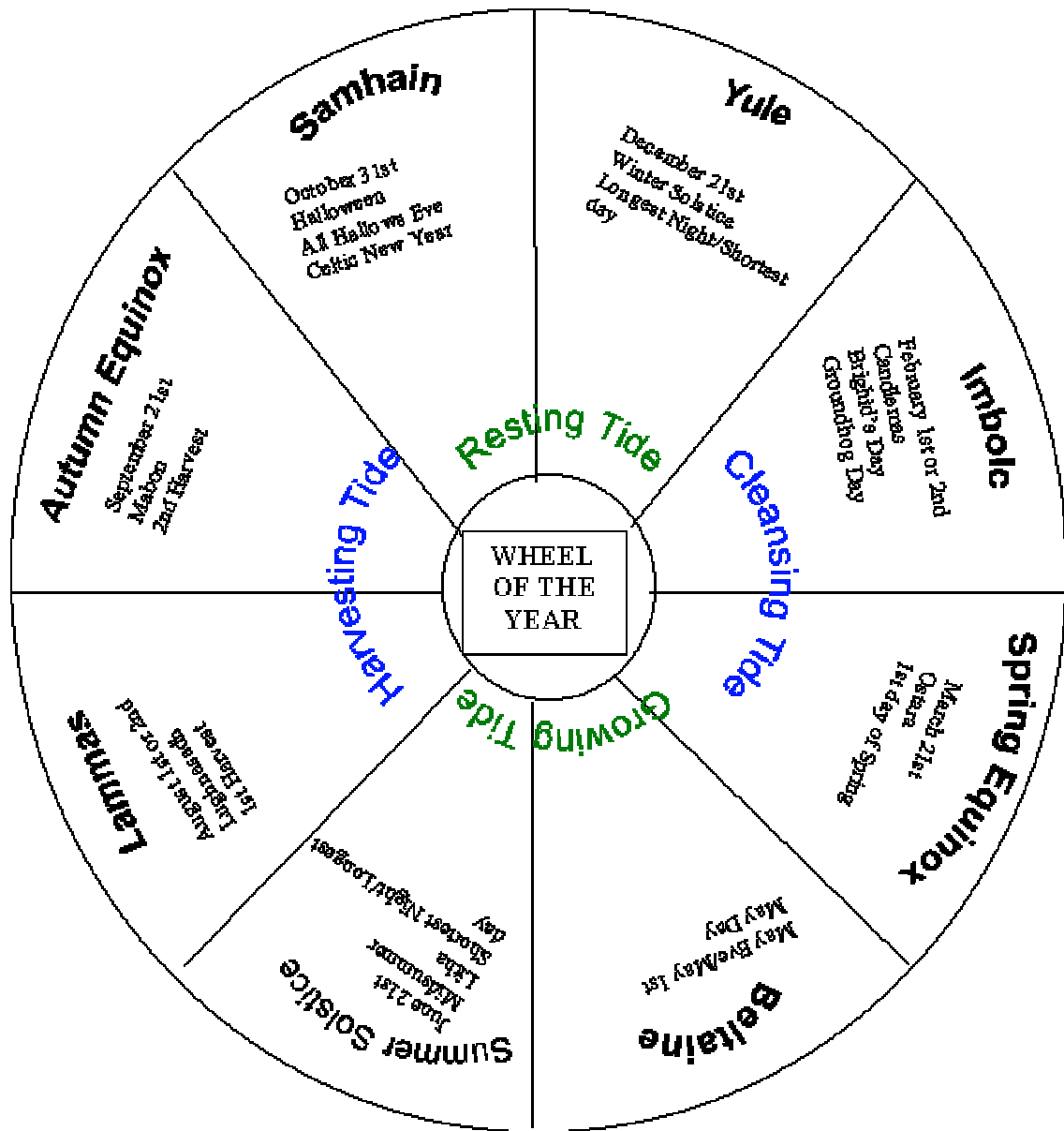
This myth of the Son-Lover, explored in-depth by Baring and Cashford^{xxxii}, should not be read literally, as incest, but metaphorically. The Goddess is the earth who receives the God, the grain. He grows within her and is harvested but the seeds of this harvest are kept back for sowing the following year. In this way the God is seen to be his own father and the cycle continues.

This cycle is marked by eight festivals, which are also known as sabbats. Celebrating is said to be “turning the wheel”- assisting, or at least recognising, the changing seasons. The eight festivals, seen in Figure 2.2, consist of two solstices, two equinoxes and four “cross-quarter” days which are argued to be of more value than the astrological events since they represent agricultural “highlights” of planting and harvesting. These sabbats are for celebration and not usually for magic, which is considered work, but for relaxing; quite literally enjoying the fruit of your labours.

It is of some debate which are the oldest and more “real” festivals, and dates of the cross-quarter days are open to interpretation. As the climate changes, it is argued, modern Pagans should not hold to the traditional day that marks the beginning of Spring, but to find where Spring begins now – when lambs are born, when flowers bloom, whatever events are most indicative of this event. For a nature based religion, it is argued, it makes more sense to follow the wisdom of the Earth than to slavishly follow a man-made calendar.

Figure 2.2 The Wheel of the Year, showing the eight most commonly celebrated Pagan festivals

Information for the Wheel comes a variety of sources but particularly the works of Marion Green^{xxxiii} and Edain McCoy^{xxxiv}.



The cycles of the Moon

It is perhaps worth mentioning here that the Pagan calendar is related to the cycle of the moon. The moon is Goddess, her cycle of darkness to full brilliance mimicking the fertility cycle of ovulation to menstruation in women. Hence a Pagan might follow, in their spiritual practices, the Druidic idea of a Thirteen month calendar, one per moon. Each lunar month is also linked to a tree; these include the Hawthorn, Willow, and Oak. A full moon celebration is called an esbat, a time for worship, magic, and feasting with cakes and ale.

This Druidic calendar is sometimes quoted as starting at a new moon. Modern Pagans mostly disagree and “The Charge”^{xxxv} states that: “once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full, then shall you assemble...”. Scholars have pointed out it is more likely that Pagans would meet and count time by an event that could be seen (full moon) rather than one that could not (a new moon).^{xxxvi} Finally, both sabbats and esbats are believed to begin and end at sunset, a tradition echoed in the Jewish Sabbath which begins at sunset on Fridays.

The Underworld

Most Pagans believe in reincarnation, which is a logical follow through of the cyclic theme. First however souls rest in the Otherworld. There are as many names for the Otherworld as there are traditions in Paganism; Avalon, Annwyn, Tir-na-nOg, and The Underworld, to name just a few. The Summerland is very popular with eclectic Pagans, as is the idea of a “timeout” before beginning a new life. This Underworld however is not however to be confused with the concept of hell. Punishment for bad deeds is through a more karmic principle; what goes around comes around, and a person suffers during their lifetime(s).

The idea of a journey to the Underworld, followed by rebirth, is found in many religions including Christianity and the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ. There are a number of stories within the Pagan traditions that deal with this journey and return, including that of the Descent of the Sumerian goddess Inanna who “makes the shamanic journey to the hidden face of life in order to achieve a deeper understanding of its mysteries.”^{xxxvii} The significance of the Descent in modern renderings was noted in “Xena as Archetype Goddess”:

“ Xena has undertaken the mythical/traditional Journey of the Divine into the Underworld/Death...We are familiar with the Descent of Inanna into the Underworld, where, as the great Goddess passes each of the gates to hell, she has to give up an item of her power. She experiences death, is brought back to life, and as she rises from the Underworld, gains back her power and more...We have seen Xena also undertake a similar journey of death, revelation/growth, and subsequent resurrection Her death is a learning experience - inner secrets are revealed to her... she acknowledges her destiny. Once this is done, she is ready to live again, and rises from the grave in all her glory”^{xxxviii}

Thou it harm none

“Nor do I demand sacrifice, for behold, I am the Mother of all living, and my love is poured out upon the earth”

So reads The Charge^{xxxv} and anyone claiming to be Wiccan should certainly follow this as another expression of the Rede. The “Harm none” rule is both simple and complex:

"Thus you can play music late at night if you want to, but not if the noise will disturb the neighbour's' sleep...there is no prohibition per se of adultery. But anyone who wishes to embark on such an extra-martial affair must consider the likely effects on their own partner and children as well as on the partner and family of their lover. Nothing in life is ever quite as simple as it sounds."^{xxxix}

This especially applies to magic. The most requested spell, the spell most portrayed in the media, the most obvious and least used of all is the love spell. Yet Pagans are permitted only to use magic to attract a partner of a particular type, not a particular person. To use magic to snare the man or woman next door would violate their free will, forcing them to love you. In fact, no magic should be worked without the permission of all parties involved.

This even applies to healing spells. Interestingly, when Buffy requests a healing spell for her mother in the "Buffy: The Vampire Slayer" episode "Shadow", she is refused:

"GILES: The truth is, uh, the ... mystical and the medical aren't meant to mix, Buffy. Sorry, um .. .the human mind is very delicate. Too much can go wrong.

TARA: Yeah, I've heard stories about people trying healing spells ... if we did something, it could make things a lot worse"^{xl}

This is not true. Once permission is obtained magic, in the form of sending healing energy, can certainly be practised. Some would say that healing – by herbs, by spiritual energy, by simply listening to someone's problems – is a major part of being a Witch, a wise woman. Currott^{xli} gives an example of a healing spell her coven participated in to help a fellow member recover from a serious illness. In addition there is a strong leaning towards the use of complementary and alternative medicine. The idea of natural remedies such as herbal extracts harks back to the image of the wise woman, while the vibrational theory behind homeopathy is magical in itself.

There are a few serious cases where magic might be used against someone and the magic worked is to reflect their own actions back upon them, or to bind them from doing harm. Such cases include rape, child abuse, and other personal attacks. If the identity of the perpetrator is uncertain they should not be named, just as no particular person should be named in a love spell. If the identity is certain, such as an abusive ex-husband, both they and their misdeeds can be named; pieces of hair or nail clippings can be added to ensure binding. Here the idea is that they are bound in the sense of being restrained and can no longer harm you. "The Craft"^{xlii} features a binding spell worked against a Witch who is out of control and her photo and pieces of hair are put into a "poppet"^{xliii} which is then bound " by the power of three times three" while black ribbon is wrapped around the it. Galenorn^{xliv} gives a remarkably similar ritual in "Embracing the Moon" along with the cautions on using such a spell.

The code of Paganism, of Wicca, of what Witches call the Craft, is that of personal responsibility. Within the loose framework of "harm none" and bearing in mind the rule of returns (what you do comes back to you, often in a multiple of three), it is up to the individual to stand by their moral decisions. When Willow's magic gets out of control in later episodes of "Buffy: the vampire Slayer", she says that magic took her away from herself and set her free. Paganism is actually about finding yourself, facing your shadows, finding your limits, staying true to your ethics. Currott^{xlv} describes this

as facing the “Guardian at the Gate”, to accept your whole, true self. To become Pagan is to be part of a tolerant, open, faith and community; it is also a duty and responsibility to act in your own and others best interests.

Finally, Starhawk has this to say of sacrifice:

“Unfortunately, newspapers, motion pictures and television today continue to perpetuate the association of Witchcraft and Goddess religion with horror and human sacrifice...Witchcraft as a religion may not have a universal creed or set liturgy, but on some points there is unanimity. No true Witches today practice human sacrifice, torture, or any form of ritual murder. Anyone who does is not a Witch, but a psychopath.”^{xlvi}

Honouring the divine

This is the element most frequently overlooked by the media portrayals, but one of the most important. Paganism is a spiritual practice, a faith, not just a system of magical spells or a belief in reincarnation. Too often media witches are shown to be in league with the devil. Other times there is no divine purpose, no divinity respected – the Harry Potter books do not represent real Witchcraft for no mention of a god or goddess is mentioned anywhere in the series. When a deity is named in a text (other than the devil as a “god”), it is usually only to serve the purpose of a spell. The most commonly referred to is Hecate, a Crone goddess, a dark goddess, a Witches goddess. However she is not the only goddess known and worshipped, nor would she be the first choice for many Pagans, be they Witches or otherwise.

Perhaps the most important point to make is to correct the most common false belief about Witchcraft, that witches worship the devil. Almost every single book relating to Paganism, Wicca and Witchcraft, states implicitly that witches do not worship the devil. To be a Witch is to be an adiabolist, for no modern Witch believes in the devil; how can they, when the devil is a largely Christian construct? The mythology of the ancient religions which modern Paganism is reclaiming has no supreme evil being; there are lords of the Underworld, such as Hades in the Greek pantheon and Arawn in the Celtic myths. Set is seen as evil for murdering his brother, Osiris, in Egyptian stories, yet even he represents the necessary destructive power; for without destruction there can be no change, new creation, or rebirth. Even the god, Lucifer, often associated with the devil or one of his fallen angels, was originally a Pagan god of light.

