

Chapter 2: Eco-Paganism Literature review

"Paganism not only holds a solution to our environmental crisis ... it can bring about a revolution in the way our culture makes sense of reality. For Paganism puts us back in touch with the body; by reconnecting our wordy analytical culture with the physical self, Paganism brings us back to the Earth" (Harris, 1995: 149). Stirring stuff, certainly, but does the rhetoric hold? Though I first spoke those words at a conference in September 1994, they still frame my discussion. This chapter explores the relationship of Paganism to "our environmental crisis", questions its claim to counter-cultural status and considers to what extent Paganism "puts us back in touch with the body".

There is no single 'Paganism'¹, but rather many 'Paganisms' (Blain, Ezzy and Harvey, 2004: vii) with various global manifestations ². However, certain "taxic indicators" (Harvey, 2004: 2-3) mark the network of Traditions, organizations, texts and practices that form what we might call 'mainstream Paganism'. Various spiritual approaches including Wicca, witchcraft, Druidry, Heathenism (Asatru or Odinism), western Shamanism and some strands of Goddess spirituality, sit, sometimes uncomfortably, beneath the Pagan umbrella. Several of these approaches - notably Wicca, Druidry and Heathenism - identify themselves as 'Traditions' (Davy, 2007: 145) with specific initiation ceremonies, practices and training, but many Pagans have a more eclectic practice and do not identify with any Tradition.

THE CONTEXT of ECO-PAGANISM

Paganism is often described as a 'nature religion' (Pearson, Roberts and Samuel, 1998: 1), but as Davy points out "some Pagans affirm a transcendence of nature" and "believe in a sort of divinity that is not of this world" (Davy, 2007: 7). Furthermore, while it is true that most Pagan practice is "centrally concerned with celebrating Nature"(Harvey 2000: 155), that celebration does not usually extend to environmental activism or even necessarily increase awareness (Davy, 2007: 175) and most Pagans "don't often think about the ethical and political implications of what they are doing"(Adler 1986: 397). Environmentally active Pagans are in "a minority"(Davy, 2002: 90) and Davy concludes that "although Pagan discourses tend to support environmentalism, perhaps the average Pagan does not tend so much toward political action"(Davy, 2002: 92). This widely supported conclusion (see inter alia, Adler, 1986; Ezzy, 2006; Greenwood, 2005; Smith Obler 2004; Letcher, 2000) is less surprising when we recognise that many Pagans "understand 'nature' as a symbol" rather than a real place or the actual living environment (Davy, 2007: 24).

¹ The terms 'contemporary Paganism', 'Pagan' or 'Paganism' are more accurate and less likely to offend rather than the alternative 'Neo-Paganism'. To speak of Neo-Paganism implies a closer relationship to the classical variety than historical research supports (Hutton, 1999: vii) and simultaneously offends practitioners some of whom feel the 'neo-' prefix "represent[s] a veiled judgment of their religion as being in some way inferior or inauthentic" (Strmiska, 2004).

² I focus on UK practice throughout but also draw on research based in the USA, specifying that location where appropriate.

It is within this context that a movement has emerged over the last 20 years which is commonly called 'Eco-Paganism' in the UK, although it is sometimes described as "Practical Paganism"(Westwood and Walbridge, n.d., Plows 1998 and 2005; Letcher 2001). The relationship between Paganism in general and Eco-Paganism is complex and the latter is not simply a sub-set of the former. Current theoretical understandings of Eco-Paganism are discussed below, but in brief, it is a distinct attitude and approach to the practical expression of Paganism that expresses itself in environmental action. Although 'typical' Eco-Pagans do exist, there are many more Pagans who at one time or another express Eco-Pagan sensibilities. On the other hand, some Eco-Pagans - especially itinerant protest site Eco-Pagans - have little or nothing to do with mainstream Paganism. Bearing this complex relationship in mind, I begin by exploring the common ground between Paganism and Eco-Paganism, pointing out particular Eco-Pagan emphases where relevant.

