

## Reflecting on Studying Wicca from within the Academy and the Craft: An Autobiographical Perspective

Melissa Harrington<sup>1</sup>

Room 112, Melling Building,  
The University of Cumbria  
Bowerham Road  
Lancaster LA1 3JD  
melissa.grovehouse@googlemail.com

I am honored to be invited to reflect on my academic biography and its intersection with Pagan studies, particularly to discuss my experience of the relationship between Pagan studies and Wicca, and to talk about the interactions between scholar and practitioner. This aim for reflexivity is a useful common ground within the wide transdisciplinary field that has come to embody the contemporary study of Paganism (an umbrella term for Pagan religiosity). Such reflexivity allows scrutiny for researcher effects, and rejects the assumption that it is possible to study human behavior and belief as an objective observer, particularly when studying one's own culture. It attempts to account for the individual researcher, how they affect their research, and how their research affects them. In my case this discussion leads into the insider/outsider debate; the interface of Pagan studies with other fields; and theory and methodology in the study of Paganisms (a specific term emphasizing the diverse religions and ideologies that form Paganism). I will start with a potted biography.

### *An Academic Biography*

British state education in the 1970s was not good. I went to a junior school with four hundred children, no learning objectives, and no

1. Melissa Harrington is a senior visiting lecturer at the University of Cumbria. She teaches research methods and fundamentals of clinical and cognitive behavioral psychology

1 internal walls. My secondary school was an ex “secondary modern,”  
2 which on the abolition of the grammar-school system had been  
3 deemed “comprehensive,” without changing its staff or limited cur-  
4 riculum. Everything conformed to the intellectual culture of the  
5 lowest academic levels. It didn’t have a sixth form, so at sixteen I  
6 commuted fifteen miles to the nearest one, which neither encour-  
7 aged nor promoted university. I left school to work with horses,  
8 taught English in Spain, and then became a temporary secretary in  
9 London before working my way up in marketing at L’Oreal; this  
10 was an enjoyable environment with excellent benefits, but then I dis-  
11 covered Wicca.

12 Wicca opened a new intellectual world to me. As a child I read  
13 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from cover to cover and requested the  
14 *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology* by my ninth birthday, but the  
15 drab utilitarianism of school had extinguished any thought of further  
16 education. Wicca strongly re-awakened this thirst for knowledge,  
17 with new concepts in religion and a path into history, philosophy,  
18 comparative and alternative religion, magic, feminism, ritual, spiri-  
19 tuality, ecology, personal development and psychology. After trying  
20 to balance work and study, I gave up my career with its financial  
21 security and incentives, and applied to Royal Holloway University  
22 to study psychology as I approached my thirtieth birthday.

23 I enjoyed the cognitive and clinically focused BSc while read-  
24 ing for pleasure in the philosophy, classics, and religious libraries.  
25 I intensively explored the magical milieu, including sojourns  
26 in magical communities and initiation into ceremonial and West-  
27 ern Mystery traditions. I did my dissertation on a cognitive model  
28 for magical consciousness and a research project on conversion to  
29 Wicca. I intended to become an occupational psychologist, combin-  
30 ing academic qualifications with prior experience and connections.

31 However, Professor Peter Clarke, head of the Centre for the Study  
32 of New Religious Movements within the Theology and Religious  
33 Studies department at King’s College, London liked my undergrad-  
34 uate work and invited me to extend my research project into a PhD  
35 supervised by him and Vivianne Crowley, who lectured there on the  
36 psychology of religion. I was delighted to accept and join students on  
37 the MA in the Sociology and Anthropology of Religion, and explore  
38 new religious movements while reading up on gender and feminist  
39 scholarship. I also visited the British Museum, enjoying the reading  
40 rooms of the old British Library, reading widely on anything related to  
41 Wiccan history. I was also in two Enochian groups; district manager,

1 open-sabbats co-ordinator and media officer for the Pagan Federation  
 2 London; running my own coven; secretary and an initiating officer in  
 3 Shemesh Lodge OTO; and running the London OTO.