Often quoted, and attributed to Dion Fortune, there is a belief is that all gods are one god, all goddesses are one goddess, and that he and she are one. This is not, however, to return to the monotheistic deity of, for example, Christianity. Firstly, the recognition of the feminine principle within this one deity is paramount. Secondly, this one deity is seen as the universal energy source, not a personality, a god who hands out commandments and protects or punishes. Thirdly, the individual recognition of a Goddess, a particular aspect (e.g. the Mother), or a named Goddess (e.g. Isis) allows an individual to connect with a particular energy. This might be something they feel connected to (such as the ocean) something they want help with (finding a new job) or a spiritual/emotional aspect they wish to explore (a shy woman might want to look at the qualities embodied by a warrior goddess). This resembles the Catholic hierarchy of saints; for example a blacksmith might call upon the patron saint of blacksmiths, St Bridget.

A coven will probably work with a particular pantheon – Celtic deities for example, or an eclectic “set” that has evolved from the members own experiences. Outside of coven practices, Pagans usually choose their own deities based on the mythologies they feel an affinity for. When addressing the overall aspect of God and Goddess the terms are Lord and Lady. It is the Lady we shall turn to next, for what sets Pagan religions apart from most others is the recognition of a divine feminine.

The Goddess

“The contemporary cult of the Goddess...is a conscious feminist protest against an allegedly patriarchal society”^{xlvii}

The Goddess, She of Many Names, appears throughout Paganism as mother, daughter, warrior, queen, giver of life – and goddess of death. Called by a generic title: Goddess, The Great Goddess, Mother Earth; or known by a specific title: Gaia (made popular again by Lovelock’s work on the Gaia Theory)^{xlviii} She is often seen in as the Triple Goddess; most commonly the forms of maiden, mother, and crone. This concept of triplicity is seen in many religions and throughout Paganism.

The Goddess may stand alone (e.g. the Roman Diana) but usually she takes lovers, and in the overall mythology, a husband. However she is never subordinate to her husband; he is her consort as much as she is his. His survival depends on her, for through her, he is reborn. This is a very different interpretation of marriage than society is used to; there are still expectations that a woman will change her surname to that of her husband, that his career is more important, that she will have (and desires) children. Relationships are often a powerplay between the partners and the statistics on domestic violence^{xlix} are both shocking and yet somehow accepted. Is it surprising that women seek out models who reject the role of wife, or who demand equality within the relationship?

The Goddess encompasses elements that women are not accustomed to. For example, she is a Warrior and her righteous anger gives her strength, anger at the abuse of the earth and the abuse of women. The Warrior allows women to acknowledge their anger and stand up for themselves and their beliefs.

Dianic Wicca takes feminist Witchcraft to its logical conclusion, worshipping only the Goddess and rarely allowing men to participate in its rituals. The majority of Pagans reject this, accusing the Dianics of hypocrisy for excluding the God and claiming all wrongdoings come from the male aspects of nature. This, they argue, is no better than claiming there is only a male god and that women are the cause of all sin. In defence, Dianics refer to the all female priesthoods of the ancient religions and the honour this conferred upon women. It is worth noting that an estimated 60% of Witches in the UK are female.¹

Goddess worshippers, whether they acknowledge the God or not, are usually feminist. They are not necessarily Witches or Wiccans and are often interested in developing a religion rather than reconstructing one.

Susan Starr Sereed^{li} recognises Feminist Spirituality as a new religious movement in its own right and explains how in the absence of “official” sacred texts the movement:

" encourages and accepts as valid and legitimate the inspirations, dreams, visions, experiences, and interpretations of individual women...women active in the movement are aware that they are a creating a new religion, one of their most important challenges is the search for authenticity. On the one hand, Feminist Spirituality roots its claims for authenticity in the academy: archaeology...anthropology... history...literary analysis... and psychology... On the other hand, Spiritual Feminists focus their search for authenticity on women's dreams, fantasies, intuitions, and direct revelations and encounters with the sacred."

This sums up the duality present in Paganism as a whole; the desire to prove this is a revival movement versus the acknowledgement that it is a reinvention, a new imagining. Both schools of thought have advantages: the revivalists can claim historical precedent validates their beliefs; those willing to admit to the infancy of the movement can distance themselves from the darker elements of Pre-Christian Paganism such as the accusation of human sacrifice; which, even if it were ever practised, is not practised today.

Starhawk knows that the history of the Goddess is a complex and controversial one. She acknowledges that she writes not as a historian, but as a Witch and uses her imagination to reconstruct the past – much as historians construct from the clues they find and the theories that resound within them. She believes that the role of history is to reawaken possibilities and alternatives:

“What I and many others are saying is simply, ‘Hey, it wasn’t always like this. It doesn’t have to be like this! So – what culture do we want to live in? let’s create it!’...Recent attacks on the Goddess traditions have tried to discredit our history...The idea seems to be that if they can disprove our origin story, they can invalidate our spirituality.”^{liii}

Sex and Sexuality

For Pagans sex is not sinful, a “dirty” or profane act, nor is it purely for procreation – while Paganism is in many respects a fertility religion, modern Pagans recognise fertility and creativity in the broadest sense, so that a child free women can express her fertility by creating a work of art.

Sex for a Pagan, then, is an expression of love, one aspect of the creative force, it is life affirming and even a form of worship^{liiii}. There are ritual sexual acts such as the Hieros Gamos which are usually performed between partners who are already sexually active together. There are no strict doctrines on sexual activity and despite negative media of the past, some reports of which were true and others unfounded, most Pagans would never require a sexual act as part of initiation into a coven. Galenorn warns specifically about this:

“If a coven insists that you must undergo ritual sex with the Priest or Priestess...or that you can’t be a real Witch without this step, then turn around and run the other way. In the past some traditions worked this way but I find the concept manipulative and destructive.”^{liiv}

Gay Pagans

When Okelle, About.com's Pagan/Wiccan Guide, was asked about gay or intersexed people and the Wiccan community, Okelle replied that as a gay witch herself, she believes that "there is definitely a place for all different kinds of people in the pagan community."^{lv} There are two pages of links provided from the About.com site featuring "Sites especially for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or otherwise queer pagans."^{lvi}

Kemp claims that gay males cannot be witches:

"the belief in male/female polarity excludes male homosexuals. Some Wiccan writers state openly that they would find it difficult to work with gay people. In the United States there are male homosexual covens which claim to be Wiccan, but it is difficult to see how they can make magic in this tradition. In Britain there is an association called Hoblink which acts as a contact network for gay and bisexual Pagans."^{lvii}

It is interesting that Kemp targets male homosexuals and not lesbians. In any case, while the male-female, black-white, Yin-Yang polarity is acknowledged by Starhawk, she points out that this can be destructive. By putting value only in heterosexual relationships, the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community is isolated. This goes against the grain of "erotic energy [which] inherently generates and celebrates diversity"^{lviii}.

For many the soul has no gender and it is the soul which strives to experience the divine, making both gender and sexuality irrelevant to spirituality.

Meanwhile it is claimed that:

"Witchery and lesbianism have always been synonymous to some degree...so it's only natural that the two lesbians in Buffy are also both witches."^{lix}

Skyclad

Sky-clad or nakedness is not always a part of Witchcraft, despite being an aspect which often makes it into the tabloids. To be skyclad is an expression of openness and some believe the Celts ran into battle naked so that their inner forces would shine forth to protect them. However, being skyclad outdoors in the middle of a British winter is unlikely to seem an inviting prospect. Marion Green laments the obsession with nakedness, that:

"some modern witches are keen to be sky-clad (naked) and free, but as a consequence take off their clothes and have to wear a house! Surely it is better in the eyes of the Earth mother to wear comfortable clothes but be out of door, in the wind and moonlight?"^{lx}

Defining Paganism: Jargon and Vocabulary

To further develop the understanding of the concept of Pagan and Paganism it is beneficial to look at some of the terms used and the definitions behind them.

Wiccan, Witch

The words Witch and Wiccan are believed to have come from the word Willow, a tree sacred to the Druids and loved for its flexibility, hence “wicker”. Others claim the words come from “wicce” meaning “wise one”. Some people use the term Wiccan to describe themselves because of the tradition they or they coven are following; some because they prefer the term to the word “Witch”.

Some people use the word Witch because this is what they feel describes them best. There is a strong psychological element to using a word associated with evil; Currott^{lxi} believes some women need to call themselves “witch” as an act of defiance and re-empowerment. By re-appropriating this word they are transforming the dark connotations and reclaiming women’s power. Green, however, disagrees:

“Real witches do not, and never have, called themselves ‘witches’; that is a term applied by others....though all witches are pagans of one sort or another not all pagans are witches.”^{lxii}

Witchcraft and Wicca are terms used interchangeably by some authors, and while being technically incorrect, with no hard and fast rules, many Pagans themselves find it difficult to differentiate between the two.

Warlock, Wizard

Wizards and Warlocks are not Pagan terms. Even in the witch-hunts the men (few though their numbers were in comparison to women) were still called witches and almost all Pagans agree that a male Witch is a Witch.

Others go further, pointing to the dark origins of the term warlock ; Galenorn^{lxiii} amongst others describes a warlock as an oath-breaker, someone sent by the Inquisition to uncover witches, and not something a Pagan should aspire to. In the television series “Charmed”, Warlocks are the enemy, bad witches, demons, people on the side of evil.

Pagan

“Pagan” often has negative connections such as heathen; godless. It originally meant “countryman” and by association uneducated.^{lxiv} Pagan can refer to any religion that is not mainstream (i.e. Christianity, Judaism, Islam). However followers of modern Paganism would distance their unique practices from those of Hinduism and Scientology, for example.

Paganism within the Pagan community is defined by a connection to the earth and to the natural cycles, and in a creator who embodies both male and female aspects.

Magick

No model of Paganism would be complete without mentioning magic; it is the most prominent aspect in fictional representation. Spelt with a “k” by many practitioners in order to distinguish between the spiritual practice (magick) and the entertainment using illusions (magic), magic is the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with will; the art of changing consciousness at will; the use of natural and supernatural forces and elements to alter reality and promote change.

Not all Pagans work magic, although those defining themselves as Witches and Wiccans are more likely to use magic. Some groups consider it essential. When Willow visits a campus Wicca group in “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer” she is upset because they are not interested in spells. Willow plays on the traditional greeting/farewell of “Blessed Be” to call the group “a bunch of Wanna-Blessed-Be’s”.

Where Willow is wrong is that magic is not the be all and end all of Pagan religions; magic should be underpinned by a moral and ethical framework that acknowledging the God and Goddess can provide. Where Willow is right about the group is that they fail to recognise the true Witch, Tara, amongst them because they do not encourage and support all their members and so fail to provide a safe community for all women to explore their spirituality.

Magick is worked through the force of will, the visualisations of the Witch. It takes into account a number of forces, some of which are considered below.

Type of Magic

Magic is often separated into bipolar opposites: Black (evil, or simply uncovering the unknown) and White; High and Practical (or Low) magic; Ceremonial or Natural magic.

Generally speaking, High Magic relates to experiencing the presence of Goddess and God while Practical magic is for necessities like health and prosperity.

Ceremonial magic involves complex charts and tables and many tools; Ceremonial magicians often study the Kabala. Earth magic, Natural magic, however is practical magic on every level, emphasising using what you have to do what you need, when you need it.

Four Elements

There are four elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. These together make the fifth element, aether; spirit. Pagans refer to the elements frequently; certain goals are considered to be related to an element (communication and air, for example) as are various oils and other magical ingredients and tools. Various deities are usually

considered to represent one of the four main elements. A prayer, a spell, a ritual at a festival will usually involve representing the relevant element(s) and/or deities.

Figure 2.3, below, shows some of the correspondences associated with the elements; again, these are not absolute, but the most commonly given guidelines.

It should be noted that these elements are not the same in the Chinese system of Feng Shui., which recognises Wood, Water, Fire, Metal, and Earth.^{lxv} This is a relevant point as in the “Charmed”^{lxvi} episode “Is there a Woogy in the House” the witches discover their home is built on a “Wiccan plane” by identifying places of power for each spiritual element. From these five points they are able to draw a pentagram. However air and spirit, possibly considered too abstract to be depicted, are ignored and the Feng Shui elements used.