'Nature' and the Knowing Body

Western mainstream culture has a pragmatic approach to the environment and at best an ambivalent attitude to the body. But for most Pagans the body and our sensual relationship to our environment is fundamental, and engenders an embodied understanding. As LaFleur points out (1998: 48) how we understand the human body reveals our deeper metaphysical assumptions, and by placing the sensual body at the heart of spiritual experience Paganism can challenge the dominant ideology at both a physical and a symbolic level. For Harvey "[e]mbodied reality is authoritative in Paganism"because Pagan understanding is located in everyday life and experience (Harvey, 1997: 187). Raphael describes Goddess spirituality as a "somatic spirituality" (Raphael, 1996: 75) that resacralizes the body (Raphael, 1996: 82), while Salomonsen comments that the symbols used in Reclaiming Witchcraft are grounded in "the human body, sexuality and parenting, as well as the earth and the seasonal cycles of the natural world"(Salomonsen, 2002: 14). This is typical of Pagans in general (inter alia, Adler, 1986; Hardman and Harvey, 1995; Harvey, 1997; Pearson, Roberts and Samuel, 1998).

In an interview in *People of the Earth* Alexei Kondratiev expresses his belief that "attunement to the natural world" is the main contribution Paganism can make to the modern world. This attunement "is not just an intellectual understanding"but rather "a gut feeling", and he explained that Pagans "react in a very personal and visceral way to Nature"(Hopman and Bond, 1995: 25). In her study of US Pagan Festivals, Pike suggests that the dancers in a fire ritual "construct their identities around the fire by moving back and forth between verbal and somatic ways of knowing" (Pike, 2001: 189). This helps create a new relationship to the body that rejects socialized values and celebrates those of contemporary Paganism, such as sacred sexuality. During the ritual "the body both expresses and constructs meaning"(Pike, 2001: 197-198).

This validation of embodied knowing is especially common in literature related to Eco-Paganism. Salomonsen quotes Reclaiming witch Francesca, for whom significant understanding comes from a profound physical involvement:

You get involved with your whole being, with your god spirit, with your sacred animal nature, with your passion – you bring all parts of you and you experience it (Salomonsen, 1998: 144).

Francesca's experience illustrates Starhawk's understanding that if we are to move beyond the "thought-forms of estrangement" we must focus on the physical: "what we can see and touch and hold" (Starhawk, 1982: 29). Starhawk - a Reclaiming founder member - prefers symbol to abstraction "because it evokes sensual and emotional, not just intellectual, responses" (Starhawk, 1982: 11) and concludes that "[o]ur economic and political systems, our science and technology, are rooted in our alienation from our bodies and from the realms of deep feeling" (Starhawk, 1982: 137). Eco-Pagan activist Alisha Little Tree spoke of the "knowledge in our bodies that tell us what's right" (Taylor, 2001: 231-232) while academic Eco-Pagan Plows describes the experience of protest camp rituals in similar terms:

We were tuning into the Earth's heartbeat, to a frequency you find only through faith and instinct (Plows, 1998a: 289).

Taylor describes similar practices at activist gatherings in the US. Although some used hallucinogens and alcohol, most activists sought ecstatic spiritual experience through drumming and dancing:

Fuelled by hard-driving music and drumming, some activists report mystically fusing with the cosmos, 'losing themselves' and their sense of independent ego, as they dance into the night (Taylor, 2001: 228).

(Eco-)Pagan Space

Beyer opines that Pagans valorize physical place, stressing relationship to what is local (Beyer, 1998: 17 and 19), and this is certainly true of Eco-Pagans, for whom this belief is expressed in the practice of building a relationship with the spirit(s) of a place, the *genius loci* (see *inter alia*, Patterson, 1991; Taylor, 2001). But how true this is of Pagans in general is debatable, as evidenced by the degree of attention paid to UK 'sacred sites' like Avebury, Glastonbury and Stonehenge (Bowman, 2000: 92; Harvey, 2000: 159) as well as more exotic places like Delphi and Crete all of which are "popular destinations" for Pagan pilgrims (Rountree, 2006: 95).

Pagan festival gatherings, which last from a few hours to a week or more, provide a space where participants can overcome the alienation Starhawk speaks of (Pike, 2001: 24). Pike is concerned specifically with large³ Pagan gatherings in the USA:

Dimensions of self and space are interconnected for Neopagans; boundaries are fluid between self and other, imagination and reality, and human and nature. Festival space dissolves these boundaries by telling participants through their senses that the space belongs to them and is different from the other spaces they live in (Pike, 2001: 28 –29).

³ Such festivals usually included over a hundred people. Similar events are held less frequently in the UK and Europe.