4 By then I was considering becoming a full-time academic, but life  
 5 presented a greater challenge. I was married, thirty-five years old,  
 6 and it was time to start a family. We did, and then moved 240 miles  
 7 home to Cumbria, also reducing my Pagan/magical commitments  
 8 to one coven, generic Thelema, and district manager for the Pagan  
 9 Federation North West. Professor Clarke has my gratitude for keep-  
 10 ing me on track throughout the two maternity leaves, part-time affil-  
 11 iation, and the several suspensions of research that followed, but  
 12 nevertheless both he and Vivianne had retired from King's by the  
 13 time I came to do my viva.

14 After a significant break to nurture and enjoy my young family,  
 15 renovate houses, and to help develop my husband's business, I  
 16 sought relevant academic teaching experience by offering my local  
 17 adult education body courses on sociology, psychology, and psy-  
 18 chology of religion, wherewith they also offered me extra training in  
 19 adult education, which I used as a springboard to become a visiting  
 20 lecturer at the University of Cumbria, on postgraduate courses in  
 21 cognitive behavioral psychotherapy. This fitted well with my family  
 22 commitments and I intend to continue with this work-life balance  
 23 while eventually publishing from my PhD, a number of books on  
 24 conversion and Wicca, and possibly to re-engage in research on  
 25 cognitive and cultural aspects of religious conversion. I would also  
 26 like to publish on aspects of the courses I teach at the University of  
 27 Cumbria.

28 I now do *ad hoc* magic with groups of friends, and enjoy the role  
 29 of matriarch to my "downline" in Wicca. I organize conferences for  
 30 the Pagan Federation, including academics as speakers. I also am  
 31 invited to give international workshops and lectures. So it seems  
 32 that a chance meeting with a Tarot reader many years ago has led me  
 33 to the role of senior lecturer and consultant Witch.

### 34 *Pagan Studies*

35 Pagan studies has so far been an umbrella term for the study of  
 36 Paganism from many different academic fields, leading to a collab-  
 37 orative interdisciplinary research base rather than any one over-  
 38 all "monotheory." This has facilitated building a polyvocal body  
 39 of work engaged with multiple forms of religious belonging and

multiple approaches to research of Pagan religion and its place in the modern world, as outlined in the goals of the Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation of the American Academy of Religion. This was established in 2005 stating a two-fold mission: 1. Foster the development of new research and new methods in the study of Paganism 2. Create an environment that helps to foster critical in-depth evaluation of current research.

Pagan studies started by mapping Paganism as it has developed, with research also reflecting its demography as it has grown. Wicca, as the largest path, has had the widest interest, and its constant diversification and denomination means there is much descriptive work left to be done. Pagans talk about “Wiccanate privilege,” whereby interest in Wicca overshadows the development of other Paganisms to the extent that outsiders see Paganism in terms of a generic sort of Wicca; this can be seen in general accounts from religious studies.<sup>2</sup> Pagan studies scholars’ work has helped to build a much more nuanced academic understanding of contemporary Paganisms in all their forms and functions, and is developing a global interest with research now beginning to take place in the Australia, post-Soviet states and the Middle East.

### *Fostering the Development of New Research*

Paganism is a religion that is as much an expression of contemporary culture as it is a rebirth of polytheistic mystery religion.<sup>3</sup> In researching Pagans, even if identifying as an “outsider”, researchers have been studying their own race, culture and class, some of whom are more educated than the researcher. They are keen to assist, and to absorb, reflect and critique academic accounts. This has led to the concept of dialogue with researched communities, and criticism of the “colonialist” narrative of classical anthropology and of the “reductionist outsider” stance. It has also led to inter-field discussion of how researching Paganisms might help to avoid the normal research perils of affecting data by presence, or skewing analysis by consciously or unconsciously favoring theory, methodology, agendas, religious viewpoints, ideology, and individual beliefs. Thus one of the key identifying features within the study of Paganisms is a

2. Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

3. Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West, Vol. 1: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacrilization, Popular Culture and Occulture* (London: Continuum, 2004).