Figure 2.3: Elements and their correspondences

Element (Direction)	Animals	Example deities	Common Associations	Colours	Tools	Time (season, of day)
Earth (North)	Four footed creatures; horse	<i>Gaia, Persephone, Ceres</i> Herne, Pan, Thor	Income/prosperity The Physical Growth Death Caverns, fields, meadows Plants and trees Crystals Salt The Tarot suit of Pentacles	Green, brown	Pentacle, Double-headed axe	Winter Midnight
Fire (South)	Salamander, Lizard, Snake	Pele, Freya, Brighid, Lugh, Vulcan, Ra	Energy Spirit Creativity, Passion Blood Healing Volcanoes, bonfires, deserts The Tarot suit of wands	Red, orange	Wand, Pike, Besom	Summer Noon
Air (East)	Birds, butterflies, bees	Aradia, Nut, Athena Mercury, Hermes, Thoth	Intelligence, Intellect communication Abstract thought Winds Mountain tops, open prairies Travel Vapour, mist, clouds, storms New beginnings, change The Tarot suit of swords	Light blue, white	Athame (ritual knife), Sword, incense, staff	Spring Dawn
Water (Water)	Sea creatures (fish and marine life)	Aphrodite, Isis, Morgan Le Fay, Osiris, Neptune, Poseidon	Relationships Emotions Fertility Oceans, lakes, polls, wells Intuition <i>Cleansing, Purification</i> Salt water, ritual wine The Tarot suit of cups	Deep blue, sea-green	Chalice (or goblet), Shield	Autumn Twilight

While using Feng Shui is not necessarily frowned upon in the Pagan community, to confuse the two systems in this way seems clumsy or just plain ignorant.

Using Magic

Witches and others are allowed to use magic for themselves, though others contest this; a spell should not be selfish, a spell cannot be for yourself. However this would put solitary practitioners at a distinct disadvantage. Generally, so long as the “Harm none” rule is followed spells are cast for yourself or for others as needed.

Circle casting

Circle casting is an important and misunderstood part of Witchcraft. A circle has four quarters, one for each element (earth, air, fire water) and is used to create a sacred space within which to work magic. Since there are no churches or other sacred buildings in the traditional sense, Witches can work and worship wherever they need to, and casting a circle creates this sacred space. The circle acts as a focus for magic and offers protection from negative energies. It is also representative of the cyclical nature of the universe.

Pentagrams may be used within, or at each corner, of the circle for protection. This is where the stereotypical evil Witch conjures up a demon in the horror genre. The circle and the pentagram represent protection from evil and a focus for any magic regardless of its intent. To cast a circle, to draw a pentagram, is to draw energy. When you light a fire, you do so in an appropriate container so it cannot harm anything except the fuel you provide. Fire is not good or bad, but it should be respected and used in an appropriate manner; so it is with magic.

Galenorn agrees that there is little evidence of circle casting in early traditions, but there is evidence to support the general concept of creating sacred space. Sometimes it is not appropriate to cast a circle –for example if you wanted to cast a protection spell over the whole house.

The pentagram should usually be upright, with a single point at the top (figure 2.4) and not inverted. An inverted pentagram can hold similar connotations to an upside down cross; however even this is contested. The pentagram is said to represent either the five elements (with Spirit at the top) and/or a human with arms outstretched “at one with the environment”.^{lxvii} When drawn it is a pentagram; in a physical form, such as to be worn on a necklace, it is a pentacle.

Figure 2.4 An upright pentagram



Tools

Before beginning a spell or as part of one, a Witch may consult a divination device.

There are a number of methods but popular ones include:

- Tarot cards
- Scrying (using a crystal ball, mirror or body of water to see the future)
- Runes (can be the Norse rune or the Celtic Ogham).

Divination may occur outside of spellwork, but is often used to decide upon the details of a spell. Other tools include:

- Representations of the elements (e.g. a seashell for water)
- Representations of the God and Goddess (e.g. a Chalice for the Goddess)
- Athame (a ceremonial knife used to direct energy)
- Candles (of various shapes and colours)
- Pictures and other ornaments the Witch feels connected to
- An offering (if appropriate; usually food or drink which is left outside after a ritual).

Clothing

Some Witches like to wear robes especially during a ritual. Outside of this, Pagans can be found wearing everything from leather and jeans to knitted cardigans or short skirts. There is, however, a concept of Pagan clothing. For some this has been influenced by the Gothic scene with its black leather and PVC. Coupled with this is the Celtic idea of feminine wear with lace bodices and flowing dresses. Generally loose, flowing skirts are worn with tighter blouses or T-shirts; however the style is also to be individualistic. Jewellery is also popular and pentacles (the drawn or physical form of a pentagram) are becoming more available. The Ankh, Egyptian symbol of life, is another piece of jewellery with Pagan connections and any number of necklaces or rings incorporating crystals are related to the New Age movement. Most television representations show women who are Witches to have long hair rather than short, perhaps to emphasise their femininity. This emphasis might be to counter-balance the power of the Witch (as power is more usually male). However the usual cautions against stereotyping apply:

“Some witches wear black because the energy of that color repels negative energy. Some witches wear heavy makeup. Some witches wear jewelry. However, the vast majority of Witches... don't advertise their religious choices in dress. Religion is a very personal thing and to avoid stereotypes and harrassment, modern Witches are virtually undetectable. They dress just like you do. They wear suits, dresses, jeans, teeshirts, sneakers, pumps, carry normal purses, umbrellas, backpacks, and briefcases”^{lxviii}

It should be kept in mind too that while black robes may signify a Witch in the fictional media, corporate sponsorship and product placement probably play a large part in selecting the modern fashionable Witch's wardrobe.

Book of Shadows

Used as a title in a number of books and media artefacts, the Book of Shadows is any number of works relating to spellcraft. Currott^{lxix} encompasses the most relevant of these when she describes a Book Of Shadows as referring to a Witch's journal, a record of spiritual wisdom, spells, songs, chants, and rituals.

Chants and Words

While many books include spells it is considered that these should serve as guidelines. The more personal the spell the more likely it is to work and so writing spells and adapting recipes is encouraged. The idea of an ancient grimoire with latin phrases may suit a stereotypical picture of spellcraft, but the truth is aside from the names of the deities called upon (if any) a spell is most likely to be written in the native tongue of the spellcaster.

Chanting, singing, dancing and drumming are often mentioned as ways to raise the energy to power a spell. The songs can be spontaneous, specially written, or favourite tracks by popular artists. When the energy is at its peak it is directed outwards to where the focus of the spell is, or perhaps inwards, towards an item representing the magical goal.

PREVIOUS WORKS

There is very little literature that looks at media representations of Paganism, although there is much academic interest in Paganism and the modern revival of Goddess worship. For example, the Open University has a research group called “Belief Beyond Boundaries” and recently held a conference, “The Development Of Paganism: History, Influences And Contexts, 1880-2002”.^{lxx}

There are exceptions; Sayer wrote “The Witches”^{lxxi}, a chapter in a Science Fiction Foundation publication looking at the gendered implications of the oppositions between the female witches of Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* series and the male wizards; newspaper articles (many of which are quoted throughout this work) look at the issues raised by programmes like “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer”; and the journals of the science fiction and fantasy community provide an in-depth look at the representations encountered.

The latter includes “Witch Way Now”^{lxxii} which traces the development of television representations of witches. Atkins puts his finger on the core of the word “witch” and what her representation so often means: “a female power...feared for the independence it represented...a person who subverted what was taken as normal by society.” Atkins looks at early representations such as “Bewitched” where Samantha came from a “line of empowered women” but “ultimately bowed to [her husbands] wishes...The message was that you could be a strong woman...within limits.”

Atkins moves on to “Sabrina: The Teenage Witch” whose main priorities are “to be certain of who she is and to be independent.” He notes that as the political climate changes, witches “can win” and alludes to an episode of “The X-files” in which “an empowered female energy has overthrown a controlling influence”. Finally Atkins moves on to examine the representation of “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer” and “Charmed”. For “Buffy” he notes that “Here witchcraft is a sexual power, yes, but needn’t be a heterosexual power” and that Willow’s relationship with her mother is almost non-existent; “Sabrina” is being raised by her aunts; and the “Charmed” sisters only inherit their powers after the death of the grandmother who raised them. Witchcraft is an example of females rebelling and Atkins is sure that

“as long as the idea of male and female identities continues to be rigidly defined and opposed, then there’ll be opportunities to retell this same conflict...Charmed may be the latest in a long line of witch metaphors, but it won’t be the last.”

Atkins then, recognises a representation of a witch when they are female, independent, empowered and often isolated from their parents.

“Buffy: The Magic Fiends”^{lxxiii} is another article that examines the link between magic and sexuality. Atkins in this piece looks at how both the ups and downs of magic are explored – “anyone who states that this portrayal is without moral repercussions has clearly been watching the wrong channel”.

A third Atkins written piece “Those Who Help Themselves” looks at the magic of “Charmed”. Unlike real Witches, the sisters are unable to use magic for personal gain (self defence excluded). Atkins acknowledges that this “allows the show to take the moral high ground” and suggests that if the sisters profited too much from their extremely powerful abilities the show would lose its conflict and therefore drama.^{lxxiv}

With all these representations of Witches, Xposé finally ran an article on “Real Wicca”^{lxxv} as part of its “Xposé investigates” series of articles. Wigmore describes the “chicken-and-egg question as to whether the activities of the likes of the Halliwell sisters [Charmed], Willow, Tara [Buffy: the Vampire Slayer], Sabrina {the Teenage Witch] and so on reflect the rising popularity of wicca in the world beyond television, or whether they are responsible for it.”

After a few dramatic examples of magic in the television universe, Wigmore asserts, “Real wicca is rather different...In the real world, wicca exists only as a shadowy and, to the outsider, confusing series of pagan beliefs.” Wigmore then attempts to give a little historical background and some facts about Wicca, including the belief in the creators having male and female forms and the triple goddess figure. Magic is likened, as in others sources, to prayer and is not black or white but coloured by the Witches intent.

Wigmore also notes that Wicca “is rooted in a desire for peace and compassion” and that “Many ‘converts’ will be turned off as soon as they realise that it’s a little more complicated to conjure up goddesses than Willow and company make out.” Finally he considers Willow who was raised Jewish, uses crucifixes to fight vampires, and now worships Pagan deities. This is an interesting point and will be considered further in the semiotic analysis.

Genge^{lxxvi} in the unofficial “Charmed” companion is concerned primarily with the “reality” of the magic shown in the series and attempts to answer the question “is it Wiccan practice being portrayed in prime time – as the show has always contended – or is it something else?”. Given the sister’s incredible powers there is no question of the show failing to be completely accurate in its depiction of real Wicca. However Genge notes that from the start however, the show has attempted to portray Wicca by giving information on what Witches aren’t and established a set of basic beliefs that Genge believes “few Wiccans would take exception [to].” These include:

- Wiccans maintain an altar space
- Wiccan holidays are sabbats
- An athame is a magical implement for directing energy

- While most Wiccans work within groups called covens, solitary practitioners do exist
- The Book of Shadows is a general title for a Wiccan's magical workbook
- A warlock isn't a male witch but an evil one
- Triple powers have special properties
- The Wiccan Rede, in short form, at least, is "An it harm none, do what ye will"

What Genge glosses over is that the sisters powers set them apart from non-witches (mortals) and that for all their new found empowerment the sisters, particularly Piper, bemoan how they want a normal life; marriage and children are apparently the only normal, desirable, lifestyle . She also ignores the treatment of Phoebe. To elaborate, Phoebe is the most "witchy" of the sisters. She believes in magic, she enjoys being a Witch, her gift is to foresee the future (divination being more possible to Pagans than her sister's telekinetic and time-freezing abilities), she accepts mortals who practice Paganism and Witchcraft where Prue seems to view mortals who practise Wicca as deluded.

However in "Is There A Woogy In The House" it is Phoebe who is taken over by the evil; later episodes show her earlier incarnations used magic for evil; yet another shows a corrupt Phoebe of the future being burnt at the stake. We seem to have come back to the concept Atkins feels tainted "Bewitched" but not "Charmed." He fails to see that the sisters desires to conform, and the fact that the Witch most interested in pursuing the Craft has the potential for the most evil, can be interpreted that a woman can be successful but only so far – she must acknowledge she is dangerous and possibly evil, and must not enjoy being powerful but desire to enter into society's normal, heterosexual, structure.

Some authors of books on Wicca mention the media, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. Starhawk, for example, bemoans the lack of realistic, rounded characters who are Witches:

“[I]n radio, films and television we’re still the equivalent of Buckwheat, Aunt Jemima or Charlie Chan. We now get trivializing movies like The Craft along with the flat-out horror films. Occasionally a Witch shows up on a TV sitcom but is usually portrayed as a wacky, New Age type. I’m waiting for the TV Witch who happened to be an auto mechanic, an engineer, or a molecular biologist.”^{lxxvii}

Additionally Pagan websites often maintain lists of films and television programmes with comments on the representation shown; “*Media Witches Verses Real Witches*” on the Alternative Religions Education Network (AREN) website^{lxxviii} for example.