It is illuminating to compare the sacred liminal space of contemporary Pagan festivals with that of the Eco-Pagan protest camps, as both create a "shared reality" that is very different from conventional experience, (which Pike's respondents call "Mundania"), but is considered "more 'real' because [it embodies] an ideal reality" (Pike, 2001: 21). Letcher notes that the "enchanted world" of the protest camp is a "forgotten, and *truer* [aspect of] reality" (Letcher, 2001; authors emphasis). In each case the contrast is moral and ontological, and celebrates the carnivalesque. Although both festival and protest space are established using narrative, ritual, and imagination, there are significant differences: Whereas the laws of Mundania permit festival space, confrontation defines the Eco-Pagan camp. The festival lasts for a brief, set period of time – usually no more than a week – but a protest camp has no pre-determined end point, so creates a tension that magnifies the sense of liminality. Because eviction – the "point of closure" – "lies in the unspecified future", there is "a sense of an ever-unfolding present, of living outside of time" (Letcher, 2001a: PAGE). This sense of timelessness enhances a 'geography of enchantment': "It is kind of like re-enchanting the land ... [a] hill will always be the same, but if it is got a myth around it, it makes it much more magical to the people who live around it" (Dave, interview conducted 28/7/99) (Letcher, 2001a: PAGE). While most protest sites are based in wooded areas, the East London M11 Link Road protest was a notable exception that nevertheless exemplified the unique qualities I've identified. In November 1993 the protest culminated in the occupation of Claremont Road, a street of over 30 houses, and by the Summer of 1994 it had "transform[ed] into a 'festival of resistance'" (Butler, 2003: 384).

□ Practice and Belief

Because practice and experience are more important than belief, Paganism has little or no creed and the question of what to believe is open to the individual (Davy, 2007: 13; Harvey, 1997: 161). Beyer considers "a strong experiential basis where personal experience is a final arbiter of truth or validity" to be a defining feature of Paganism (Beyer, 1998: 17), while for Starhawk, Witchcraft is not a belief system at all, but simply an "attitude of joy and wonder to the world" (Starhawk, [1979] 1989: 108). Vee Van Dam, editor of *Spiral* magazine (circa. 1989), agreed:

I do not even think of Paganism as a religion; I perceive it as a 'feeling' and when clear about things as a 'knowing' ... many so-called Pagan religions ... lose the 'feeling' of the Spirit for the sake of dogma, tenets, rules and often useless rituals.

Van Dam's definition of Paganism is quoted approvingly by UK Eco-Pagan Richard Westwood in *Earthwise* magazine (Westwood, 1988: 12).

Although there is agreement that "Paganism is not so much a set of beliefs as a way of relating to the world" (Harris, 1995: 153), the specific practices of Eco-Paganism introduces an inevitable tension. Adler once assumed that Paganism would "consider the protection of the earth a religious duty" and so "anyone who did not

feel this way ... was not a 'real Pagan'" (Adler, 1986: 399). Activist academic Letcher held a similar view:

if Pagans are not taking a leading role in the struggle against environmental destruction then they not only disempower themselves, but their religion and that which they hold to be most sacred (Letcher, 2000).

Letcher concludes that there are "inconsistencies within modern Paganism" and compares 'Radical' activist Pagans with the 'virtual' Pagan mainstream (Letcher 2000).

Deity

The prioritization of practice over belief is apparent in relationships with deity, which vary enormously. Not only do Pagans disagree on every aspect of this relationship, but may hold apparently inconsistent beliefs or have no beliefs at all: Philip, a Wiccan, wrote:

I am monotheist, duotheist, pantheist, panentheist and atheist and find no contradiction in that whatever (Philip, pers. comm. 11/10/2006).

Inquiring into how Pagans practically relate to deity is more useful than asking about belief, and we can differentiate between 'working' with deity and 'worship'. Most contemporary Pagans "devote themselves to one or more gods or goddesses" (Cowan, 2006: 179), but acts of worship often blur into practical work with or through deities to empower a spell, ask for counsel or invite some degree of possession (Harris and Nightmare, 2006: 234).

Beyer's claim that Pagans stress relationship to what is local (Beyer, 1998: 19) is again not borne out, as reference to local deities is unusual and generally linked to the kind of specific 'sacred sites' referred to above. Many Pagans work with a generic Goddess, a God and Goddess partnership (Pearson, 2002), or deities from ancient pantheons of Egypt, Greece, Rome or Celtic or Nordic Europe (Pearson, 2002; Harvey, 1995). For Druid priest Philip Shallcrass "[a]ll Gods are one God, and all Goddesses are one Goddess" (Shallcrass, 1998: 164), and this is true for many Wiccans (inter alia, Greenwood, 1998: 101; Crowley 1998: 170) and Pagans in general (Cowan 2006: 180). The most common alternative view is that each deity is a distinct entity (Cowan, 2006: 180) sometimes understood as "powers of nature" (Restall Orr, 2005: 10) with the Goddess conceptualized as "the Earth Mother" (Stuckey, 2002: 115). Some Pagans have a more psychologized understanding of deity as "role models" (Davey, 2007: 18) or the "inner motivations ... of a persons life" (Harvey 1997: 75-76) and Wicca in particular has been influenced by Jung (Greenwood, 1998: 105; Crowley, 1995).