high level of reflexivity, allied to discussion of how best to engage in the dynamic process of studying evolving religions within our own culture, and how to apply that to wider research communities.<sup>4</sup>

*Fostering the Development of New Methodologies*

Studying Paganism's manifestation of spirituality, religion, ideology and identity in the twenty-first century is helping to develop appropriate methodologies and tools for contemporary religions that can then be used for studying wider religion.<sup>5</sup>

As an undergraduate psychologist I realized that psychological conversion literature did not reflect the common Wiccan experience of an internal shift in "coming home," but placed more emphasis on adopting religion due to outside agency. In my final research project I created a scale to measure "recognition" as a conversion motif alongside Lofland and Skonovd's existing motifs of intellectual, mystical, revivalist, affectional, and coercive conversion, which I then applied to Wiccans.<sup>6</sup> The recognition motif scored highest for all participants as their key conversion motif; I ascribed this to pre-existing cognitive factors.<sup>7</sup> In a later assessment of the rise of Paganism in Britain I have attributed these factors as ones which have led to a quiet religious revolution with Paganism becoming the largest "other" religion in Britain today.<sup>8</sup>

I explored this process in my PhD and ascribed such conversion to a process of "schematic integration," whereby a religion fits with previously constructed cognitive schema or templates. I have realized since that this "recognition" is a description of the process of cognitive consistency, the opposite of cognitive dissonance, which engenders that feeling of homecoming. I think this could be applied to young Muslims converting to extremist Islamic groups, as a more

4. Graham Harvey, "Pagan Studies or the Study of Paganisms? A Case Study in the Study of Religions," in *Researching Paganisms*, ed. Jenny Blain, Douglas Ezzy, and Graham Harvey (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004), 241–55.

5. Michael York, *The Emerging Network, A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995); Jone Salomonsen, *Enchanted Feminism. Ritual, Gender and Divinity among the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco* (London: Routledge, 2002).

6. John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, "Conversion Motifs," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (1981): 373–85.

7. Melissa Harrington, "Conversion to Wicca?" DISKUS, 2000, <http://www.uni.marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/harrington.html>

8. Melissa Harrington, "The Popularity of Paganism: Making Sense of the Census," *BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group, Study Day 2013: "Making Sense of the Census, The SocRel Response,"* 2013.

1 useful model for understanding Western jihadism than the current  
 2 “grooming” hypothesis favored by the media, which leans towards  
 3 “brainwashing” theory discredited by sociologists such as Eileen  
 4 Barker. Looking at schema theory and conversion I see that “hate-  
 5 preachers” provide a revivalist element to jihadist conversion, but  
 6 the problem of Britons supporting Daesh is arguably far more deeply  
 7 seated in the generation who have grown up in an adopted country  
 8 during the Bush/Blair years.

9 *Going Native in Reverse: An Initiatory Process*

10 Becoming Wiccan was an integral part of my becoming an academic.  
 11 Jo Pearson developed the term “going native in reverse,”<sup>9</sup> and I find  
 12 it apt for my experience, though without the negative connotations  
 13 that are implicit in the original anthropological concept. I would like  
 14 to build upon Pearson’s discussion and say that this was a result  
 15 of a successful initiation into the Academy. Academia has degrees  
 16 of initiation, each with its own liminalities and learning processes,  
 17 ordeals, expectations, rituals, and robes that define one’s status and  
 18 experience. Their achievement implies and ensures increasing levels  
 19 of enculturation. I found the viva voce and trial by critic to be greater  
 20 ordeals than any esoteric initiation. I see my own determination to  
 21 stay involved as proof that once one has invested so much energy  
 22 and belief into something one is likely to value it, identify with it,  
 23 and believe in its ideology, culture and norms.

24 *Interpretative Drift*

25 This is similar to Tania Luhrmann’s ( process of “interpretive drift,”  
 26 which I find viable as a descriptor of enculturation but problematical  
 27 in its suggestion of cognitive dissonance as a causative force in the  
 28 adoption of magical belief systems.<sup>10</sup> I think she describes a general  
 29 process of organizational socialization that is not sufficient to explain  
 30 magical beliefs, particularly as many people join magical societies  
 31 *because* they have already had magical/mystical experience.