However it seems Pagans can look beyond an otherwise negative portrayal; one Pagan described “*The Wicker Man*” (1973) thus:

“Unfortunately, in the end, the Pagans are 'revealed' to be the requisite bad guys. If you can overlook the ending, however, this is fine movie. Every Pagan I know who's seen it wants to move to Summer Isle immediately.”^{lxxix}

Furthermore, where even the Devil was just doing his job in “*Brimstone*” and the real villain was a (admittedly truly Pre-Christian) Pagan Priestess, Tammy Todd - the About.com’s Alternative Religions Guide - recommended the show as excellent Halloween viewing, making reference to a number of non-Christian belief systems:

“As you probably know, Halloween (Samhain for us pagans) is this Saturday night, so I thought it would be fitting to review the spooky, surreal new show... Brimstone ...The mythos of Hell and the damned souls is taken straight from Christianity. Most LaVeyan Satanists will not enjoy the series, although the Traditionalists will love the intelligent, independent portrayal of Lucifer. All in all, Brimstone succeeds not because of its mythology, but because of its strong plot and wonderfully dark aura. I loved this show.”^{lxxx}

These examples would seem to support the uses and gratifications theory; Pagans can enjoy something even when it depicts their religion in a negative light. Perhaps it is easy to ignore the negativity because the representation is so unreal it cannot offend; to the Pagan it is not a representation of Paganism at all.

3. Methodology

Selecting the text: content analysis

Using the model of what real-life Paganism involves, a single text has been analysed in-depth.

The text was selected by a basic, adapted, form of content analysis. Content analysis, described at length in Chapter Five of “Mass Communication Research Methods”^{lxxxix} can be used to identify items of interest. This systematic approach counts the number of references made to a particular subject, and can include brief notes about the treatment of the subject (i.e. positive or negative).

To select a text for in-depth analysis, a number of questions were kept in mind when reviewing materials. A secondary set of questions were kept in mind to discover how the representation was formed. These questions can be seen in Figure 3.1.

Content analysis usually takes place over a short, specific, period of time and looks at a range of media including fictional television, televised news reports, commercials, newspaper stories, newspaper editorials, and radio features.

The main problem with content analysis other than as an identifying tool is that it does not show how meaning arises from the texts, simply the existence of a particular subject or organisation. There is little room for interpretation and no way of recording

Figure 3.1 Questions borne in mind for adapted content analysis to identify representations of Paganism

Primary Questions: Does the Text contain a representation of Paganism?	Secondary Questions: How the representation is formed
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is one or more of the major characters (appearing in most or all episodes of a television show or scenes of a film) referred to or shown to be a practising Witch, Wiccan, Warlock, Or Pagan? 2. Is one ore more of the supporting or recurring characters (that is, appearing in two or more episodes of a series, or appearing in a significant number of scenes in a film) referred to or shown to be a practising Witch, Warlock or Pagan? 3. Is a single reference made to, or does a single episode deal with, Paganism, or Wicca, or Witchcraft, and are the beliefs and practices of significant value to the plot? 4. Is a single reference made to, or does a single episode deal with Paganism, or Wicca, or Witchcraft, where the subject is discussed but does not form a major part of the plot? 5. Is there no overt reference to Paganism, Wicca or Witchcraft, but attention is drawn to some aspect of the beliefs or practices – for example “Hercules: The Legendary Journeys” gives a media representation of the Greek gods?^{lxxxii} 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the Pagan/Witch character shown to have inherited their beliefs or did they find Paganism by themselves? 2. Does the character practise alone or as part of a group (coven)? 3. Do they use spells? If so for which purposes? 4. Are they shown to worship any particular god or goddess? 5. If a Witch, how do they describe non-witches? (humans, mortals, etc) 6. How does the Witch describe themselves and others like them; how do others describe them (eg A Witch, A Pagan)?

the audience’s response. It relies upon correct classification and categorisation of a subject; it is necessary to know that Witches do not worship the devil in order to remove the counting of Satanism or devil worship from the analysis. However adaptation of this system allowed identification of a particular subject.

Selecting the text: reasons for choosing “Family” to be analysed in-depth

Conducting a detailed analysis was restricted to one text for reasons of time and space constraints. Some reference to other texts suitable for further analysis has been made in the literature review.

The text that was analysed in-depth is a particular episode of the television series “Buffy The Vampire Slayer”. The series fits the profile because it meets the criteria listed in Figure 3.1 as can be seen in Figure 3.2

Figure 3.2 Adapted content analysis of “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer”

Primary Questions: Does the Text contain a representation of Paganism?	Responses from “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer”
<p>1. Is one or more of the major characters (appearing in most or all episodes of a television show or scenes of a film) referred to or shown to be a practising Witch, Wiccan, Warlock, or Pagan</p> <p>2. Is one ore more of the <u>supporting or recurring characters</u> (that is, appearing in two or more episodes of a series, or appearing in a significant number of scenes in a film) referred to or shown to be a practising Witch, Warlock or Pagan? Figure 3.2 cont.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single episode in the first season featured a Witch and her daughter, Amy • Later episodes featured Amy as a hereditary Witch and a <u>recurring character</u> • Jenny Calendar, a temporary <u>recurring character</u> was a self-described Cyber-Pagan but not a Witch • After Calendar’s murder, Willow, a major character, used Calendar’s notes to begin studying the occult. Over a number of episodes, she gained power and was described as a Witch • Tara became a <u>recurring character</u> who inherited her Witchcraft from her mother.
<p>3. Is a single reference made to, or does a single episode deal with, Paganism, or Wicca, or Witchcraft, and are the beliefs and practices of significant value to the plot?</p> <p>4. Is a single reference made to, or does a single episode deal with, Paganism, or Wicca or Witchcraft, where the subject is discussed but does not form a major part of the plot?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of episodes feature spells and their consequences • The episode “Gingerbread” featured a Witch hunt against real Witches (Willow, Amy and others); looked at prejudice against Witches.
<p>5. Is there no overt reference to Paganism, Wicca or Witchcraft, but attention is drawn to some aspect of the beliefs or practices – for example “Hercules: The Legendary Journeys” gives a media representation of the Greek gods?^{lxxxiii}</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entire premise of “Buffy” is based upon non-Christian mythology , primarily the idea that demons pre-date humans and the world we know is just one of many dimensions.
Secondary Questions: How the representation is formed	Responses from “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer”
<p>1. Is the Pagan/Witch character shown to have inherited their beliefs or did they find Paganism by themselves?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willow became interested in the occult and became a Witch despite her Jewish upbringing. Tara on the other hand inherited her powers from her mother.
<p>2. Does the character practise alone or as part of a group (coven)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At first Willow practised alone. Later, she had little time for the on-campus coven (not enough emphasis on spells) but formed a personal relationship with Tara. Working with Tara allowed Willow to tackle more complicated and powerful spells.
<p>3. Do they use spells? If so for which purposes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the time. While some are frivolous many are for the protection of the group.
<p>4. Are they shown to worship any particular god or goddess?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship is the wrong word to describe how deities are approached. Goddesses and others are called upon, most noticeably Hecate, but only when casting a spell.

Figure 3.2 cont.

5. If a Witch, how do they describe non-witches? (humans, mortals, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Witches are human and mortal; Willow is not a hereditary Witch and so is not considered genetically different or superior.
6. How does the Witch describe themselves and others like them; how do others describe them (eg A Witch, A Pagan)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The terms Witch and Wiccan are used interchangeably. The character who was a self-described “Cyber Pagan” differentiated herself from Witches because she didn’t “have that kind of power”

Of all the episodes “Family” was selected for in-depth analysis because of the issues it raises both about Witchcraft and the deeper ideological issues relating to acceptance, family, and women’s place in society- see Figure .3.3.

Figure 3.3 Issues raised in the episode “Family”

<p>Issues about Witchcraft</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tara and Willow regularly practise magic, but Willow is becoming more powerful than Tara (in this representation hereditary witchcraft is contrasted with self-taught witchcraft and the latter is allowed to be stronger) It considers the right of a woman to be a Witch (i.e. powerful) and looks at “where the magic comes from” It features a spell that appears harmless but backfires (moral issues relating to magic use)
<p><i>Issues about the Family vs. Alternative Lifestyles</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willow and Tara have “come out” as a couple but Tara still remains on the periphery of the main group (acceptance issue) It looks at a number of important issues including the differences and similarities between Tara and Willow’s upbringing It looks at the issue of homosexuality/alternative relationships vs. the traditional family unit It has deeper ideological themes such as the definition of “family” and what this means (women’s place in education or at home?)

Analysing the text

Representation in the media is based upon signs and their meanings. Theories relevant to reading signs and meanings include semiotics and ideology. The semiotic analysis of the media text will look primarily at the social codes (names and clothing) with some reference to the technical codes (camera angles). An analysis of the narrative will also be made.

Semiotics

Hermann^{lxxxiv} identifies three types of signs used in television, the Social, the Technical and the Representational. For each of these signs there is the denotation – what is there– and the connotation – what it means. Some examples of these can be seen in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 Television Signs – examples of type with denotation and connotation

<u>Type of Sign</u>	Example	Denotation	Connotation
Social	Dress	A black hat worn in a Western	Villain
Social	Profession	The President of the United States	American Power
Technical	Camera Angle	Shot angled down to a person	Superiority of the viewer (or character whose viewpoint this is)
Technical	Music	Gentle, soft music rising as characters discuss their feelings	Romance
Representational	Indication of genre	An isolated dusty town with horses tethered outside a bar	Western

Saussure noted two dimensions that aid our understanding of meaning. These are the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic. As Dawson^{lxxxv} explains, “a paradigm is the set of signs from which one is chosen” and meaning is “created as much from what was not chosen as from the paradigm as from what was”. In relation to this report, the choice of the word “Witch” is a denotation; the connotation might be “power”; the paradigm is “Witch” and the question is why not “Wiccan” or “Pagan” or “Sorceress” was chosen. The analysis will look at the paradigm that is Willow as a Witch and the paradigm that is Tara as a Witch and the differences that exist between the two.

Barthes^{lxxxvi} also described a tri-dimensional pattern of signifier, signified and sign. He uses the example of a bunch of roses (signifier) which represents passion (signified). Roses and passion exist independently of each other, however these concepts together act as a sign. Therefore if a man gives a woman red roses this can be said to be a sign of his passion for her. Signs are not arbitrary and Barthes described the concept of “myth” a meaning which is produced at the level of connotation which is possible because of shared social knowledge which is historical and cultural. Selby and Cowdery^{lxxxvii} explain this as:

“all signification is first and foremost a social phenomenon...connotative meanings might more accurately be described as intersubjective rather than subjective or personal

Hodge and Kress^{lxxxviii} agree that “social dimensions of semiotic systems are so intrinsic to their nature and function that the systems cannot be studied in isolation.” It is the social factors - such as culture, society’s values and politics - that provide the motivation, origins, form and substance of semiotic systems. Furthermore, they argue, the interaction between speakers and writers (or authors and audience) is more important than the system or product. These social factors are indicators of the prevailing ideology.

Ideology

What Selby and Cowdery are referring to then is the communication that occurs between the creator of a text and the society reading the text. For this communication to be effective certain conventions must be used such as the social and technical codes. The reason for communication is also important. For the various creators of television programmes the reasons are differing but include:

- Provide a message (author)
- Entertain (author/production company)
- Propagate values; maintain prevailing ideology (production company by commissioning an author)
- Gain an audience (production company/network)
- Gain profit (author/production company;/network)

Given that “Ideology is a social and cultural domination which makes the social relations of domination and oppression seem natural and predetermined”^{lxxxix} the current ideology should be kept in mind when looking at connotation. What social relations are being supported by a text? Ideology echoes this concept - what is pre-determined - with representation as noted in the introduction; Chandler’s concern

with the way in which representations are made to seem 'natural'. Chandler also draws upon work by Gebner when he says that:

“the mass media cultivate attitudes and values which are already present in a culture: the media maintain and propagate these values amongst members of a culture, thus binding it together”^{xc}.

If the mass media is propagating the values then it is those in control of the mass media whose values are imposed upon the audience. Herrmann agrees that from:

“a more Marxist point of view, television [can] be seen "as an agent of the domination of capitalist society through the ideological character of the text and the passive nature of the audience. In watching television, people are persuaded to accept a view of society, and of their place in it, that confirms their subordination" (Abercrombie 1996, p. 200).”^{xcii}

Media texts either support or challenge the existing ideology. These latter, subversive, texts take place more often in non-mainstream media texts: independent film, for example, where the heroes do not always win as Hollywood dictates. Less likely to be supported by the major players who control the mass media these texts appeal to the viewer who will not so easily accept their subordination, perhaps the sort of active viewer who will make a reading that is in direct opposition to the preferred reading.