Ritual

Ritual is difficult to define (see Grimes, 2000) but for the purpose of this thesis I use my own definition of contemporary Pagan ritual:

A Neopagan ritual is a process played out through performance. It is set apart from the mundane and involves physical activity and symbolic verbal or non-verbal communication expressed through multiple sensory modalities. Some Neopagan ritual intends to engage with 'ultimate reality' or mystical powers and takes place in the context of a heightened emotional state (Harris and NightMare 2006: 217).

According to Adler, Kelly claimed that "the Craft ... is totally defined in terms of the ritual" (Adler, 1986: 170), and given the many functions that it fulfils it is no surprise that it serves a "vital need" for many Pagans (Harris and NightMare, 2006: 234). Some form of ritual is important to most - perhaps all - Pagans, but it is practised in a wide varieties of ways: Wiccans claim that their religion "can *only* be expressed and experienced though direct participation in its rituals" (Pearson, 2007: 69), so Wicca is ritually orthopraxic, but other Pagan rituals are more eclectic or ad hoc, and can include simply sitting in the woods (Harvey, 2000: 158), dancing (Pike, 2001) or other intentional performances.

Although my 1996 paper claimed that ecstatic Pagan rituals could heal "the rift between body & mind" (Harris, 1995: 153), Hutton notes an emphasis on control in contemporary witchcraft rituals which "lack the ecstatic, euphoric, and abandoned quality of many tribal and shamanist ritual practices; the object is usually not to lose consciousness but to enhance and deploy it" (Hutton, 1999: 407). Given the pervasive influence of the Craft on contemporary Paganism (inter alia, Hutton 1999; Melton 1993; Kelly 2002), my claim must be understood as selective at best.

Magic

Melton classifies Paganism within the "Magick Family" (Melton, 2002) but magic is tricky to define because "[t]he word *magic* works far too hard" (Glucklich, 1997: vii). Glucklich later offers Middleton's definition as authoritative: Middleton identifies as "magic" actions performed with the intention of bringing "about certain events or conditions" without any scientific "cause and effect relationship between the act and the consequence" (Middleton, 1987: 82). Middleton's understanding accords with Melton's belief that "[i]nherent in the magical world-view is the notion of control and manipulation" (Melton, 2002: 173). Pearson offers a more nuanced view that contrasts such "occult magic" with the more "'ordinary magic' of everyday life" that enables "interaction with other people or the Earth" (Pearson 2007: 101). This latter form of magic is concerned with "feeling[s] of connectedness with the sky, the trees, the soil" (Pearson 2007: 101) and distinguishes "stellar-based occultist magic from earth-based pagan magic" (Woodman, J., 2000, cited by Pearson, 2007: 101).

Earth-based and Esoteric Paganism

In our 2006 paper Welch and I traced the genealogy of contemporary Paganism through diverse currents of influence, the most important of which we described as "earth-based" and "esoteric" (Harris and Welch, 2006). Although these currents are not isolated from each other, they carry distinct ideological characteristics and attract different socio-political groups. The Western Occult Tradition is the primary current flowing through Wicca, which has in turn influenced mainstream Paganism

(inter alia, Melton 1993, Kelly, 2002 and Hutton, 1999.) This esoteric current is rooted in an ideology of anthropocentrism (Greenwood, 2005: 187), personal power and hierarchy (Hutton, 1999: 83; Kelly, 2002) that tends towards a patriarchal sexism (Salomonsen, 2002: 92-93). Given how much Paganism drew from this esoteric tradition, Harvey finds it unsurprising that "some Pagans do or say things which denigrate matter", and suggests that this leads to "a form of schizophrenia in which the celebration of Nature is assented to while disembodiedness is sought" (Harvey, 1997: 139). Greenwood claims that this high magic influence leads Wicca to be more concerned with "personal spiritual transformation" than "reverence for spirits of place" or the environment (Greenwood, 1998: 101-102), while Hutton notes that none of the many witches he researched had ever joined a protest camp "in sharp contrast with Pagan Druids and non-initiatory Pagans" (Hutton, 1999: 405).

