Introduction

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In 1993 the first international pagan studies conference was held, bringing together scholars from all over the world in fields as diverse as psychology, theology and ecology. In *Researching Paganisms*, published in 2004, Blain et al. cite multiplicity as central to the discipline of pagan studies, and note that just as contemporary Paganisms are still evolving, so are the methodologies and approaches of those who choose to study them. Popular music studies is one area in which pagan studies activity is only just emerging and yet, as seen in a pagan history of celebration and story-telling through music, it is a voice through which Paganism might be readily expressed. Indeed, as this book will presently explore, popular music has already proved a highly effective medium for the articulation of pagan ideology and aesthetics. A range of genres, from folk, through punk and goth to heavy metal frequently embody images and discourses drawn from paganism. Similarly, a number of popular music artists profess a deep seated investment in and expression of paganism and pagan identity through their music.

Depending on the interpretation, Paganism is a religion, worldview, way of life and even a human trait. This multiplicity varies according to modes of perception, reception, and dissemination and is represented in the range of topics represented in the chapters of this book. This multiplicity is also reflected in the range of readers this
book will appeal to: in the broad sense, it will be of benefit not only to those with an interest in Paganism and pagan studies, but will also raise questions for those engaged in studies of religion, particularly popular religion. As Catherine Albanese notes, “to suggest that religion is somehow implicated in the production of the popular is to nod toward that other thorny growth among academic problems regarding it – the meaning of popular religion.” (1996). The topic will evidently be of interest to those with an interest in popular music studies in general, however the subject raises interesting specific questions regarding intent versus interpretation, and of insider/outsider, emic/etic points of view or any combination of the above along that continuum.

By investigating a group of popular music practices and cultures from a pagan studies perspective, this book brings the two fields together in original ways that shed new light on both. It is intended that the readership of this book will be drawn from both pagan studies and popular music studies – indeed anyone with an interest in music and religion and how the two connect. Because of the diverse background of that readership, a short discussion of what we mean by Pagan, and where popular music fits into that context, would seem a logical starting point.

**Paganism**

The distinction between Pagan and Neo-pagan can be problematic, with the former sometimes used to describe pre-Christian Paganism, and the latter, reconstructions of that religion. Contemporary Pagans may however reject the ‘neo’ prefix as disconnecting Paganism from its past. In recognition of personal interpretations of these terms, for the purpose of this book, authors have been allowed to choose
whichever descriptor they feel most comfortable with. Other variations may also arise - Andy Letcher, for example, prefers pagan (lower case p) to refer to Pre-Christian paganism, and Pagan (upper case) to refer to contemporary practices, while neo-Pagan is claimed to be the US equivalent of the latter. York (2003) uses the term geopaganism to describe an unstructured, and somewhat unconscious, veneration of nature, characteristic of what he calls “folk religion. He differentiates this from recopaganism, which he describes as more deliberate attempts to reconstruct the rituals of a Pagan past, such as is exemplified by Neopaganism for example; both are contained within the broad Paganisms umbrella. York leans toward a fluid definition, noting that what we might recognize as Pagan identities in fact are sharing selectively from a common pool, a list of Pagan characteristics.

Primarily, Pagan identity is constructed as a continuation of a religious tradition which, while having been suppressed, sometimes violently, during its history, can claim a pedigree extending long before the advent of Christianity, and at least to the Classical era. However, the difficulty in studying – and defining – Pagan religions lies partly in the fact that they are not systematically organized on a large scale, but rather consist of smaller local, national and international networks, groups and organizations and also individual or sole practitioners, often networking through the Internet. Paganism is evolving, fluid, non-codified, and has no orthodox form; indeed Harvey (1997) suggests it is not an ‘ism’ at all, but rather a broad movement. How then might a definition of these Paganisms be expressed? Michael York proposes one definition: “paganism is an affirmation of interactive and polymorphic sacred relationship by individual or community with the tangible, sentient and nonempirical” (2003, p. 161). Harvey (1997) defines it as a “polytheistic Nature religion” and an
“ecological spirituality”. A theme of interconnectedness links both of these
descriptions, to which can be added animistic beliefs, polytheism and
anthropomorphism, and a reverence for tradition, antiquity and ancestry. To this
definition can be also be added the consistent expression of a veneration of ‘place’.
Paganism is rooted in the sacredness of place and, by extension, the divine in nature.
York lists as characteristics “polytheism, animism, humanism, magic, organic and
numinous qualities, pantheism or at least a quasi-pantheistic immanence of deity.”
(2003  p. 60)