32 9. Joanne E. Pearson, “‘Going Native in Reverse’: The Insider as Researcher in  
 33 British Wicca,” in *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual*,  
 34 ed. Elizabeth Arweckand Martin D. Stringer (Birmingham: University of Birming-  
 35 ham Press), 97–113.

36 10. Tanya M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witches’ Craft: Ritual Magic in Con-*  
 37 *temporary England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).



As I worked magic with many of the people Luhrmann did, I know there are various accounts of magical belief systems that she was exposed to but did not include in her write-up. This may have been a conscious choice as they didn't fit with her theory, or unconscious avoidance due to the "cognitive contamination" of the overarching plausibility structure of the academic rite of passage which was the key driving force in her magical training.<sup>11</sup>

In psychology one would not set out to prove rather than test a hypothesis, as Luhrmann does, nor ignore a prevalent narrative such as "coming home" to magical *communitas*, which is resonant with cognitive consistency rather than its opposite cognitive dissonance, to which Luhrmann attributes magical affiliation. From a psychological research framework, her study is a single case study of Luhrmann, rather than her environment. It is the story of one girl's struggle with cognitive dissonance created by her research parameters, rather than an impartial examination of belief adoption, such as Eileen Barker's *The Making of a Moonie*.<sup>12</sup>

What Luhrmann finds in herself, she projects onto her respondents, creating a cognitive model based on her own dissonant cognitions, initiated "as if" she was a Witch but never participating in ritual or *communitas* within the same cognitive space. It is interesting to wonder what Luhrmann would have written had she done her research ten years later, in a different institution, using something other than anthropology, or if supervised by any of the senior scholars who write reflexively in *Researching Paganisms*, which discusses these issues in depth. What stands out in Luhrmann's study is her very honest account of her struggle, an early independent attempt at the reflexivity that has come to typify Pagan studies, from within an institution with an extremely conservative academic ethos. *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft* has thus come to be a litmus test in insider/outsider debate related to studying Paganisms, and it is only due to Luhrmann's honesty in providing this data about her own struggle that so many subsequent scholars have been able to use the book to determine their own stance.

If interpretive drift is a robust theory it should be applicable to other accounts of coming into magical belief/practice, but so far this does not seem to be the case. Equally if the theory is robust it

11. Peter Berger, *A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

12. Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

1 could be applicable to other forms of initiation and enculturation.  
 2 One might then expect cognitive dissonance to be part of my own  
 3 journey from “irrational” Wicca into rational academia. However I  
 4 found no cognitive dissonance from my initiation into academia,  
 5 in contrast it offered me tools to understand and continue my own  
 6 spiritual journey.

7 *Knowledge Transfer and Exchange, Reflexivity and Reactivity*

8 Most Pagans want to learn more about Paganism. The successes of  
 9 Vivianne Crowley’s Jungian analysis of Wicca and of Ronald Hut-  
 10 ton’s academic histories illustrate this. It is interesting to note that  
 11 the textual emphasis of academia could lead to the assumption Hut-  
 12 ton’s work was not popular among Pagans, as three Pagan critiques  
 13 of Hutton led to a response from him and articles by Peg Aloï and  
 14 Caroline Tully.<sup>13</sup> However Ronald Hutton is the invited keynote  
 15 speaker at many Pagan conferences. The Doreen Valiente Trust and  
 16 Centre for Pagan Studies have put on special “Days for” celebrat-  
 17 ing the contribution and life of founders of Wicca. These have so far  
 18 included Doreen Valiente, Gerald Gardner, Patricia Crowther, and  
 19 Ronald Hutton. There could not be a much higher accolade from the  
 20 community than this.