However, an alternative current flows from the free festival culture of the 'new-age travellers' and biker scene into several interconnected streams. McKay claims that there were ongoing exchanges between travellers and peace camps throughout the early 1980's and quotes Don Aitken (*20 Years of Festivals*) that "[i]t was from the new Travellers that the Greenham women learned about benders"⁴ (McKay, 1996: 58). Letcher opines that protest site Eco-Paganism, with its "romanticised gypsy life, and a new tribalism" also emerged from the free festival travellers (Letcher, 2005: 557). This same current blended with Druidry at Stonehenge to create the 'alternative' Druidry of the Glastonbury Order, Secular Order and the Loyal Arthurian Warband, many of whom identify as Eco-Pagans. Greenwood offers a similar model that focuses more on underlying ideologies than cultural influences. She compares the roles of esotericism and organicism in "nature spiritualities" and "highlights many contradictory and internal and inconsistencies that may throw doubt" on claims that Paganism is "inherently ecological" (Greenwood, 2005: 172-173).

We do not propose a dichotomy between two distinct groups, as many Pagans do not fit comfortably into any classification, but argue for ideal types. A typical earth based Pagan develops a spontaneous and intuitive practice where ritual is unstructured, ecstatic and focused on celebration. Earth based Pagans dislike organisation and some resist identifying as 'Pagan' at all. Esoteric Pagan groups, typically run by traditional Druids or Wiccans, tend to have a hierarchical organisation and ritual practice that inclines towards the formal and non-ecstatic. Crowley's brief description of Pagan worship provides an eloquent illustration: She points out that some Pagans mark the seasonal festivals with "complex ritual" while others "simply sit and meditate or go outside to commune with nature" and suggests that these differences effectively mark "low and high church, field and temple Pagans" (Crowley, 1996: 169). Initial research suggested that earth based Pagans would be common in alternative Druidry and Eco-Paganism and my research confirms that this is indeed the case.

⁴ A bender is a low impact dwelling commonly used at UK protest sites. It is made by bending coppiced wood to create a dome, which is then covered with a tarpaulin and lined with blankets.

ECO-PAGANISM

Eco-Paganism has not yet been extensively researched and I have examined all material referring to the UK including magazines and grey literature. Although I have read material on US practice, I have not researched the movement in detail beyond the UK, though Eco-Paganism is widespread in the USA, and practised across Europe, in Canada, Australia and South Africa.

There are clearly similarities between Eco-Paganism and mainstream Paganism, but significant differences remain. First, there is a strong political dimension to Eco-Paganism that is often absent in the mainstream form. (See, inter alia, Harris & Scullion, 2004; Hine, 2000; Starhawk 2002). Plows, for example, reports that "spirituality often informs a political stance" and notes that it was though Paganism that she became radically politicised (Plows, 2001: 4).

The concept of Eco-Paganism emerged within the last 20 years, and the term itself is even more recent, with the earliest reference in *Moonshine* magazine # 7, which lists *Wood & Water* as a "goddess orientated eco-pagan magazine" (Westwood and Westwood, 1987b). The first discussions of UK Eco-Paganism were also in *Moonshine* magazine (Westwood and Westwood, various dates), and in the late 1980's several key articles were collected into the booklet encouraging Pagans to be more ecological and to apply magic to political ends. While *Moonshine* is clearly significant, Letcher opines that Eco-Paganism properly begins with the *practical* protests on Twyford Down the 1992 (Letcher, 2005: 556).

Who are Eco-Pagans?

Some Eco-Pagans are involved in a Pagan Tradition, counting themselves as, inter alia, Wiccans, Druids or Heathens (Harvey, 1997a, Letcher, 2000, 2002), but many are " 'detraditionalized' ", a term Letcher uses to describe the "elective and affectual spiritualities of protesters living more permanently at protest sites" (Letcher, 2005: 557), which emerged with the Twyford Down Donga Tribe (Plows, 2005). These two groups are not mutually exclusive (Letcher, 2003): Druids and Wiccans are found at protest camps (Roberts and Motherwort, 1997; Pendragon and Stone, 2003) and Eco-Pagans typically move from one circle of influence to another: They may, for example, be part of the Dragon Network, an initiated Druid and a member of a protest camp tribe. Letcher's model has heuristic merit in defining ideal types, and I refer to detraditionalized and traditionalized Eco-Pagans throughout this thesis. According to Letcher, detraditionalized protest camp Eco-Pagans practice syncretic spiritualities that incorporate elements of "Buddhism, Shamanism, the New Age, Theosophy, 60s psychedelia, the Rainbow movement, and British folklore, whilst retaining a core Pagan doxa" (Letcher, 2005: 557). This eclecticism supports his claim that this "religion of the people ... has emerged from the community of protesters and their collective stories" (Letcher, 2001b). Letcher's model is valuable, but we also need to distinguish between the Eco-Pagans he identified on protest sites and more urban Eco-Pagans. Boundaries between all these categories are fluid, and at a given time a site Eco-Pagan may be a member of a Pagan Tradition or not, and others of either persuasion may be living a more urban lifestyle.