Paganism is a term that encompasses pre-Christian European religions and many
contemporary Pagan religions such as Wicca, Heathenism and Druidry. Its revival
owes much to the ideologies of the Romantic era, through which nature was idealized,
the ‘peasant’ held up as representative of an idyllic lifestyle lived in harmony with
nature, and the ‘noble savage’ seen to be the connection to a utopia lost. Rousseau
himself theorized an ancient polytheistic, nature-based religion, which he believed
could be found again, offering an antidote to the ills of contemporary society.
Contemporary Paganism also owes much to the folklore revival of this period, the
folk, or people seen to have much in common with the idealized peasant. Folklore
has informed much Pagan ritual since. Because of its history, modern Paganism is
characterized by a blend of old and new practices, mostly Western, but also drawing
on Indigenous and Eastern belief systems. The Romans used the term *paganus* to
refer to rural dwellers, “people of place”, those whose customs and rituals were
intrinsically tied to their locality – and hence, to land. In English language usage, and
within the context of the Christian hegemony, the term has come to mean anything
from non-Christian to nonbeliever, and has often taken on negative or pejorative
connotations. This definition of Paganism is sometimes reflected in the ways many Pagans themselves construct their identity as oppositional to dominant Christian belief systems, by which some contemporary Pagans “have crafted a history for themselves that specifically links them to the marginalized and the oppressed.” (Magliocco, 2004, p. 187)

These kinds of binaries are however not useful ways by which to understand Paganism: this book is based on the concept of Paganism as more of a continuum - not a set of constructed beliefs that refer to nature, the earth etc. but arising from the point of view of the earth manifesting in various culturally specific contexts and which may be informed by phenomena held sacred to pagans such as land, place, and nature. In her book “Witching Culture” (2004) Sabina Magliocco describes how one Pagan community member describes Paganism as “somehow innate or essential, its seeds already present in childhood” (p. 57) and notes that “the idea of Paganism as something natural or inherent is common in the movement.” (p. 58) Viewed this way, Paganism can be seen more as something instinctual, a human condition, and therefore arguably more mainstream than might immediately be obvious.

Considering Paganism – and pagan studies - in this way removes the essentialising characteristics that problematise oppositional constructions of Pagan identity. By examining popular music and its practitioners through a Pagan ‘looking glass’, and from a pagan studies perspective, we can gain an understanding which not only emphasises commonalities rather than difference, but which offers new insights into the production and consumption of popular music which are not evident in current approaches. This means understanding people through their connections to land, or
place, the ways they interact with it, the way it informs their culture, not from an outside point of view, but rather from one of mutual understanding. It means understanding ‘others’ through the pagan lens of ‘feeling’ rather than the more distanced eye of observation and analysis, of being “in” the world of the music studied rather than “outside looking in”.