21 I speak at Pagan conferences, where academic contributions are  
 22 warmly received. This has the dual benefit of providing a knowl-  
 23 edgeable audience who can offer specific constructive feedback,  
 24 and bringing academic tools into the Paganism. I see this as a valu-  
 25 able process of basic knowledge transfer and exchange. Knowledge  
 26 transfer is usually seen in terms of business or industry uptake  
 27 and application rather than religion, but it may be relevant in this  
 28 domain. It takes research out of the ivory tower and into an applied  
 29 capacity. This concept of course opens into a debate about reactiv-  
 30 ity, how can researchers achieve an open dialogue but not affect  
 31 or contaminate their own data, which is a key discussion point in  
 32 Pagan Studies. Clear research methodologies, conscious reflexivity  
 33 and collaboration seem to be the best way to negotiate this. Lowell  
 34 Livezey’s epilogue in Arweck and Stringer discusses the formalized

35 13. Peg Aloï, “Review of *Trials of the Moon*,” *Pomegranate: The International Jour-*  
 36 *nal of Pagan Studies* 12 no. 2 (2010): 263–69; Caroline Jane Tulley, “Researching the  
 37 Past is a Foreign Country: Cognitive Dissonance as a Response by Practitioner  
 38 Pagans to Academic Research on the History of Pagan Religions,” *Pomegranate: The*  
 39 *International Journal of Pagan Studies* 13, no. 1 (2011): 98–105.



1 sharing procedures used by the Religion in Urban America Program  
 2 that do not confer veto or control, but enable critical evaluation by  
 3 the researched community.<sup>14</sup> This research program also creates re-  
 4 search teams of people who are of diverse gender, race, and religions  
 5 to work together.

6 Other concepts that are highlighted in literature on “knowledge  
 7 transfer,” which are relevant to Pagan studies, are knowledge as  
 8 power: what is the knowledge, where is it located/embedded, how  
 9 can it be shared, what are the ethics of how it is shared, who has  
 10 the knowledge, and how do they share it? This is already discussed  
 11 in Pagan studies, but could be usefully allied with extant theory  
 12 from this area of social science, particularly in terms of how knowl-  
 13 edge as power is seen and transmitted in Paganism, and how the  
 14 academy interacts with, treats, and portrays practitioners, and the  
 15 knowledge they share.

#### 16 *A View from “Inside”*

17 When discussing the insider/outsider debate I recommend Kim  
 18 Knott’s discussion of the evolution of different approaches, and  
 19 their positive and negative effects.<sup>15</sup> Ann Taves provides eloquent  
 20 reflection, and Arweck and Stringer a multidisciplinary perspective.  
 21 *Researching Paganisms* gives a detailed Pagan specific view, as does  
 22 Barbara Davy’s *Introduction to Pagan Studies*.<sup>16</sup>

23 *Researching Paganisms* has various detailed accounts of how  
 24 Pagan scholars negotiate the boundaries within and between Pagan-  
 25 ism and the academy. How one negotiates walking between these  
 26 worlds is ultimately due to each setting their own criteria and ethics  
 27 in conjunction with academic ethos. I ask, as in practical magic, “to  
 28 what end?” This encompasses such questions as “Why would I do  
 29 that work, who will it benefit, who might it hurt, what could be the  
 30 result, what do I hope to gain from it, what problems might it create,  
 31 can it be a success, and what is the best way to go about it?” I try

32 14. Lowell W. Livezey, “Epilogue: The Ethnographer and the Quests for Mean-  
 33 ing,” in *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual*, ed. Eliza-  
 34 beth Arwick and Martin D. Stringer (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press,  
 35 2002), 155–65.

36 15. Kim Knott, “Insider/Outsider Perspectives,” in *The Routledge Companion to*  
 37 *the Study of Religion*, ed. John R. Hinnels (London: Routledge, 2005), 230–70.

38 16. Barbara Jane Davy, *Introduction to Pagan Studies* (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira  
 39 Press, 2007).