Oppositional Readings

“Cult” film and television is outside the mainstream; it has a smaller following but a loyal one, and the allegorical nature of the texts, usually of the science fiction or fantasy genre, is discussed in magazines, via the internet, and in person at conventions. The various subtexts including “slash” (homosexual relationships) possibilities are of great interest and fan fiction often explores alternative relationships for characters. Boyd gives a brief overview of the types of fanfiction and links to academic fanfiction links on the webpage “Electronic Fandoms and FanFiction”.^{xciii}

“Cult” texts, by using allegory and subtext, are therefore able to tackle controversial issues, and this is one of the reasons for the loyal followings; the desire to be challenged, or to be shown alternatives. Aside from fanfiction all media texts exist to make a profit and it is likely that both a preferred meaning and a subversive subtext will be carefully structured in order to reach the widest possible audience.

Semiotics and Narrative

Additionally the analysis will look at the narrative of the text, a syntagmatic analysis. This will help to uncover the supporting or subversive ideology being presented by looking at which characters fulfil which roles.

Hansen^{xciiii} describes the work of Propp who identified roles (which are fulfilled by characters) and functions (which constitute plot). Seven roles were identified by Propp from his work on fairy tales. A role may be filled by the same character or by more than one character. The roles are:

- Villain
- Provider
- Helper
- Princess and her father
- Dispatcher
- Hero
- False hero

There are 31 main functions which can be further subdivided. These main functions can be grouped into six subjects as seen in Figure 3.5.

Hansen stresses that few moving image texts will contain all of these elements but they provide useful variants on these central themes. This is a useful tool for analysing the chosen text as the mythology of “Buffy The Vampire Slayer” is consistent with fairytales, albeit in a post-modern way. For example “Gingerbread” used the mythology associated with the story of Hansel and Gretel to stir up an unnecessary Witch hunt, while “Helpless” used elements of Little Red Riding Hood (Buffy’s red coat, the deception of her mother using this item of clothing).

Some theorists feel that this is an outdated approach, that focussing on archetypes fails to recognise the deeper messages being communicated by the creator of the text. While there is value in recognising the social dimensions of semiotics (the text is American, the text exists to make a profit, the text is aimed at teenagers, etc), this does not invalidate the idea of archetypes. Science Fiction and Fantasy television is the mythology of our times with the fantastic and impossible, the magical and the divine, the heroes and villains. The mythos of “Buffy” is an example of a modern folk tale where good battles evil and the hero is aided by wise and brave friends.

Archetypes are powerful; they are the roots of civilized thought, encapsulations of the human experience. Pagans in particular recognize archetypes as they try to reclaim their past mythologies. "The Goddess: Evolution of an Image" looks in-depth at the archetypal Goddess and all her guises^{xciiv}.

Figure 3.5 Propp's Functions and Groups (Hansen)^{xcv}

Function	Group
1. A member of the family leaves home 2. A prohibition or rule is imposed on the hero 3. This prohibition is broken 4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance 5. The villain learns something about his victim 6. The villain tries to deceive the victim to get possession of him and his belongings 7. The victim unknowingly helps the villain by being deceived or influenced by the villain	Preparation
8. The villain harms a member of the family 8a A member of the family lacks or desires something 9. This lack of misfortune is made known; the hero is given a request or command and he goes or is sent on a mission/request 10. The seeker (or the hero) plans action against the villain.	Complication
11. The hero leaves home 12 The hero is tested, interrogated, and as a result receives either a magical agent or a helper 13. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor 14. The hero uses the magical agent 15. The hero is transferred to the general location of the object of his mission/quest	Transference
16 The hero and villain join in direct combat 17. The hero is branded 18. The villain is defeated 19. The initial misfortune or lack is put right	Struggle
20. The hero returns 21. The hero is pursued 22. The hero is rescued from pursuit 23. The hero arrives home or elsewhere and is not recognised 24. A false hero makes false claims 25. A difficult task is set for the hero 26 The task is accomplished	Return
27. The hero is recognised 28. The false hero/villain is exposed 29. The false hero is transformed 30. The villain is punished 31. The hero is married and crowned	Recognition

Indeed, Jung^{xcvi} describes four essential archetypes that are central to Paganism:

- Mother
- Rebirth
- Spirit
- Trickster

Jung says that “The concept of the Great Mother belongs to the field of comparative religion and embraces widely varying types of mother-goddess.” For Pagans today the Mother archetype, the Mother Goddess is very relevant.

Rebirth can also be related to Pagan ideals; as can be seen in the literature review, the cycles of life and reincarnation are inherent in modern Paganism. Spirit is another staple of belief; that the four physical elements of earth, air, fire and water make up the fifth element, aether (or spirit), is a popular one. All magic, prayer and ritual is meant to help the individual connect with the creative Spirit, the divine source.

Finally Trickster, which Jung identifies as a man’s own hidden shadow, can be related to Pagan beliefs as the Shadow Side or the Guardian at the Gate. Currott^{xcvii} in particular describes this in detail, but generally the Guardian is a person’s shadow self. This self possesses qualities that the person does not acknowledge for whatever reason; to progress spiritually one must face this shadow and not so much defeat it, but accept and embrace it.

4. Discussion: Semiotic analysis of “Buffy: The Vampire Slayer” episode “Family”

Outline

To further the understanding of this episode, particularly the narrative structure, the Appendix gives a background and synopsis to the episode. The narrative analysis will come later. First the semiotics of this episode will be examined.

Semiotic Analysis

Paradigm: Willow

Background

Denotation

Never popular, Willow has always been intelligent. A computer genius she used her hacking skills to help Buffy up until Jenny Calendar's death when she began looking through the late teacher's occult notes. Willow studied magic as seriously as any of her school subjects. At one point her usually distant mother turned against this study of Witchcraft. Willow turned down offers from a number of major universities such as MIT to stay with Buffy to offer moral support – and to continue to practise Wicca which is stronger because of the Hellmouth that attracts the vampires and demons to the town. She was going to join the on-campus Wicca group but was upset that they didn't practice spells. However it was here she met Tara, a hereditary Witch. They formed a friendship, a magical partnership, and gradually a loving relationship. The episode “Family” takes place after they have “come out” as a couple.

Connotation

Willow fits Atkins model of a Witch isolated from parental authority. Her father is never seen onscreen and her mother is usually distant. She is different before becoming a Witch, a “geek” who is good at her studies and with technology instead of trying to be popular and fit in. Being outside of the mainstream probably makes it easier for us to accept Willow taking up a non-mainstream religion. Willow's previous boyfriend left her for fear of hurting her (he was a werewolf, a metaphor for the brute strength of men). However, a lesbian relationship was hinted at by a parallel universe Willow who was a vampire and openly gay. As will be seen, magic can be seen as a metaphor for sex including non-heterosexual sex. Additionally Willow is in higher education and knowledge is power.

Name

Denotation

Willow Rosenberg.

Connotation

Willow is one of the trees included in the Druidic tree alphabet, or Ogham. The willow was considered sacred to the Moon and to the deities Hecate, Circe, Hera, Minerva and Persephone. It has a long association with witches which leads Graves^{xcviii} to conclude that witch and wicked are derived from the ancient word for the tree, which also yields "wicker". Many myths feature the willow. Salicylic acid present in the leaves and bark of the tree can be used for rheumatism which was once thought to be caused by witchcraft.

Events in "Buffy: the Vampire Slayer" are often foreshadowed many episodes in advance. It seems possible that Willow was named in anticipation of her later association with Witchcraft. Rosenberg indicates a Jewish background.

Religion

Denotation

Willow has a confusing background. She was raised Jewish and her parents were strict enough that she had to watch Christmas television specials at Xander's house.

The infestation of vampires that plagues Sunnydale means she has taken to carrying a crucifix to ward them off and she also considers herself a Witch.

Connotation

Green^{xcix} states that someone from any religion can be a Witch. While many religions have magical elements, given the Church's stance against Witchcraft it seems unlikely that a Christian could feel comfortable using nature-based magic. However a survey reported by York^c compared religious origins with religious beliefs held now within a sample of new-age and neo-pagan groups. A relatively high presence of Jews was found in a group called the St James Alternatives and one person responded their religious preference now was Jewish Pagan. It is also worth mentioning that there is the hidden Divine Feminine in Judaism (The Shekinah^{ci}) and the Cabalah is associated with mysticism outside of its Jewish origins.

While she doesn't seem to be an Orthodox Jew – for example we never see her turning down a night at the Bronze because it is the Sabbath – Willow never loses her Jewish identity. This is perhaps a cultural as much as religious issue, a racial identity separate to her spiritual pursuits.

Clothing

Denotation

Willow's clothes have always been "off-beat" unlike Buffy's, which represent the cutting edge of US fashion. As she matured and became interested in Wicca her clothing became more flattering although still individual. Willow is often seen wearing tight tops with long skirts. Her hair is red and in this season is quite short. In the majority of the episode "Family" Willow is wearing two tops, a purple frilled top of light material worn over a tight fitting darker vest top. Her skirt is long with fairly abstract patterns. She is wearing a necklace that consists of a leather "fringe" and appears to be Native American in style.

Connotation

This clothing signifies a desire to be different; Willow is not in jeans and the multi-layered tops with long flowing skirts is often associated with the New Age movement. The necklace suggests she has eclectic tastes and spiritual practices.

Paradigm: Tara

Background

Denotation

A shy isolated young woman, Tara was largely ignored by the on campus Wicca group. A hereditary Witch, she gained her powers from her mother. With her friendship with Willow, Tara began to be more confident and even her stuttering became less pronounced. The episode “Family” looks at how Tara has yet to be fully accepted and integrated into the group.

Connotation

Like Willow, Tara is getting an education, something her father does not seem to value. Up until this episode no mention is made of Tara’s family apart from that her mother had died some time before. Tara is another example of a Witch isolated from parental authority. Her stuttering shows her shyness and its disappearance her confidence. Its brief return in this episode should have alerted Willow to the stress Tara was feeling at facing her family.

Name

Denotation

Tara McClay

Connotation

The name Tara refers to: “the most sacred place in Ireland, and the main residence of the high kings...regarded as the Celtic capital of Ireland...the capital of the Tuatha de Danaan [people of the Goddess Danu].”^{cii}

“Mac” or “Mc” as in Tara’s surname of McClay means “son of”^{ciii} in the Celtic naming system, underlining Tara’s Irish ancestry.

Magic and myth are often associated with Ireland and the Celtic branches of Paganism are very popular today. For Americans this association of Ireland as mystical is probably even stronger as the tourist industry relies upon history both real and imagined to draw US tourists.

Religion

Denotation

No mention is made of any religion preceding Tara’s interest in Wicca. She is a Wiccan or a Witch, interchangeably so.

Connotation

Tara makes no distinction between hereditary and non-hereditary Witchcraft, nor between Wicca and Witchcraft. This is possibly due to a lack of understanding of the differences between the two. It is a positive representation that Tara acknowledges

Willow is becoming more powerful than she is; study and practice are just as important as inherent skill.

Clothing

Denotation

Tara first appeared wearing her hair oddly asymmetrically parted but this changed over a number of episodes to a more normal styling. Her hair is blond and worn long. In the majority of this episode Tara is wearing a blue long sleeved top with bright crystalline beadwork in the form of a flower or leaf motif, and a long, purple check skirt. She is wearing a peacock feather on her necklace.

Connotation

Again, Tara's clothes are distinctive. There is a similarity in dress between herself and Willow, which hints at their relationship. The peacock feather is an unusual choice and may point to Native American styling (dream catchers have feathers attached to them). The peacock is sacred to Hera in Greco-Roman mythology and an allusion to Classical paganism is perhaps being made. A flower or leaf motif on her top reminds us of the earth based connections of Paganism.

Tara and Willow: paradigm of a relationship

We shall now look at the relationship between Tara and Willow and how the technical elements come into play.

Camera shots, an example of a technical code, signify their intimacy by having close-ups of both girl's faces when they talk to each other; particularly at the start of the episode in the bedroom, and later when Willow asks Tara if their relationship was based on a lie.

There is a strong example of the characters positioning onscreen when Mr McClay orders Tara to come with him. Buffy and her sister, Dawn, mirroring each other's movements to show their own closeness, physically put themselves between Tara and her family. This physical division also represents a metaphorical one, for Mr McClay says that Tara "needs her family". Buffy agrees. The family in question is Buffy and the "gang" not the blood kin of the McClays.

Another example of character positioning is the close-up when Tara and Willow dance. As the camera pans back we realise they are floating above the dance floor, a literal showing of the metaphorical "feet not touching the ground" people claim to feel when in love.

The Ideology of Family vs Alternative Relationships

Denotation

Buffy, Giles, Xander and Willow have formed a group often described as the “Scooby Gang” because they investigate mysteries. Those dating members of the group become honorary members as has happened with Anya. While Anya’s assertiveness and forthrightness do not allow her to be sidelined, Tara does not feel like part of the group; her obscure joke reminds her of how different she is from them.