**Paganism and music**

As in many cultures, music plays an important role in Pagan practice. It is often the focal point of the many Pagan gatherings and festivals that occur throughout the world, some of which are specific music festivals. It can play a role in many aspects of Pagan ritual and is an important vehicle for the expression of Pagan beliefs. Pagan songs can express solidarity, or reinforce common Pagan beliefs. Magliocco gives the examples (2004, pp. 93-197) of "The Burning Times" (Charlie Murphy), the lyrics of which link European witches to Pagan religion, and describes their execution, usually by burning, as a “war against women” specifically by the Catholic church. That memory of the burning times galvanizes contemporary Pagans is the theme of “We won't wait any longer" (late Gwydion Pendderwen), in which Pagans are survivors, ready to “rise again and reclaim what is theirs.” It would be impossible to describe any one style of music which is specifically Pagan, and the diversity of Pagan music and music employed by Pagans is indeed representative of the range of music representative of popular music in general. That music is important to Pagan culture is however best evidenced through analysis of its presence in the one place that unites nearly all Pagans – the internet.
The internet provides a vibrant virtual community for Pagan practitioners, and in many ways has contributed to the growth of the religion, connecting likeminded people and offering “Pagan advocacy and support networks operating at both national and international level” such as the Pagan Federation, the Circle Network, the Lady Liberty Network and the World Congress of Ethnic Religions. (Strmiska 2005, p.45)

A survey of pagan music sites on the internet reveals the diversity of the ways in which music and Paganism intersect. At the time of writing (2011) a YouTube search of the phrase “pagan music” gave 545 hits, mostly original music from the English speaking world, although Russia and Lithuania also make an appearance. The search also resulted in some instructional and more explanatory videos. The same search on Google resulted in 178 000 hits, which contained a combination of blogs, forums, online stores and more regular websites, while a search for ‘Pagan radio’ resulted in 151 000 hits. A survey of these sites paints a telling picture of the importance of music to Pagan culture, while the variety of ways it is available and presented demonstrates the diversity of its membership.

*Pagan Music and Poetry* is one example of the kind of Pagan forum that offers members opportunities to discuss and share Pagan art and music. It is part of Tribe.net network of websites where members discuss topics of interest to them - this is part of a collection of “Tribes” dedicated to Pagan culture and is the one dedicated most prominently to music and the arts. It contains reviews, interviews and extensive forum discussions.¹ The *Pagan Dance Pagan Music Forum* is dedicated to a “love of spiritual dance, paganism, Wicca, drumming, inkubus sukkubus, and all other pagan music … “ and describes its target membership as those who are looking to find

¹[^1](http://pagansongs.tribe.net/)
spirituality through music and dance, with a focus on Pagan music. The majority of
the content is available to members of the forum only.  

2 The Pagan Wheel describes itself as “...all about Pagan Music” and is a blog dedicated to Pagan music of all kinds. It contains comprehensive forums and links, as well as CD reviews, musician and band profiles. It also contains announcements of Pagan music events and gigs.3

The Bardic Blog is the blog of Welsh musician, Damh the Bard. It includes entries describing the pagan music festivals and gigs in the UK that he attends as well as Pagan music articles of interest. What he describes as Wiccan and Druidic music is most prominent.4

While the above were examples of the ways in which Pagan music is discussed, its dissemination relies on site such as Folk Records, a traditional and Slavic, Pagan folk record label that offers free downloads of the bands on its roster as well as information on Slavic music and the pagan culture of pre-Christian Russia, including a description of the different prominent genres of modern Slavic music that uphold traditional Slavic culture and pagan spirituality.5 Arula Records is a distribution and record company, the site consisting of descriptions of the Pagan music they sell and the artists who make it, alongside a catalogue and online store.6 Serpentine Music Productions is a large Pagan music record label and distributor. The website is quite comprehensive and the Pagan Music Library section contains links to blogs and articles on Pagan music.7

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2 http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/PAGANDANCE/?v=1&t=directory&ch=web&pub=groups&sec=dir &sk=13
3 http://thepaganwheel.com/?p=7
4 http://damh.wordpress.com/
6 http://www.arularecords.com/
7 http://www.serpentinemusic.com/cgi/annehill/ps.pl?action=thispage&thispage=pagan.html&ORDER_ ID=417801548
an independent label based in Wiltshire, UK. The site contains a catalogue of its affiliated artists and various other information related to the label and its connected companies and artists.8