1 to observe boundaries that practitioners expect academics to pre-  
2 serve while using academic practice to elicit or convey information  
3 that is useful to both communities. This question is not dissimilar to  
4 that posed by Ann Taves: “*What we are trying to make?*” She suggests  
5 shifting self reflexively between detachment and engagement, using  
6 the metaphor of researcher role rather than researcher place. This  
7 resonates with the discussions in *Researching Paganisms*.<sup>17</sup>

8 However, even if we follow Taves’ recommendation to shift into  
9 role rather than place, we can still be affected by the roles we choose  
10 and thus affect our research. It is easier to control for academic bias  
11 and researcher effects with research methodologies than it is to control  
12 for overzealous application of such controls due to personal  
13 insecurity as an insider, which I now think is a common feature of  
14 both mine and Luhrmann’s research. Jo Pearson once bemoaned to  
15 me her criteria, set by herself, as to what she can and cannot research  
16 within Wicca. I now wonder if my concern to create valid research  
17 in my own limited studies, to stand up to judgment, has been to the  
18 detriment of what I could have contributed to the bigger picture.

19 When I did my undergraduate project on conversion to Wicca, it  
20 was as a training exercise to create a psychological research tool within  
21 the overall framework of a quantitative experiment. I sent the ques-  
22 tionnaire to a set of respondents that could easily be replicated, from  
23 a popular, then well-published, gathering. Anyone of any religion or  
24 background could replicate my study. I carried on in my PhD with  
25 the same ethos, using snowballing from an open source and standard-  
26 ized qualitative interviews, so the work could be tested, replicated,  
27 or used in a meta-analysis of similar studies within or between reli-  
28 gions. I never used my personal contacts, though they were those of  
29 a key gatekeeper and I was using them at the time to help journalists,  
30 authors, academics, and seekers. Instead I created careful studies that  
31 had my elderly Witch friends somewhat amused, and Doreen Valiente  
32 gave me her press cuttings in case they would help. On reflection it  
33 is possible that all the time and effort I have spent engaged in aca-  
34 demia has directly contributed to a loss rather than a gain in knowl-  
35 edge about Paganism, as I could have preserved so much knowledge,  
36 wisdom and information from Gardner’s high priestesses, instead of  
37 setting up studies of A.N. Other Wiccan group that could be repli-  
38 cated by A.N. Other researcher.

39 17. Ann Taves, “Negotiating the Boundaries in Theological and Religious Stud-  
40 ies,” [www.religion.ucsb.edu/Faculty/taves/GTU-FinalLecture.pdf](http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/Faculty/taves/GTU-FinalLecture.pdf).

*Porous Boundaries Between In and Outside*

Pagan scholars use various terms to describe joint insidership of the academy and Paganism, and how they site themselves within both. Neither category is solely exclusive, with many levels of in/outsiderness in both. I see a constant interaction of academia and Paganism that is invisible to Pagans, and raises ethical questions about covert research. One Witchfest International I spoke at included three eminent professors in the audience. The last people at the Pagan Federation fortieth anniversary conference in London, apart from myself and the after-party organizer with whom I was staying, were two Scandinavian academics. This raises the old joke “How many Witches does it take to change a light bulb?” with the answer “None – the anthropologist will do it.”

Markus Davidsen writes emphatically against insider research, but has spent time in the Pagan milieu, with Wiccan gatekeepers assisting him, including promoting and attending (and thereby endorsing) a symposium on Paganism run by him.<sup>18</sup> He was given insider privileges, which he has never acknowledged. These gatekeepers were astonished to read his attack on academic Wiccans, and see it as a manifestation of him being more of a Pagan outsider than an impartial outsider looking at Paganism (pers comm).

*Inside, Outside and Upside Down*

Understandably there are Witches in academia who are not “out.” However, I struggled with a paper a neophyte initiate wrote that is complicated by their claim to be a complete outsider. The group they joined has demanded the community accepts its neophytes on equal terms with others’ first degrees, and thus I dispute their avowed outsidership. They may have taken a Luhrmann-oath, “as if” they were an initiate, but it still gives them full access to the community. Does their personal statement that they are an outsider mean I can “out” them in the interest of critical evaluation? Or am I bound by my own oaths to protect their identity? I feel that that this inverts the ethics, principles and practice of research. If the dichotomous insider/outsider paradigm has caused this behaviour it is proof that it is inappropriate for Pagan studies.

18. Markus Davidsen, “What is Wrong with Pagan Studies?” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 24 (2012): 183–99.