On the other hand we have Mr McClay, a widow, his son Donny, his daughter Tara, and his niece, Beth. The inclusion of Beth allows a traditional female perspective, but as blood kin, she can be said to be part of an extended traditional family (ie the McClays).

Connotation

The title of the episode is “Family” but the construction runs contrary to the current ideological definition of family – two parents, one of each sex, who are married and have one or more biological (blood related) children.

This episode uses the McClays to represent the traditional values. Although Mr McClay is a widower (and was once, therefore, married) he is also a patriarch who in the absence of a wife requires his daughter to serve both himself and his son. This is contrasted with the modern “family” a term used in the loosest sense of the word.

First and foremost, Buffy’s “family” has no blood ties. She is from a single-parent household and her mother has been distanced, first by her need to work to support Buffy, then by Buffy keeping secret the fact she is the Slayer, and most recently by a severe illness. In the absence of a nuclear family, Buffy has reached out to others in her social circle. Giles no longer fulfils a patriarchal role as Buffy’s Watcher, but is a substitute for the father who abandoned her when she was a child. Willow, Xander and Anya are close friends. Even Dawn is not her real sister (a complex plot point, but Buffy knows the truth and will still guard Dawn with her life). “We are her blood kin” Tara’s father says angrily when he is prevented from taking Tara away. “Who the hell are you?”

“We’re family,” Buffy says simply and the lack of blood or marital ties matters not, for the meaning of family here is a group of people who care deeply about one another, who may argue, but will always come through for each other. It also allows for unconventional relationships to exist, such as the lesbian relationship of Willow and Tara. It includes the Jewish Willow, the Witch Tara, the ex-demon Anya, the British older man Giles.

Family “makes you crazy” according to Willow and this sentiment is echoed by Buffy in relation to Dawn; “She makes me crazy”. Buffy tries to protect Dawn from wandering the streets by confining her to the house because “It’s family night.” Family means protection however “crazy” they make you.

The binary opposition of alternative vs. traditional ideology can be seen more clearly in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Alternative model of family vs. traditional model

Alternative	Traditional
<p data-bbox="277 376 368 409"><i>Father</i></p> <p data-bbox="180 416 798 584">No relations back in Britain are ever mentioned. Giles’ family here is with Buffy; he was removed from his position as her “Watcher” by the Council who monitor the Slayers because he has a father’s love for his charge.</p> <p data-bbox="180 618 798 719">Giles makes reference to his paternal role at the start of the episode when Buffy accuses him of not pulling his weight with the packing:</p> <p data-bbox="180 719 772 808">GILES: Well, I saw myself in more of a patriarchal sort of role. You know, lots of pointing and scowling.</p> <p data-bbox="180 808 746 869">(Smiles. Looks to his left, points and scowls.) You two, stop that!</p> <p data-bbox="180 869 798 929">Shot of Xander and Riley grappling, bent over at the waist. Xander has Riley in a headlock.</p> <p data-bbox="180 965 798 1066">However he does not control Buffy, simply guides and advises her. In fact it is Buffy who breaks up the fight:</p> <p data-bbox="180 1066 778 1099">GILES: Stop it, or you're going to break something.</p> <p data-bbox="180 1099 671 1133">BUFFY: Or I'm going to break something.</p> <p data-bbox="180 1133 788 1167"><i>The guys suddenly let each other go and straighten up.</i></p> <p data-bbox="180 1189 798 1290">Giles understands Buffy; he may love her and want to protect her, but he will never seek to dominate her.</p>	<p data-bbox="820 416 1436 477">Mr McClay is a patriarch who wants to keep “his” women in line.</p> <p data-bbox="820 517 1436 618">He claims their power – magic – is evil and that they are demons. This is “where the magic comes from”.</p> <p data-bbox="820 651 1436 819">Only he can protect them from hurting themselves and others. He plays the hero by offering to control them but his motives are more selfish; he wants Tara to take over her mother’s “duties”.</p> <p data-bbox="820 853 1436 954">He is defeated by a united stand from Buffy and Dawn (who he sees as two little girls) and eventually the rest of the surrogate family.</p>
<p data-bbox="277 1294 440 1328"><i>Son/Brother</i></p> <p data-bbox="180 1339 798 1574">Xander doesn’t seem to mind being outnumbered by women. He doesn’t challenge Buffy or get in the way when she is fighting. He is less intelligent than Willow, less physical than Buffy. His best quality is his loyalty and he uses his sense of humour to lighten the mood when things get too serious.</p> <p data-bbox="180 1608 798 1742">He has in Anya a determined, independent woman, and does not seem to need to dominate. Xander is not afraid to fight however and in fact he steps up to defend Tara from Donny:</p>	<p data-bbox="820 1339 1436 1541">Donny McClay is Tara’s older brother. He is shown to be ignorant, making jokes about Witches in the magic shop. He is dressed scruffy-casual in jeans and a T-shirt. He has a beard but it looks like an attempt to age him; he appears inexperienced, the country boy in the city.</p> <p data-bbox="820 1574 1436 1641">When Tara refuses to go home he whines like a spoilt child before threatening physical violence:</p>

DONNY: Daaad. You -- you gonna let 'em just... (stomps forward) Tara, if you don't get in that car, I swear by god I will beat you down.

XANDER: And I swear by your full and manly beard, you're gonna break something trying

Daughter

Buffy is the Slayer, a legacy she cannot escape. She takes charge of situations automatically.

She is afraid neither to ignore Giles, nor to ask his advice. Her confidence is paramount and she wisecracks during her many fight scenes.

Buffy is also taking on a motherly role to Dawn who must be protected.

Tara has run from her family made obvious when she almost asks how they found her:

TARA: How did you fi - I, I mean, how come you came?

She has inherited her powers from her mother. Since her mother died it seems Mr McClay wants her to take over the household duties.

Tara is having an unconventional relationship with Willow and seems to be trying to break away from the traditional daughter role.

Figure 4.1 cont.

Sister/daughter	
<p><i>Willow, an only child, is used to being isolated as she is not popular. However the gang gives her a surrogate family.</i></p> <p>Willow's varied skills such as computing and Witchcraft make her invaluable. Giles tried to hide his dark magic books from her in case she wasn't ready, an example of fatherly concern.</p> <p>Her relationship with the gang weakened as Buffy dated Riley and Xander didn't attend college at all. Spike hinted Buffy didn't approve of magic and thereby Tara. However the gang has since reunited although Tara remains on the periphery.</p>	<p>Cousin Beth serves as a surrogate daughter for Mr McClay. She represents the normal order of things.</p> <p>She accuses Tara of being selfish and hints she knows about Tara's sexuality:</p> <p><i>BETH: You don't care the slightest bitty bit about your family, do you? Your dad's been worried sick about you every day since you've been gone. There's a, a house that needs taking care of... Donny and your dad having to do for themselves while you're down here living god knows what kind of lifestyle.</i></p> <p>Her speech ("bitty-bit") and simple clothing mark her as a country girl, a dutiful daughter, a traditional role model.</p>

Magic as metaphor

“The occult in Buffy is a brilliantly sustained metaphor that embraces the multiple social and sexual crises of the teenage years.”^{civ}

Denotation and “realism”

The specific magic shown in this episode has little bearing on real Wicca. Tara uses her magic to blind her friends to her demon side. She calls upon “Blind Cadria”. No trace can be found of Cadria in a number of published sources and online references of deities and demons. The closest match is in relation to St Catherine's Day which in Estonia is known as *kadripäev*, a festival marking the arrival of winter; “basically a secular holiday, and is even somewhat pagan.”^{cv} Kadri (St Catherine) seems an unlikely choice and it likely that this is an invented deity.

There is a however a reminder that magic can be used wrongfully; the so-called harmless spell blinds Buffy and her friends to real demons, putting them in danger. Additionally the spell to “blind” represents the lie Tara has been living, hiding what she believes to be her true nature, and the truth about her family, from the group

Connotation: Power

When Mr McClay says “That's where the magic comes from” ie Tara's demon side, it is a lie. Tara should realise this for if it were true, how could Willow work magic? The real meaning is that women with power are evil, they are deformed in some way and unnatural. The only way to overcome it is to submit to the male authority, restoring the status quo.

It is relevant that it is Tara's birthday, a powerful archetype of gaining power, which represents adulthood and its related roles and responsibilities (fertility, family duties, the right to vote, etc.) In many folk tales a birthday heralds a woman's maturity, a time for her to marry and lose her virginity/innocence. An example of this is the myth of Sleeping Beauty whose birthday leaves her in a deep sleep only awakened by a kiss (sexual awakening) from a prince.

Connotation: homosexuality

The idea of magic as homosexuality is illustrated as Buffy and Xander discuss preparations for Tara's birthday. Figure 4.2 shows the relevant dialogue. They don't know what to get her as a gift because they don't know her well enough. This turns into a discussion of how different Tara is and how they are worried they won't fit in with the Wiccans who will be at the party. Willow is their friend, they still know her and like her, but Tara is strange and new. Not wanting – genuinely, it seems – to be homophobic Buffy and Xander both emphasize that while they don't understand Tara she is “nice” and “swinging with the Wiccan lifestyle” is “cool.”

Figure 4.2 Dialogue from the episode “Family”

BUFFY: So ... what'd you get her?
XANDER: Huh?
BUFFY: Tara. You said you got a present already.
XANDER: Yeah, that was a tangled web of lies, sweetie. I'm not really sure what kind of thing she'd ... I mean, I don't really know her that well.
BUFFY: (nods) I know.
XANDER: (quickly) I mean, she's nice.
BUFFY: (quickly) Yeah! Yeah, nice ... nice. I-it's just, I-I sort of...
XANDER: I don't necessarily get her ... but she's really nice.
BUFFY: Yeah. There's ... just that thing.
XANDER: (agreeing) That thing.
BUFFY: That ... thing of not understanding-
XANDER: Half of what she says?
BUFFY: As for example. But she's super nice.
XANDER: You betcha.
They continue looking at books.
BUFFY: Think there'll be a lot of Wiccans there, heavy Wiccan crowd?
XANDER: Well, that's sort of her deal. Her and Willow are all Wiccie. Swingin' with the Wiccan lifestyle.
BUFFY: Which is cool.
XANDER: Well, yeah.
BUFFY: I just hope we fit in, not awkward.
XANDER: With Willow it's like, she's got this ... whole new thing in her life. But she's still Willow, so I can always figure her out. But Tara, I just know she likes Willow, and she already has one of those.

By the end of the episode Tara is a part of the group, the family. Regardless of her background or lifestyle she is another lost and possibly abused woman who deserves to be part of the supportive unit the gang has formed.

Finally, Williams points to the unusually positive representation of homosexuality Tara and Willow display. On the usual homosexual creative models of ‘stasis’ (spending, drinking, spending) versus the ‘social productivity’ of heterosexuality (working, breeding, working) Williams points out how:

“their power has far exceeded brute, ‘heterosexual’ strength, and without them most of the episodes would end with the certain death of all the nice people. Buffy uses the ancient association of Wicca and rug-munching not to compound but to reverse that model.”^{cvi}

Propp’s analysis

In this analysis, there are a number of candidates for the roles of hero, villain, false hero etc. A role may be filled by more than one character, and the same character can fill many roles. The roles and characters for this episode can be seen in Figure 4.3

Figure 4.3 Roles and Characters for the episode “Family”

Villain	Glory, Mr McClay, Donny, Cousin Beth, the Lei-Ach demons
Provider	Spike (who gives Tara the truth; that she is human)
Helper	Willow, Xander, Spike, Anya
Princess and her father	Tara and Mr McClay; Tara is the princess threatened by the villain. However the father is also the villain and in a modern twist Tara is not given to the hero by her father. She is the hero and gives herself to Willow.
Dispatcher	Beth (when she sends Tara to say goodbye to the gang)
Hero	Tara, Buffy. Tara is the “victim hero” who is pursued by one of the villains. Buffy is the “seeker hero” who helps victims of the villains (by defending Dawn from the demons, Tara from her father, etc.)
False hero	Mr McClay

Figure 4.4 shows the outline of the story alongside the most relevant functions.