Bearing in mind the complexity of the distinction, traditionalized Eco-Pagans fall primarily into three groups: Reclaiming, Dragon and various Druid orders. Reclaiming is the best known, primarily because of the wide influence of activist Witch Starhawk, and though California Reclaiming has been extensively studied (Salomonsen, 1998 and 2002), research into the UK branch, founded in 2001, has been minimal (Dougherty, 2004). Although the UK based Dragon Environmental Network (founded by Harris in 1990) has a firm place in mainstream Paganism, it has been described as "the Dragon Tribe"(personal recollection, but see Butler, 2003: 399) and some detraditionalized protest camp Eco-Pagans count themselves as 'Dragons' (Harris, 1995). Several Druid orders are environmentally active, notably The Loyal Arthurian Warband and The Secular Order of Druids. The British Druid Order, which has now branched into the separate Druid Network, organized ritual protests at Newbury, but neither Order has the same level of activist involvement as the Warband.

Some Eco-Pagans remain largely ignorant of Traditional paths or even hostile to them. Rowe, a member of the Donga Tribe, refused the name 'Pagan' but felt it was close to what she felt: "I don't like to worship and idol [*sic*]. I worship the land because I live on it and I can feel the energy from that. I don't like structures and rules"(interviewed by Berens, 1994). Rowe's attitude is not uncommon, and reflects a distrust of urban Pagans who are initiated into one of the Traditions which are sometimes seen as hierarchical, rule bound and remote from the protester's spirituality, which is grounded in a life close to the land. When visiting Wiccans invited the Eco-Pagan protesters living in Lyminge Forest to join their ritual, they were told: "We don't need your rituals. We live it every day"(Roberts and Motherwort, 1997: 26).

Several features of mainstream Paganism are emphasised in Eco-Paganism. Obviously environmental practice is fundamental to Eco-Paganism, and stronger than mainstream Paganism activity. Letcher claims that the New tribalism⁵ (Letcher, 2002: 85) found in Paganism is central to the construction of identity for many protest site Eco-Pagans. He adds that the aesthetic aspects of spirituality which are apparent throughout Paganism may be more significant for protest site Eco-Pagans (Letcher, 2002: 85), especially in the form of storytelling: "Stories are extremely important in the formation and maintenance of vernacular spiritualities. Eco-paganism is shaped, not by books or charismatic leaders, but by the language spoken and by the myths and narratives shared around the campfires, the hearths of the protest camps"(Letcher, 2001b). His point is borne out by the mythologised story of Clairmont Road told by "Crow, the Shaman":

a small tribe living at the East End of a Great Town, at the Edge of a Great Forest ... They then called up the magical peoples - the Dongas and the Dragons; tribes who came from nowhere and whose place was with nature. ... the tribes dressed up the palace of Claremont in strange colours and decorated it with mystical symbols, splendid icons and mysterious idols. They

⁵ See Bauman 1993; Maffesoli 1996 for more on "neo-tribalism".

created a sacred place of pilgrimage and made it loud with foreign drum beats, music and dance (Butler, 2003: 399).

According to US activist Greg Sotir one of the "prime tenets" of Eco-Paganism is the belief in "taking an active stand to stop the rape of the planet", and he emphasises the importance of re-connecting with nature that is enabled by this practice (Sotir, 2003). Clysdale's academic discussion concurs: Eco-Paganism is a "movement" specifically concerned with involvement in direct action that opposes "what is seen as an increasing modern separation from the earth". Fundamental to this reconnection is the "nonintellectual experiential knowledge" which I have described as the "knowledge of faith, of emotion, of the gut feeling" (Clysdale, 2002: 86, citing Harris, 1995).