1            *Questionable "Critical Analysis" and its Negative Effect*

2    Some of the arguments against insider research seem to seek "power  
3    over," rather than share "power with." They presume that the out-  
4    sider is right just because they are a (rational, pure, unbiased knowl-  
5    edgeable) outsider, as opposed to an (irrational, contaminated, biased  
6    naive native) insider, even if the insiders are established research-  
7    ers and the outsider is a novice academic. Davidsen and Leon van  
8    Gulik both published "critical analyses" that appear to be driven by  
9    personal assumptions and emotions and which aimed to strengthen  
10   claims of personal detachment and reason. I have already commented  
11   on Davidsen in notes put on academia.edu for discussion at the Pagan  
12   Studies session at the American Academy of Religion 2013, which  
13   forms the draft of a future paper, and to which any constructive criti-  
14   cism is welcome.<sup>19</sup>

15    The tone and nature of Van Gulik's article reflect a misun-  
16   derstanding during his field work. He assumed a request to not  
17   attend a workshop was due to the intention of blocking his "out-  
18   sider" research, rather than about attendees not having given per-  
19   mission, nor expecting, their personal experience of bereavement  
20   to be used as research data. This raises the question as to how  
21   much academics respect the consent of the community studied,  
22   and how much they assume from having once completed forms  
23   for their university ethics committee. This feeds back into my  
24   earlier discussion about the relationship between academia and  
25   Wicca. Who has the authority to demand what? Why should an  
26   academic, particularly a self identified outsider to the community,  
27   assume that the purposes of their personal project should take  
28   priority over the individual and group purposes of practitioners?  
29   His paper also raises the issue of how a researcher responds to  
30   others who say "no." There will always be disappointments, and  
31   moments when research participants are not able to offer academ-  
32   ics what they desire. This brings us back to the applicability of the  
33   concept Graham Harvey has developed of "guesthood,"<sup>20</sup> with its  
34   recommendation of a mutual effort of respect, care, and a genuine  
35   attempt to understand.

36            19. Available at [www.academia.edu/5163312/Academia\\_edu\\_davidsen](http://www.academia.edu/5163312/Academia_edu_davidsen).

37            20. Harvey, Graham. "Guesthood as Ethical Decolonising Research Method,"  
38   *Numen* 50, no. 2 (2003): 125-46.

## Looking Forward

We live in very interesting times and are privileged to be working in a fascinating field. I am grateful to both Paganism and academia for enriching my life and giving me incredible tools for looking at the world around me and my place within it; these have led to my interest in much wider debate, in politics, policy and global humanity. I left school to try to make it as a show-jumper, looking at the world from between a horse's ears. I never thought I'd become a Witch, let alone a university lecturer, much less be invited to contribute to an edition like this. For me it is a journey that continues, and I know not where that will take me. I do not solely identify as a Wiccan—my life is wider than that—and it is only part of my identity and religious path; however, it is the one thing that everyone, from my neighbors to the academy, seems to want to hear about. I think the study of contemporary Pagan Witchcraft has only just scraped the surface of what it could be, and that academia can work in a very effective dialogue with scholars and practitioners. I hope that as Pagan studies progresses it will continue to strive for honesty and reflexivity, with all Pagans out of the broom closet, as their human right, and part of a wider ranging scholarly necessity. What I do know is that as Pagan studies grows it will continue to provide a vital view of contemporary religion, community, identity, and belief, and remain at the forefront of developing new resources for studying humanity and its dilemmas, drives and dreams in the twenty-first century; and I am be proud to be a part of this.