Figure 4.4 Functions and the corresponding steps from the episode “Family”

Narrative step	Function
Mr McClay, Donny and Beth leave home to look for Tara.	1. A member of the family leaves home
Tara’s family arrive and begin asking questions.	4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance
Tara’s father discovers she has been practising magic and that she hasn’t told her friends about her true nature.	5. The villain learns something about his victim
Tara’s father reminds her that her magic comes from her demon side. He suggests that her friends will not accept her as she really is and she should return to her family, who will accept her.	6. The villain tries to deceive the victim to get possession of him and his belongings

To cover up her demon side, Tara casts a spell blinding her friends to demons.	7. The victim unknowingly helps the villain by being deceived or influenced by the villain
Buffy and the rest of the substitute family lack the ability to see demons and are put in danger.	8a A member of the family lacks or desires something
Beth tells Tara what she did was “cursing” and sends Tara to say goodbye to her friends before they leave.	9. This lack or misfortune is made known; the hero is given a request or command and he goes or is sent on a mission/request
Tara goes to the Magic Box, a magical shop and one of the main meeting places for the family, where the showdown will occur.	15. The hero is transferred to the general location of the object of his mission/quest
Buffy fights the Lei-Ach demons.	16 The hero and villain join in direct combat
Figure 4.4 cont. Tara gets hit while removing the spell.	17. The hero is branded
Buffy can see the demons and kills them.	18. The villain is defeated
Tara’s family arrive at the Magic Box to see the devastation.	21. The hero is pursued
Mr McClay tells the group that Tara is half-demon and therefore dangerous.	24. A false hero makes false claims
It is revealed that there is no demon side to Tara; it is a lie to keep the females in line. Tara’s family are seen to be bullies and liars.	28. The false hero/villain is exposed
Tara’s father is defeated; humiliated and prevented from exercising his patriarchal authority he must leave without his daughter.	30. The villain is punished
Tara and Willow celebrate Tara’s birthday with a slow dance.	31. The hero is married and crowned

This is a positive representation of Witchcraft as the Witches are in hero and helper roles. Mr McClay claims to be a hero. He wants to protect people from Tara’s demon side; in other words support the prevailing ideology. However he is revealed to be a false hero, his lies are exposed and the subversive family unit of heroes and helpers stands against him.

Conclusion of analysis

Overall this episode of “Buffy: the Vampire Slayer” has a positive representation of Paganism, Wicca and Witchcraft and supports an ideology counter to the dominant social structure.

5. Conclusions

At the start of this report we looked at how cultural verisimilitude looks at the world outside the fiction and how when a new social construct is emerging it must be shown – not in ways that are “real” but in constructs of the new reality.

The popularity of Witchcraft in modern movies and television may represent a longing for magic, excitement and escape from modern day pressures, as the uses and gratifications theory suggests, but it may also be representing the actual emergence of Witchcraft, Paganism and Goddess Worship as recognised religions. As we have seen, Witches are usually female and are shown to struggle with their powers which are as great as their responsibilities. While Piper of “Charmed” constantly bemoans the fact she wants a “normal life” - to get married and have children - other Witches such as Willow challenge even these conventions. Witches can be representative of the power men would rather have for themselves. Yet times are changing and even the family unit – usually with the women submissive to the men within it - is not inviolate.

Magic can be representative of sex and it is not limited to heterosexual relationships; lesbian Witches need no man in their bed or their rituals. Finally, as Atkins pointed out, many of the Witches are without parents or other authority and so operate independently, making their own decisions and upholding the Pagan ethos of taking responsibility for their actions.

Witches then are usually shown as empowered women, which, as we have seen, is exactly how actual female Witches would describe themselves.

On the subject of the methodology used, it seems that Propp’s roles and functions can work to look at the archetypes involved and give an idea of the positive or negative portrayals by showing which characters are heroes and which are villains or false heroes. Obviously its use beyond this initial framing is limited and this is where the deeper semiotic systems come into play.

Looking at denotation and connotation uncovers the hidden meanings and metaphors used within a text and can help to find out how the new and possibly feared reality is introduced in an allegorical – and therefore not so frightening – fashion.

The model of Paganism used here is itself a construct, an attempt to frame an eclectic, diverse set of beliefs. Pagans themselves debate with each other concerning the “reality” of their beliefs. As a complete model of Paganism it is lacking, as a model against which media can be measured, it suffices.

While the particular text analysed was found to be a positive portrayal of Witchcraft and by association, Paganism and Wicca, it should be remembered that in a television series the representation is ongoing. Later episodes see Willow losing control of her magic and the metaphor is more relevant to drug use than homosexuality.

To build a more comprehensive picture of representation a number of items would need to be analysed in depth, not just television shows but films and possibly novels.

The sample would encompass sitcoms and dramas as well as science fiction or fantasy although the restrictions relating to year of production, language, and target audience would be advisable.

Finally it is worth remembering that:

- Pagans can ignore negative portrayals or make their own preferred reading as seen in the literature review
- They would prefer positive representations of Witches especially when the target audience is teenagers
- Regardless of the communication involved, the text exists to entertain and to make a profit, which may be at odds with giving a realistic portrayal.

As one Pagan noted on a discussion board regarding “Witches in the Media”:

“One of the reasons that movies don't properly depict Wiccans/Pagans is the same reason they don't properly depict Christians: Movies are created to entertain and excite us, and Witchcraft (the real thing) just isn't dramatic enough. That's why they show gore, old ugly hag witches, power rays firing from people's fingertips, etc.

Can you imagine a movie where some folks quietly work a ritual, wait a month or two, and then their crops grow big? Can't see THAT movie competing with "Terminator 3" at the boxoffice.^{cvi}

Empowered women may threaten the prevailing ideology but their intelligence and independence alone isn't exciting enough - or dangerous enough - for the mass media.

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Synopsis of the episode “Family”

Previously

Recap of events relevant to this episode; Spike dreaming of kissing Buffy, Tara sabotaging the spell to reveal demons, Glory¹ the demon looking for the Key which is revealed to be a form of energy posing as Buffy’s sister, Dawn.

Teaser

(pre-credit sequence)

Willow and Tara watch their kitten playing and make up bedtime stories. Willow wants to sleep but Tara wants to study magic; she wants to “keep up” with Willow and to be useful.

Meanwhile Buffy discusses keeping Dawn safe from Glory.

Act One

The gang are helping Buffy move from her dorm back to her house to help take care of her mother. Buffy is trying to pack and keep an eye on Dawn. Tara watches the antics, smiling. During a discussion Tara makes a reference to obscure mythology that is

¹ The demon Glory is later revealed to even more powerful; a hell-god (and interestingly not hell-goddess). Pagans don’t believe in hell and neither does the Buffy mythos. There are other dimensions some of which are hell dimensions and some of which are heavenly.

supposed to be a joke. No-one gets it and, feeling isolated, Tara leaves the room. Willow takes the opportunity to remind everyone about Tara's birthday which they all seem to have forgotten about.

Meanwhile Glory ensnares a Lei-Ach demon.

Action moves to the magic shop Giles owns. Buffy and Xander discuss how they haven't got Tara a present yet; they don't know her that well although she's "super nice". They discuss if they will fit in with the "Wicca crowd".

Spike fantasises about Buffy.

Back at the shop, a customer browses. He behaves like a complete idiot and jokes about being turned into a frog. Willow and Tara enter the shop, Tara explaining her joke to Willow who finds it funny. However Tara is shocked to see the customer who reveals he is Tara's older brother, Donny.

Act Two

As Tara introduces Donny she stutters. When she first met Willow her stutter was pronounced but recently it has faded. Now she can barely get the words out. She introduces the gang as her friends. Donny is rude: "What all of you hang out? Wow. That's more people than you met in high school."

Donny says "they" are here for her birthday and on cue Tara's father, Mr McClay, and a girl, Cousin Beth, enter the store. No one seems to notice Tara's awkwardness at this unexpected reunion. Mr McClay is quite abrupt, arranges dinner plans for Tara, then leaves with the excuse that he is double-parked.

Willow comments that they "seem nice". Tara isn't so enthusiastic.

Buffy goes home to boyfriend Riley. Dawn wants to go out to a friend's house but Buffy won't allow her. She is scared that Glory will try to hurt Dawn but instead claims it is Family Night (ie to be spent together). Riley becomes frustrated with Buffy keeping secrets from him – he doesn't know Dawn is the Key – and wanting to do things her way. He leaves, annoyed.

Tara returns to her dorm room but her father is there. He is disrespectful of her property by handling her personal items and makes his feeling about Witchcraft quite clear:

"The door wasn't locked. I was a little early. (looks around) I suppose you ... wanted me to see all these ... (picks up a large crystal and examines it) toys. (puts crystal down) You don't even try to hide it any more. I'd hoped maybe you'd gotten over the whole witchcraft thing. That if we let you go, you'd ... get it out of your system. (puts hands in pockets) Then they told me to look for you in ... (disgusted) that store."

Mr McClay reminds Tara that it is her twentieth birthday and hints it means something important, something that happened to her mother at that age. "It" is evil and "where the magic comes from". He says he will take Tara away by morning and that:

"Your family loves you, Tara, no matter what. How do you think your friends are going to feel when they see your true face?"

Meanwhile Glory interrogates the demon to find more information about Buffy. She decides to use the Lei-Ach demons to help her find the Key.

Willow returns to the dorm room. She wants to try the demon finding spell again. Tara refuses. When Willow pushes the issue Tara snaps that "my family's here, okay, I can't just- (pauses) Not everything is about your friends and stuff." Then she apologises. Willow leaves and Tara has an idea, begins searching through a magic book.

At the magic shop Willow, Buffy, the whole gang in fact, are studying, trying to find out more about Glory and how to defeat her. We see Tara hiding in one corner of the shop. She casts a spell:

“Blind Cadria, desolate queen, work my will upon them all. Your curse upon them, my obeisance to you.” The spell disorients the group but after a moment they carry on as if nothing has happened.

Act Three

Riley flirts with a vampire at a local demon hang out.

Spike discovers from his girlfriend that the Lei-Ach demons have been recruited to kill Buffy. He rushes out, claiming he wants to watch, but really he wants to warn her.

Beth finds Tara walking across campus. Tara tells Beth she isn't returning with them. Beth accuses Tara of being selfish:

“You don't care the slightest bitty bit about your family, do you? Your dad's been worried sick about you every day since you've been gone. There's a, a house that needs taking care of ... Donny and your dad having to do for themselves while you're down here living god knows what kind of lifestyle. (Tara looks upset) I can't wait till your little friends find out the truth about you. And they will, you know. No matter how innocent you act, they'll see.”

When Tara protests they won't see, Beth accuses her of cursing people. Tara says it is so they won't see her demon side, that the spell is harmless.

At the magic shop Willow opens the door to a Lei-Ach demon but can't see him, a direct result of the “harmless” spell.

Act Four

Beth scolds Tara and insists she tell her friends the truth before leaving.

At the shop the demons take up position, unbeknownst to the gang. One of them attacks Buffy. She can sense it but can't see it. Spike arrives and helps as he can see the demon.

A fight breaks out although the gang are severely disadvantaged as they cannot see their attackers. They gather together for protection and Buffy orders quiet so she can focus.

Tara enters the shop and warns Buffy there is still a demon behind her. Buffy asks if Tara can see it; Tara realises what she has done. She removes the spell and is hit by the demon. Now everyone can see the demons. Mr McClay, Donny and Beth enter. The demon leaves Tara and rushes towards Mr McClay but Buffy intervenes, breaking its neck.

Mr McClay wants to know what it is. Spike says it is a Lei-Ach demon. Mr McClay looks at Tara as if this is her fault. So does Buffy. Tara is on the verge of tears, apologising. She didn't them to see what she is. Mr McClay takes the opportunity to preach to them that:

“Demon. The women in our family... (Everyone looks up at him) have demon in them. Her mother had it. That's where the magic comes from.”

Giles now understands what Tara did and why. Buffy glances at Dawn and comments how Tara nearly got them killed. Tara agrees to go with her father. Willow and Mr McClay argue; she wants Tara to stay and it should be Tara's decision, he says only her family can take care of her “problem”.

When asked outright, Tara doesn't want to go. Buffy steps in that if Mr McClay wants Tara, he can take her. When this has sunk in deepening Tara's despair, Buffy adds that he will have to go through her first.

Dawn stands alongside Buffy. They are forming a barrier between Tara and her family. The rest of the group (except Spike) agree with Buffy. Donny gets into a temper and threatens violence against Tara. Xander threatens him back. Mr McClay hopes they will be happy with a "disgusting demon".

Anya, an ex-demon herself, helpfully asks what kind. Mr McClay is confused and Spike has an idea. He has been implanted with a chip that means he can hurt demons and other vampires but not a human; if he tries, the chip activates his pain centres.

Spike hits Tara and is hurt himself by the chip. He concludes that:

"There's no demon in there. That's just a family legend, am I right? (Mr. McClay looks angry) Just a bit of spin to keep the ladies in line. (smirks) Oh, you're a piece of work. I like you."

Finally Tara's family leave. Mr McClay says in disgust at the whole situation, "Magic!" ***It is evening at local nightclub the Bronze, Tara's birthday party. The gang are having a good time. Tara explains her earlier joke to Anya who gets it but still doesn't think it's funny. Willow rescues her and they slow dance. Tara comments that even when she's at her worst Willow makes her feel special; how does she do that? Willow answers "magic".***

As the camera draws back we see many couples slow dancing intimately. But Tara and Willow are floating a few feet off the ground.