Related to online distributors of Pagan music, there are also sites which feature lists or collections of songs which in some cases can be streamed. The New Oral Tradition (Pagan Music Collection), for example, “Includes new and original pagan music by Willow Firesong and BarleySinger, along with pagan music of all kinds collected from the web and other sources”.9 Pagan Heart Music and Songs is essentially a collection of streamed Pagan songs (or songs that the site’s creator dubs as Pagan).10 Bardic Arts contains an extensive list of “song, chant, poetry and satire for the Pagan community”. When each chant or song is clicked on it brings up the lyrics and information about the song, and contains links to online sources for the song, chant or poem that one is viewing.11 Pagan Playlist @ Pagan Space is a Pagan community site where Pagans post their online playlists. This site contains comments on the playlists and a discussion forum.12

Other sites compile lists of links to various Pagan music sites on the web. Witchvox, or Witch’s Voice for example promises a “Pagan music...Celebration!” It is a large web-community that is dedicated to all things Wiccan. This site contains a list of links and essays discussing Pagan music, predominantly centred on the USA. It contains a link to Witch’s Voice: Pagan Music on the Net, which has a large list of links to individual Pagan artists which contains thorough information on all things Pagan and

8 http://www.maethelyiah.com/
9 http://members.tripod.com/~Willow_Firesong/PagMusic/index.htm
10 http://www.pagan-heart.co.uk/music.html
11 http://www.bardicarts.org/
12 http://www.paganspace.net/group/paganplaylist
has many sections dedicated to music and art.\textsuperscript{13} The Wicca Folk and Neo-Pagan Folk Directory is essentially a directory of sites and articles dedicated to music as described in it title. It also has links to sites that are not essentially Pagan or Wicca but are in some way linked to the aesthetic, such as sites dedicated to tribal music and world music.\textsuperscript{14}

Pagan music is also available via various online radio station dedicated to Pagan music. The Pagan Radio Network broadcast a range of music and spoken Pagan programs via the Internet. The program list includes A Darker Shade of Pagan, hosted by Jason Pitzl-Waters, a contributor to this book, which “looks at modern music from a unique spiritual perspective” across a range of genres.\textsuperscript{15} Pagan FM! Combines talk with music from pagan artists while Night Ritual “brings together chants from the various Gods and Goddesses from around the world”. Many of the various internet radio stations are tagged as Pagan, New Age, and world (for example) showing the crossover between these genres.\textsuperscript{16}

A survey of these sites reveals themes consistent with Pagan belief, both in lyrical content and website discourse, including, but not limited to, the reclaiming ancient ways, themes and deities as an alternative to the dominant paradigm of contemporary society, acknowledgement of the spirit in plants and animals, the sacredness of the earth, the cycle of Nature and the wheel of the year, polytheism, reclaiming the Goddesses (especially the ‘Earth Mother’), ancestor worship, inner divinity, and reclaiming one’s own ‘indigenous’ religion/culture or taking on the

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.witchvox.com/_x.html?c=music
\textsuperscript{14} http://psychevanhetfolk.homestead.com/WICCA_FOLK_and_NEOPAGAN_FOLK.html
\textsuperscript{15} http://www.paganradio.net/programming/shows/adsop/
\textsuperscript{16} http://www.paganfm.com/
perspective/mythology of other indigenous peoples.

It would be an impossible task to classify Pagan music, or even what is meant by the term, and the above is meant only to illustrate the diversity of music culture surrounding Paganism. This book does not set out to define Pagan music – it is not a book about Pagan music from a particular perspective, but rather a book that attempts to both complement existing understandings of Paganism through an exploration of some of the music that may be associated with it, and to propose new understandings of popular music through approaching it from a Pagan studies perspective.