## Bibliography

- Aloi, Peg. "Review of *Trials of the Moon*." *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 12, no. 2 (2010): 263–69.
- Arweck, Elizabeth, and Martin D. Stringer, eds. *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study Of Ritual*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002.
- Barker Eileen. *The Making of a Moonie*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1984.
- Berger, Peter. *A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Blain, Jenny, Graham Harvey, and Douglas Ezzy, eds. *Researching Paganisms*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004.
- Davidson, Markus. "What is Wrong with Pagan Studies?" *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 24 (2012): 183–99. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/157006812X634881>.
- Davy, Barbara Jane. *Introduction to Pagan Studies*. Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2007.
- Harrington, Melissa. "Conversion to Wicca?" *DISKUS* (2000), <http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/harrington.html>

- 1 ——. "The Popularity of Paganism: Making Sense of the Census." *BSA Sociology of*  
2 *Religion Study Group, Study Day 2013; "Making Sense of the Census, The SocRel*  
3 *Response,"* 2013.
- 4 ——. *A Study of Conversion Processes in Wicca, with Specific Reference to Male Converts.*  
5 PhD thesis, London: King's College, 2005.
- 6 ——. "Wicca: Migration and Mutation of Nomenclature, Meaning and Affiliation on  
7 Modern Pagan Witchcraft." In *Religion, Migration, Mutation.* European Associa-  
8 tion for the Study of Religion, British Association for the Study of Religion and  
9 International Association for the History of Religion Special Conference, 2013.
- 10 Harvey, Graham. "Guesthood as Ethical Decolonising Research Method." *Numen* 50,  
11 no. 2 (2003): 125–46. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/156852703321506132>.
- 12 ——. "Pagan Studies or the Study of Paganisms? A Case Study in the Study of Reli-  
13 gions." In *Researching Paganisms*, edited by Jenny Blain, Douglas Ezzy, and  
14 Graham Harvey, 241–55. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004.
- 15 Heelas, Paul, and Linda Woodhead. *The Spiritual Revolution.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- 16 Hutton, Ronald. *The Triumph of the Moon. A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft.* Oxford:  
17 Oxford University Press, 1999. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/978019>  
18 [8207443.001.0001](http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198207443.001.0001)
- 19 Knott, Kim. "Insider/Outsider Perspectives." In *The Routledge Companion to the Study*  
20 *of Religion*, edited by John R. Hinnels, 230–70. London: Routledge, 2005.
- 21 Livezey, Lowell W. "Epilogue: The Ethnographer and the Quests for Meaning." In  
22 *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual*, edited by  
23 Elizabeth Arwick and Martin D. Stringer, 155–65. Birmingham: University of  
24 Birmingham Press, 2002.
- 25 Lofland, John, and Norman Skonovd. "Conversion Motifs." *Journal for the Scientific*  
26 *Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (1981): 373–85.
- 27 Luhrmann, Tanya M. *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary*  
28 *England.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.
- 29 Partridge, Christopher. *The Re-Enchantment of the West, Vol. 1: Alternative Spiritualities,*  
30 *Sacrilization, Popular Culture and Occulture.* London: Continuum, 2004.
- 31 Pearson, Joanne E. "'Going Native in Reverse': The Insider as Researcher in British  
32 Wicca." In *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual*,  
33 edited by Elizabeth Arweck and Martin D. Stringer, 97–113. Birmingham: Uni-  
34 versity of Birmingham Press.
- 35 Salomonsen, Jone. *Enchanted Feminism. Ritual, Gender and Divinity among the Reclaim-*  
36 *ing Witches of San Francisco.* London: Routledge, 2002.
- 37 Taves, Ann. "Negotiating the Boundaries in Theological and Religious Studies,"  
38 [www.religion.ucsb.edu/Faculty/taves/GTU-FinalLecture.pdf](http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/Faculty/taves/GTU-FinalLecture.pdf).
- 39 Tulley, Caroline Jane. "Researching the Past is a Foreign Country: Cognitive Disso-  
40 nance as a Response by Practitioner Pagans to Academic Research on the His-  
41 tory of Pagan Religions." *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*  
42 13, no. 1 (2011): 98–105.
- 43 Van Gulik, Léon. "Cleanliness is Next to Godliness, But Oaths are for Horses: Ante-  
44 cedents and Consequences of the Institutionalization of Secrecy in Initiatory  
45 Wicca." *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 14, no. 2 (2012):  
46 233–55.
- 47 York, Michael. *The Emerging Network, A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Move-*  
48 *ments.* Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995.