The organic environment is sacred to most Pagans, but this belief is expressed most practically in Eco-Paganism. Clifton and Starhawk agree that "participation in the natural cycles of the region empowers people" (Davy, 2002: 92), while protest site Eco-Pagans often have an emotional, embodied understanding of the genius loci. Although many lack "specific knowledge" about local ecology, site Eco-Pagans "often feel intense emotional bonds with the tree in which they live, or the land they are defending" (Letcher, 2005: 557).

A connection with elemental nature is an important aspect of site Eco-Paganism and is enabled by the simple practice of camping or living in a low impact dwelling like a bender or tree house. Anderson notes that everyday life on a protest site creates "ties between self and place", at least partly because of "heightened awareness of the local environment's agency", which "ties participants closer to their cosmological value systems as they experience at first hand unmediated positioning with a broader ecological system" (Anderson 2004: 51). Although Pagan festival camps like those researched by Pike (2001) achieve this to some extent, those living on a protest camp will experience it most intensely. Life on a protest site makes the reality of our relationship to the environment starkly clear: Dealing with the mud, the rain, and the use and misuse of resources is everyday life: "The very act of living out, however dependent on wider society for food and so on, puts one in touch with nature in a way that is real, not virtual" (Letcher, 2000). However, Letcher also found that Eco-Pagans lacked environmental sensitivity and noted that those at the Newbury protest "trampled the flora into a quagmire and scared off the fauna" during rituals (Letcher, 2001c). This has not always been the case, and Plows emphasizes the importance of a "Practical paganism" that respects ecology (Plows, 2001).

Past research observed rudimentary protest site Eco-Pagan rituals that focused on celebration or protection (Plows, 2005: 505). Letcher claimed that "[s]uch celebrations are a product of the movement's origins in (free) festival, and so-called 'new-age traveller' culture" (Letcher, 2005: 557). Ethnographies from the late 1990's found that rituals were more likely to emerge spontaneously amongst Eco-Pagans at protest sites than they would in a more urban context, and they often had a wild Dionysian edge (Letcher, 2002; Plows, 2001). MacLellan described such rituals as "a mixture of traditional witchcraft, street theatre and odd bits of traditional shamanism" and confirmed Letcher's conclusion (Letcher, 2002: 84) that these

rituals enabled practitioners "to give shape to their feelings about the earth they are trying to protect"(MacLellan, 1995: 145).

Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism

Environmental philosophy has influenced the activist movement and Eco-Paganism, primarily through Deep Ecology and ecofeminism. The activist group Earth First! assert that their "actions are tied to Deep Ecology, the spiritual and visceral recognition of the intrinsic, sacred value of every living thing" (Earth First! Worldwide, 2007), and Davy notes the membership overlap between Earth First! and Eco-Paganism (Davy, 2007: 178) that was apparent at Twyford Down (Plows, 2005). Deep Ecology - a movement as much as an identifiable philosophy - emphasizes that human beings are only part of the ecology of the planet and that only by understanding our ecological interconnectedness can we fully realize our humanity (Naess, 1989).

Ecofeminism, which has always had a spiritual dimension (Primavesi, 1996: 46), is more influential on Eco-Paganism than Deep Ecology. Ecofeminism has a complex history that makes it difficult to summarise, but it is rooted in the belief that the domination of women is fundamentally linked with that of nature, so environmental activism is integral with work to overcome female oppression (Harris, 2007). Taylor claims that some of the rituals enacted by US Eco-Pagans are "informed explicitly by ecofeminist beliefs"(Taylor, 2001: 230), while Lecher suggests that the Eco-Pagan understanding of nature is at least partly grounded in ecofeminism (specifically Merchant, 1980) and Goddess spirituality (Letcher, 2003). The relationships between Goddess spirituality, feminism and Eco-Paganism are intricate, and I will not attempt to unravel them, but those "drawn to Paganism from the women's movement are often more politically aware than longer-term Pagans" and bring a "pro-environmental" stance to their Paganism which we might infer is otherwise absent (Crowley, 1996: 170). Some Eco-Pagans emphasize the ecofeminist celebration of the erotic (LaChapelle, 1992; Spretnak, 1989). Eco-Pagan Webster claims that the "cultural forces that are damaging the earth" also repress the erotic, which is "an archaic mode of perception that uses merging as a method to know the other" (Webster 2006: 3). She thus echoes Starhawk's injunction to "love nature ... carnally, with our meat, our bones" (Starhawk, 1982: 143).