Overview of the book

While the above overview has focused on the diversity of music that currently represents Pagans and pagan practices, the relationship between Paganism and music has a long history, not all of which is immediately obvious. The first section of this book explores three quite different ways in which this relationship has developed.

Andy Bennett explores a range of ways in which the 1960s counter-culture paved the way for the broader development and articulation of pagan beliefs through the medium of popular music. As Bennett observes, though a great deal of highly romanticized rhetoric has been created around the significance of the counter-culture as a medium for socio-political change, it is clear that, at one level the counter-culture did serve as a platform for greater awareness and tolerance of alternative forms of ideology, spirituality and aesthetic belief, many of which continue to manifest themselves in current popular music scenes and their associated cultural practices. As
Bennett argues, embedded within the counter-culture’s oppositional stance were ideas and practices clearly influenced by paganism. Notable here is the counter-culture’s back to the land ethos, as seen in the emergence of the commune movement and the shared earth philosophy that articulated itself at the green field sites of several counter-cultural music festivals.

Moving further back in history, Rupert Till explores the relationships between Stonehenge, popular music and Paganisms, and how Stonehenge became associated with popular music in general and “rock music in particular.” Till explores archaeoacoustic research through which he has looked at how the acoustic qualities of Stonehenge may have impacted on the experience of ritual and music within the circle of the stones, and argues that sound has played, and continues to play, an important role in Stonehenge’s ritual history. Both in prehistory and more recently, Stonehenge has been the focal point of gatherings at significant times in the earths’ annual planetary cycle, especially the equinoxes and solstices, and Till proposes that music and sound have helped it “to become an iconic representation of Pagan spiritualities.” Stonehenge has become linked to popular music culture through its evocation by musicians like the Beatles, Ten Years After, Hawkwind, Spinal Tap and Black Sabbath, and by the music festivals held at the site. Till concludes that such “links between the ancient and the modern, the sacred and secular, are an artefact of the impact of postmodernity upon religion.” It continues to be a “signifier of the interaction of popular music and paganisms in the popular imagination...a site outside of mainstream religious control for experiences that allow individuals to feel connected to past histories, to their embodied present, and to a sense of place.”
Donna Weston approaches history in a different way, approaching it not as something bounded by temporality, but as something constructed through memory. Bringing together theories of memory and place, Weston examines how a collective cultural memory of sacredness of place might find its expression in popular music, and argues that attachment to conceptual place is the expression of unconscious ‘rememberings’ of a Pagan past. Through analysis of a range of musical styles and practices, none of which are overtly Pagan, she draws on theories of place and of cultural memory to establish a framework within which references to place, and uses of space in popular music can be recontextualised as drawing on innate Pagan impulses.

Pagan Music, Genre and Style

While much Pagan music is defined by its lyrical focus and to a lesser extent its intended audience, rather than by style, there are nonetheless a number of genres which are explicitly linked to Paganism. This is the topic of the second section of this book. Deena Weinstein looks in detail at the sonic, visual and verbal aspects of several well-known Pagan Metal bands from various European regions, drawing conclusions about the importance of localized culture to the Pagan Metal scene and its use as a reaction to the perceived hegemonic tendencies of the European Union, a move against post-national deterritorialization (Europeanism) in Scandinavia, and a move towards reterritorialization (post-Communism) in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc. Weinstein classifies Pagan Metal according to three “clusters”: Neopaganism, which she describes as deriving from the same sources that informed Neopaganism and Wicca in the UK and USA, for example the work of Gerald Gardner and; ‘roots paganism’, which draws on pre-Christian religions, especially those of Northern Europe, and “chauvinistic paganism,” which Weinstein defines as a
group who sets itself consciously in opposition to any group that may pose a threat to one’s roots. Conducting an in-depth musical and paramusical analysis, Weinstein comes to the conclusion that Pagan Metal introduces identity politics into the culture of Metal.