ⁱ GLEDHILL, Christine. *Genre and Gender: the case of soap opera*
IN HALL, Stuart (ed). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.
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ⁱⁱ *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*, Television Series, 1997-present. Created by Joss Whedon. Owned by Warner Bros until it was sold to UPN in 2001. An episode of called "Family" from season 5 is to be analysed in-depth

ⁱⁱⁱ This episode of JAG (CBS) has yet to air in the UK. However it is of interest because it looks at Wiccans in the military, a topical subject in the US military. A full review of the episode and its handling of the issues can be found [online] at

<http://www.celticcrow.com/wmedia/wmedia.html>

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^{iv} O'NEIL, Daniel J. *The New Age Movement And Its Societal Implications*. International Journal of Social

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^vPagan Census, ongoing, [online]

http://www.geocities.com/pagan_census/census.html

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^{vi} ROBINSON, B. *How Many Wiccans Are There In The US? Religious Tolerance* 18/12/01 [online]

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^{vii} McBRIDE, Kelly. *Pagans rising: Pipes of spring*. Spoke.net [online], 7/5/00

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^{viii} Religious bias 'on increase. *Guardian*, 28/2/01

^{ix} : "In the most influential case, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 1986 that Wicca, despite its differences from mainstream faiths, is a religion deserving of First Amendment protection. Since then, Wicca has received recognition from the Internal Revenue Service as a bona fide religion for tax-exempt purposes as well... Wicca has been recognized by the military for at least two decades. Under the heading "Individually Distinctive Groups" in the 1993 edition of the military chaplain's handbook, Wicca is described as "a reconstruction of the Nature worship of tribal Europe."

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^x Potty About Paganism. *Metro*, 24/8/00

^{xi} BODI, Faisal. We Suspect A Plot. *Guardian*, 2/2/01 p22

^{xii} CHANDLER, Daniel, *Media Representation*. 1997 [online]

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^{xiii} ABERCROMBIE, Nicholas. *Television and Society*. Polity Press, 1996

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^{xiv} HERRMANN, Stefan. *Do we learn to 'read' television like a kind of 'language?* [online]

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xv INTROVIGNE, Massimo . ‘*There Will Be No Thomas Aquinas at This Table*’: *Notions of God in the New Religious Consciousness*.” [Lecture delivered 7-9 April 2000 , text available at ^{God} *New Religious Movements and Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Massimo Introvigne’s Templeton Lecture in Harvard* [online]]:

http://www.cesnur.org/2001/buffy_march01.htm

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xvi BERGER, Arthur Asa. *Popular Culture Genres, Theories And Texts, Foundations Of Popular Culture 2*, London: Sage, 1992, p70

xvii BERGER op cit

xviii WIGMORE, Gareth. She will suffer for this! *TV Zone*, issue 147, January 2002, p42-45

xix RUSSELL, Ben. Buffy 'prompting pupils to access the occult'. *The Independent*, 22/4/00

xx Warning After Sabrina Casts Spell On Young. *The Express*, 4/8/00. p29

xxi Potty About Paganism, op cit

xxii Warning After Sabrina Casts Spell On Young. op cit

xxiii CHAOSWITCH Re: Pagans in the Media - Entertainment Irresponsibility. 19/01/02

Available from About.com, Pagan and Wiccan Religion message board [online]

<http://forums.about.com/n/mb/message.asp?webtag=ab-paganwiccan&msg=2019.25>

visited 29/1/02

The “Xena: Warrior Princess” reference is in connection with an episode not aired in the UK or some parts of the USA after Xena met Vishnu; some of the Hindu community found this blasphemous and demanded the episode be withdrawn.

xxiv For example: *Witches In The Media, Pagan-Wiccan Religion Net Links* [on-line]

<http://paganwiccan.about.com/culture/paganwiccan/msubmedia.htm>

visited 20/04/00

AND

Media Witches Verses [sic] Real Witches. AREN [online]

<http://aren.org/media.html>

visited 17/5/00

xxv These organisations can be found [online]:

Alternative Religions Educational Network (AREN). <http://www.aren.org>

Religious Tolerance <http://www.religioustolerance.org>

Witches Against Religious Discrimination (WARD) <http://www.ward-hq.org/>

Witches League for Public Awareness. <http://www.celticcrow.com>
Pagan Federation <http://www.paganfed.demon.co.uk/>
The Pagan Federation address is BM Box 5896, London, WC1N 3XX
CENSUR <http://www.censur.org>
fire more information from <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fire>
Pagan_Media_Society more information from
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Pagan_Media_Society
PaganPR more information from <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PaganPR>

^{xxvi} LUBIANO, Wahneema. *But compared to what? Reading realism, representation, and essentialism in school Daze, Do the Right thing and the Spike Lee Discourse.*

IN BLOUNT & CUNNINGHAM (eds). *Representing Black Men*. London: Routledge, 1996

^{xxvii} The Pagan Federation, established in 1971 to provide information on Paganism and work for the right for Pagans to worship without censure. They can be contacted at The Pagan Federation, BM Box 7097, London WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom. Alternatively their website is online at:

<http://www.paganfed.demon.co.uk/>

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^{xxviii} WALKER, Wren., *Magical Connections*

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^{xxix} THOMPSON, David, MA., *The Craft And The 'Web; An Illustrative Study Into The Use Of Internet Services By The Pagan Community*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Central England in Birmingham, 1998

^{xxx} DOWSE, Jem. CYBERPAGANS! The Old Religions Meet the New Technology. *Pagan Dawn*, Number 119, Beltane, 1996

^{xxxi} A chant used by the coven Curott was initiated into:

CUROTT, P, *Book of Shadows: a modern witch reveals the wisdom of Witchcraft and the power of the Goddess*. London: Pikatus, 1998

^{xxxii} BARING, Anne & CASHFORD, Jules. *The Myth of the Goddess: evolution of an image*. London: Arkana, 1991

^{xxxiii} GREEN, Marion, *A Witch Alone: thirteen moons to master natural magic*, London: Thorsons, 1991

^{xxxiv} MCCOY, Edain. *Celtic Myth and Magic*. Minnesota: Llewellyn, 1995

^{xxxv} "The Charge" is a poem written by Doreen Valiente. It attempted to draw on a large number of historical sources and combine them into a Ritual. This ritual is used when "Drawing down the moon" -i.e. channelling or directly experiencing the Goddess. The full text and its variations can be found in a number of books and internet sources including this "Pagan Library" site:

<http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/bush/447/pagan/MYTHOS.TXT.htm>

visited 19/11/01

^{xxxvi} Even the relatively modern meeting of minds which took place in 18th Century Birmingham was called the Lunar Society for the fact that meetings took place on the first Monday closest to each full moon so that members could make their way home by this light, being without the street lighting we now take for granted. [online]

<http://www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk/COLLECT/P165.HTM> (visited 19/02/02)

^{xxxvii} BARING & CASHFORD op cit.

^{xxxviii} *Xena as Archetype Goddess* [online]

<http://members.tripod.com/~SuZilla/paper.htm>

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^{xxxix} KEMP, A. *Witchcraft And Paganism Today*. London: Brockhampton, 1993

^{xl} *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*, Television series, 1997-present. Created by Joss Whedon. Owned by Warner Bros until it was sold to UPN in 2001. Episode "Shadow" from Season 5.

^{xli} CUROTT op cit

^{xlii} *The Craft*. Film, directed by Fleming. USA, Columbia Pictures, 1996

^{xliii} A small figure often made of felt that is then stuffed with items such as cotton, tobacco, and personal items such as a person's hair or nail clippings. A picture of the person it represents can be stuck to the front of it. Galenorn describes the use of a poppet in a banishing ritual (p199-201). However a poppet could be used in other ways, such as making two figures of a husband and wife to wish them happiness and togetherness. Described in:

GALENORN, Yasmine. *Embracing The Moon: A Witch's Guide to Ritual Spellcraft and Shadow Work*. Minnesota: Llewellyn, 1998

^{xliv} GALENORN, op cit

^{xlv} CUROTT op cit

^{xlvi} STARHAWK. *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of The Ancient Religion of The Great Goddess; 20th Anniversary Edition*. USA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999

^{xlvii} GIBBONS, B J. *Spirituality and the Occult: from the Renaissance to the Modern Age*. London: Routledge, 2001

^{xlviii} Biochemist James Lovelock proposed that the biosphere can be viewed as a "single living entity, capable of manipulating the Earth's atmosphere to suit its overall needs and endowed with faculties and powers far beyond those of its constituent parts"

LOVELOCK, JE. *Gaia: a new look at life on Earth*. Oxford: OUP, 1996

IN FISHER, Mary Pat; *An encyclopaedia of the world's faiths, Living Religions*. London: I.B.Tauris, 1997

^{xlix} "one in four women reported a physical assault by a current or former partner in their lifetime" reported by BLACK. *1996 British Crime Survey*; referencing Home Office Research Study 191, *Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire*.

^l CHAUDHURI, A. The Witch is back. *Guardian*, 29/6/00

^{li} SEREED, Susan Starr. *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister: Religions dominated by Women*. Oxford: OUP, 1994

Purkiss also notes that "modern witchcraft offers a unique opportunity to see a religion being made from readings and rereadings of texts and histories:

PURKISS, Diane. *The Witch In History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations*. London: Routledge, 1996, p31

^{lii} STARHAWK op cit

Purkiss also makes reference to fact that modern witches "suggest that it may be less important to feminism and even to women to know the truth than to invent a good fantasy." (PURKISS op cit, p53)

^{liii} KEMP op cit

^{liv} GALENORN op cit

^{lv} *Ask Okelle: How do gay and intersexed people fit into the Wiccan community*. About.com Pagan/Wiccan Spirituality [online]

<http://paganwiccan.about.com/library/letters/ask/blask2.htm>

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^{lvi} *GLBT Pagans*. About.com: Pagan/Wiccan Spirituality [online]:

<http://paganwiccan.about.com/msubqueer.htm>

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^{lvii} KEMP op cit

^{lviii} STARHAWK op cit

^{lix} WILLIAMS, Z. The Lady And The Vamp. *Guardian Weekend*, 17/11/01

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- lx GREEN op cit.
- lxi CUROTT op cit
- lxii GREEN op cit
- lxiii GALENORN, op cit
- lxiv GRAYLING, A. The last word on Paganism. *Guardian*, 22/4/00
- lxv SKINNER, S. *Feng Shui*. Bath: Parragon, 1997
- lxvi *Charmed*, television series, 1998-present. Created by Aaron Spelling, owned by Spelling productions.
- lxvii *Frequently Asked Questions About Witchcraft, Wicca and Paganism*. Goddess Pictures (Pagan documentary filmmakers) [online]:
<http://www.goddesspictures.com/FAQ.html>
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- lxviii *Media Witches verses[sic] Real Witches*. Alternative Religions Educational Network (AREN) [on-line]
<http://aren.org/media.html>
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- lxix CUROTT op cit
- lxx *Belief Beyond Boundaries: the Open University Religious Studies Research Group* [online]
<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/relstud/bbb/index.html>
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- The Development Of Paganism: History, Influences And Contexts, 1880-2002* Details of this conference, which was held on 12/01/02 available [online]
<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/relstud/bbb/pagan-dev.htm>
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- lxxi SAYER, Karen. *The Witches*
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- lxxii ATKINS, Ian. Witch Way Now. *Xposé Special* Number 11, Spring 2000, p52-56
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- lxxvi GENGE. *The Book of Shadows: The Unofficial Charmed Companion*. London: Boxtree, 2001
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- lxxix NICHOLS, M. *A Neo-Pagan Filmography: An Annotated List of Recommended Viewing*. March 1989[online]
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- lxxxi HANSEN, COTTLE, NEGRINE, NEWBOLD. *Mass Communication Research Methods*. London: Macmillan, 1998
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- lxxxiii *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* op cit

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- ^{lxxxv} DAWSON, Elaine. 'Careless Talk Costs Lives': *A case study analysing the operation of information in domestic British propaganda posters 1939-1945.* Unpublished dissertation, University of Central England in Birmingham, October 2000
- ^{lxxxvi} BARTHES, Roland. *Mythologies*. London: Vintage, 1972
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- ^{lxxxviii} HODGE, R and KRESS, G. *Social Semiotics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988
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- ^{xcii} HERRMANN op cit. Hermann is quoting
- ABERCROMBIE, Nicholas. *Television and Society*, London: Polity Press, 1996
- ^{xciii} BOYD. *Electronic Fandoms and FanFiction*. [online]
<http://boydz.home.mindspring.com/fandom.html>
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