Eco-Paganism and the Direct Action Movement

Although there is a long history of non-violent direct action in this country, the protest that began at Twyford Down in 1992 marked the arrival of Earth First! to the UK, and ignited the direct action movement in Britain. Twyford Down was an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, but the Government decided a new road was needed, so a 250 metre wide and 40 metre deep cutting now slices through the chalk downland. The protest was intense and involved hundreds of activists some of whom - the Eco-Pagan Donga Tribe - lived at various camps on the Down. The fact that the Donga Tribe were named after the Iron Age track ways on the Down illustrates their "very strong self identification with the land" (Plows, 1998b: 45). Because the Donga Tribe were the first site Eco-

Pagans and formed the core of the key UK protest, their "actions and worldviews had a significant influence on the wave of activists that followed" (Plows, 2005: 505). In common with later site Eco-Pagans, the Donga Tribe practised a "very earthy" Paganism that saw "[e]veryday nature ... as magical", and combined basic herbalism with simple rituals that "often" involved entheogenic mushrooms (Plows, 2005: 505). Twyford Down marked the beginning of the protest movement which was active at the M11 (1993) , Newbury (1996) and "an estimated 200 anti-road campaigns" (Butler, 2003: 383), before merging into the 'anti-globalization' protests of the Global Justice Movement (inter alia, Seattle, 1999 and Scotland, 2005).

Worthington opined that "[f]rom the beginning the road protesters demonstrated a raw, untutored form of grass-roots eco-paganism that went further than any previous protest movement in embracing the land as sacred" (Worthington, 2005: 214), while Butler noted how "various expressions of 'spirituality', or 'energy' as it was often termed" united the otherwise diverse protesters at Clairmont Road (Butler, 2003: 386). Although many protesters wouldn't call themselves 'Pagan', boundaries blur between Eco-Pagan and protester, with most sites revealing shades of Pagan-to-protester. A "Pagan discourse" [underlies] the [protest] movement"(Letcher, 2000), and Plows confirms that a "sense of connectedness" contributes to "a fairly 'standard' activist spirituality" which she describes as 'practical paganism'. Taylor asserts that the US radical environmental movement "can aptly be labelled 'pagan environmentalism' ", and notes that each issue of the US Earth First! activist journal is dated by Pagan festivals (Taylor, B., 2001: 178).

Letcher suggests that Eco-Paganism, "in particular ideas of nature", has had a profound influence on the protest movement (Letcher, 2003: 6), but the influence is reciprocal, and Eco-Paganism in its current form would not exist without the direct action movement. Doherty argues that a "protest camp can be understood as a heterotopic space in which it becomes possible to express a new way of life without posing a direct challenge to the social order" (Doherty, 1997: 13). Letcher opines that the space of a protest camp may encourage an Eco-Pagan culture to flourish and points out that the pressure of inevitable eviction places protesters in a kind of time out of time, which, "might elsewhere be called 'festival time' (Bakhtin, 1984; Schechner, 1993)"(Letcher, 2001a: PAGE).

Conclusion

Paganism is a complex movement which suffers from a schizophrenic split between its identity as a 'nature religion' and its esoteric origins. This split is highlighted by the existence of Eco-Paganism. Although there is much common ground between mainstream and Eco-Paganism, there are significant differences in emphasis, attitude and approach. Eco-Pagans are typically politicised activists with a strong sense of place. Eco-Paganism is found as a sub-culture within Traditional Paganism and amongst environmental activists, notably at UK road protest sites. These groups are not mutually exclusive and both are influenced by ecofeminism, valorize embodied knowing and tend to practice ecstatic rituals focused on celebration.

Although Eco-Paganism is a significant spiritual phenomenon, research into it has been minimal: MacLellan wrote that the future of the urban shaman lay in the protest camps (MacLellan, 1995: 145), while Harvey suggests that Eco-Paganism tests "our understanding of what 'spirituality' might mean"(Harvey, 1997b: 3). It is also apparent that embodied knowing is particularly significant in Eco-Pagan spirituality, as intuition and 'gut feelings' have priority over intellectual approaches and understanding emerges from physical involvement. Furthermore, Pagans sometimes experience the boundaries between body and environment as fluid (Pike, 2001: 28 –29) and Eco-Pagan spirituality is closely related to a sense of connection (inter alia, Letcher, 2005; Plows, 1998b: 166). However, research into the relationship between embodied knowing and spirituality is lacking and fails to explain why Eco-Pagans are more motivated than mainstream Pagans. Existing research suggests that embodied cognition is fundamental to these processes and that further investigation into its distinctive role in Eco-Paganism will unearth more of its magic.