British Pagan folk musician Andy Letcher focuses on the difficulty of truly defining current folk music as what it has come to stand for is now so closely intertwined with how it sounds. He posits that both the Left and Right have tried to claim folk music, with the Left utilising it as the authentic voice of the working class, and the Right as the voice of the folk, of tradition, and of the imagined past. Letcher is concerned primarily with these questions: “if we trace the folk tradition back far enough, don’t we come to an ‘archaeological’ layer that predates Christianity?” And: “Aren’t the origins of folk music, ultimately, pagan?” In this chapter, using examples of traditional song, Letcher broadly examines contemporary British folk music (in particular three modern Pagan folk music idioms ‘Pagan Folk’, ‘dark folk’ and ‘traditional folk’) in order to describe the three ways in which musicians relate to the “supposed” pagan origins of their craft and discusses their claim to folk music as a vehicle for the expression of religious identity.

Jason Pitzl-Waters defines Goth as a post-punk musical subculture originating in Britain,” which represented a romantic, decadent, and “inward-looking” alternative to the anger and nihilism of the wider punk scene. He argues that many Pagans, dissatisfied with the music and culture of the traditional Pagan communities, found a spiritual home in Goth music, eventually coming to constitute a third of the scene’s members. This “cross-pollination” of Goth music and Paganism would, by the mid-
1990s, result in what Pitzl-Waters refers to as a “darker shade of Pagan”, distinct enough to identify as a discrete "Pagan Goth" musical sub-genre.” Pagan Goths have now been absorbed by, and integrated into, the mainstream of modern Paganism. Pitzl-Waters explores “Pagan Goth”, Dark Wave, and other Goth subgenres through discussing the work of bands such as Inkubus Sukkubus, Sisters of Mercy, Dead Can Dance,"ethno-Gothic" Pagan bands, such as Ataraxia and Rhea's, and "darkwave" bands like Faith and The Muse, Unto Ashes, and The Dreamside.

As anthropologist Sarah Pike observes, “Neopagan identity is primarily expressed through music and dance” (p.5) and it is the performative relationship between paganism and music which is the focus of the third section of this book. Douglas Ezzy argues that the embodied performed aspects of religion make it “meaningful and transformative.” He explores religious transcendence and its importance in leading the individual into relationships, as well as the significance of shared beliefs and symbolic systems in providing frameworks of meaning and morality. Ezzy posits that deities, spirits, and ancestors are “significant beings” in relationship with humans and engaged with via ritual and sees the collective ritual of dance as a site for resistance and defiance as expressed by a seemingly marginalised group. The argument made in this chapter is that for Pagans in Australia, dancing to the music of Pagan bands creates a spiritual community in which individual transformation can occur. Ezzy focuses on dancing’s centrality in contemporary Pagan religious practice, generally through giving auto-ethnographic depictions of his own experiences at Pagan festivals and meetings and through descriptions of common dances such as the spiral dance. He concludes that dancing, as an embodied experience, is one of the primary sources of religious transcendence, secondary to dogma and narrative.
Graham St John draws parallels between eclipse (rave) festivals and Neopagan festivals, because of the emphasis of both on planetary cycles. He describes what he calls a cosmic nature spirituality which is expressed in these eclipse festivals, which he contextualizes through the three aspects of natural (geological), cosmic (astronomical) and social (festival) embodied by the festival and through mystical states of consciousness may be experienced. St John describes several ‘types’ of Pagan who are drawn to these festivals – Neopagans, those who actively construct their own kind of Paganism or revive older traditions and “geopagans.” Describing the eclipse festival experience as a techno-shamanic experience, linking the sensory world of physical sensation through dance to the transcendent experience of self, St John describes a “socio-sensual confluence” through which emerging forms of Paganism can be observed.

Staying in the realm of electronic music and dance, Adam Possamai and Alan Nixon also explore the concepts techno-shamans and altered states of consciousness, but do so in the context of what he calls Primordial Religious Experiences (PREs), and religious ecstasy in the rave scene. Possamai and Nixon explore the history of different subcultural movements within the rave scene, looking in detail at the history of Goa and the psychedelic dance music that emerged from the hippie communes set up there in the sixties by Westerners. This particular Goan brand of electronic dance music (EDM), which eventually morphed into the subgenre of Psytrance, is cited as the root of techno-shamanism. At its core this chapter argues that three “agents” are providing an interpretation of ecstasy in the field of EDM culture; these agents are the Neopagan, the Christian, and the secular (or mainstream), all of which provide “cultural and symbolic capital to this economy of ecstasy.” The authors also evoke
Mafessoli’s theories of neo-tribalism and relate them to rave culture, concluding that over the course of this discussion he has found that dance music participants, whether Pagan, Christian or secular, each sees the primordial religious experience induced in dance culture from a different perspective.

As seen in the short survey earlier in this chapter, music evidently plays an important role in expressing and supporting Pagan belief, and supporting a Pagan network. Christopher Chase explores this role in his discussion of the way in which religious communities have employed musical traditions as a medium for the transmission of different types of knowledge. He analyses the lyrics of a number of Pagan songs within the context of what calls “Pagan theologizing” and describes the central role that music plays in exploring the place and role of humans in the natural and social worlds. Chase frames his discussion within Mary Bednarowski’s (1989) concept of the “theological imagination” and focuses specifically on the role of music to explore polarities which locate the communal sense of relationship to sacred power.

Narelle McCoy explores a different kind of community – that which exists online. Focusing on the music of Irish singer and composer Enya, McCoy argues that the dissemination of Celtic mysticism via New Age web sites invites anyone who shares these core beliefs to identify as Celtic. She proposes that this New Age “cyber-diaspora” may be a reason for the popularity of artists such as Enya, who has tapped into this fascination with Celtic pagan mythology. This chapter explores the music of Enya as well as lesser known composers and performers who advertise and promote their music on New Age/Pagan websites under the banner of Celtic popular music.

Christopher Partridge describes a more underground, transgressive community, and
through it explores what he refers to as ‘occulture’. He explains that ‘occulture’ is a term most likely coined by Genesis P-Orridge, the founder of the experimental ritual magick network, Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth (TOPY). P-Orridge, the main subject of this chapter, is a musician, artist, occultist, and “self-styled ‘cultural engineer’,” best known for his projects COUM Transmissions, Throbbing Gristle, Psychic TV and Splinter Test, and Thee Majesty. Through these projects, Partridge finds that P-Orridge’s idiosyncratic experimental art, a blend of the audio and the visual, transgresses societal norms through its exploration of taboo themes such as sexuality, violence and death. Partridge discovers nothing of the typical Pagan in P-Orridge’s work and goes on to explore the dystopian, confrontational, decadent and urban nature of his particular brand of Paganism, one that subverts the hegemony and explores the darker aspects of human existence. P-Orridge is depicted throughout as an artist who is mainly concerned with Paganism as “esoterrorism” - a tool to subvert societal norms and religious hegemony.

**Conclusion**

Paganism expresses itself though popular music in myriad ways, often characteristically nuanced by the specific local socio-cultural circumstances in which popular music is produced and consumed. As such, this book cannot, and does not, profess to offer a definitive account of the intersection between contemporary paganism and popular music. Rather the aim is to offer a series of critical insights relating to key examples of the expression of paganism in popular music as these range across particular genres and / or the work of specific artists. In doing so, the book is also intended to broaden debates about Paganism and popular music that are
presently emerging in popular music studies and cognate disciplinary and multi-disciplinary fields. As with other modes of contemporary cultural identity that draw on pre-modern beliefs and practices, the study of Paganism and its expression through popular music enriches our understanding of the increasingly plural and postmodern terrain of everyday life and its cultural sphere.
References


