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**Gender, Reiki and Energetic Healing:
an Exploration of Holistic / 'New Age' Healing in Scotland**

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Abstract

Within this thesis I provide the first empirical academic study of energetic healing, Reiki and dowsing in central Scotland, with the focus of my research being on the teaching of energetic healing in workshops (the Salisbury and Westbank centres being key locations) and related textual material. This thesis is also a step towards addressing the historical imbalance of writing about New Age beliefs and practices from a predominantly androcentric positioning, as I place emphasis on exploring how gendered spiritualities may be actively constructed in this setting. For as Dominic Corrywright has stated “the web of New Age spiritualities is crucially sustained by the individual and collective weavings of women and this is particularly evident in healing and therapies” (2003:131).

I argue that women’s predominance in healing circles has a lot to do with personal projects of redefinition and self-transformation. This sort of ‘work on the self’ does not occur under, as radical feminists Daly (1991) and Sjo (1994) would state, overarching patriarchal paradigms. Rather ‘healing of the self’ is located within fluid “fields of force” (Foucault, 1980). Therefore throughout this thesis I build up a decentralised narrative of power and locate women as active healing agents. In order to construct this narrative I draw from research in the fields of Goddess and women’s spiritualities, for here we find useful evaluations of how women re-inscribe their bodies as sacred and empowered through, in the former, imminent ties to the Goddess. I relate my research to Meredith McGuire’s empirical study of healing in the American context, where she argues that “If the creation, maintenance and transformation of individuals gender identities are indeed among the foremost identity work to be accomplished, then extensive empirical

study of the many contemporary instances of gendered spirituality is very worthwhile” (McGuire, 1994:254).

Hence in the first two chapters of this thesis I engage with feminist and ethnographic theory in general. I argue that discourses of power are multivalent operating within academic, religious, bio-medical and holistic healing circles and at the individual level. For debates abound in relation to, for example, the prioritisation of text over experiential practice – the latter being central to New Age healing in Scotland. I introduce my location as a bothsider, an academic researcher and a practising healer as this positioning has raised its own particular set of theoretical and personal questions. And I draw in the aforementioned research in the parallel fields of Goddess and women’s spiritualities.

Chapter three engages with representations of “the body as energetic” at the micro ‘in the field’ level and is primarily descriptive. Within these pages I provide a picture of how the energetic body is discursively constructed hence providing some necessary background for later ethnographic material. In chapter four I also build on the previous chapter in relation to healing and curing models of health. I adopt Meredith McGuire’s analytical framework of healing types. In this way I can locate my narrative of women’s power and consciousness of healing into the debates between male dominated biomedical approaches to health and the apparently more egalitarian holistic (mind, body and spirit) approaches to the same.

Chapters five and six focus specifically on the healing practice and discourses of Reiki, this healing modality growing significantly in popularity in Scotland. I will propose that Reiki provides the practitioner with contrasting notions of “the healthy body” to bio-

medical and mainstream religious significations of the same and enables the development of empowered models of subjectivity “as healer”.

The technique of dowsing, which is explored in chapter seven, is regarded in healing circles as being a “visible expression” of intuitive practice. Hence learning to dowse appears to provide additional confirmation for women healers of their ability to work as more autonomous agents. For dowsing practice falls within the umbrella of earth mysteries or Gaian traditions, where the earth is seen to be a conscious, living, self-regulating entity and is identified with as the “Goddess imminent”.

In the final chapter I pull this thesis together as a whole and return to some of the questions asked in my opening material, noting my distinctive contributions to healing research as “a bothsider”. Throughout I acknowledge that my location as ‘researcher/healer’ is just as materially and politically located as are healers in the field. For I, as well as ‘the subjects under study’, operate within fluid fields of force. Overall, I place emphasis on evaluating distributions of power and the development of new liberating models of subjectivity in healing epistemologies.

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Gender, Reiki and Energetic Healing:
an Exploration of Holistic / 'New Age' Healing in Scotland

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Chapter One

Setting The Scene

Introduction

Within this thesis I will critically evaluate the development of new constructions of identity within the New Age¹ scene in central Scotland. I shall locate “gender as an analytical category” (Scott, 1986:1066) as the key underlying framework for this research. For while much academic material has been produced on the historical location, modes of participation and beliefs within New Age networks, the at best cursory, inclusion of gender is highly problematic. For it is precisely within these fields of contemporary spirituality that we find new ideals and alternatives to traditional gender roles with, for example, the re-sacralisation of the female body. This work is hence the first ethnographic study of gender, Reiki and energetic healing in Scotland. Emphasis has been placed on examining how participants are taught to heal in workshops in central Scotland - the Salisbury and Westbank Centres being important locations for this - and in evaluating how participants respond to learning new ways of being “as healer”. In order to support my ethnographic material I have drawn from various New Age textual literature, both historical and contemporary. Hence sources include, for example, workshop teaching manuals and texts recommended by healers. In this way I also hope to construct an understanding of the issues underlying healing practice.

¹ As I will discuss in Chapter Two, the term ‘New Age’ is problematic as Sutcliffe states, it would be misleading to accept the hegemonic (academic) view that the ‘New Age’ is a “homogeneous entity” or that it should be assigned “to a homogeneous cultural epoch or astrological era” (2003:9). Therefore I employ the term New Age while remaining sceptical “as to the reality it denotes” and locate it within implicit quotation marks throughout (cf, Levi-Strauss,1962:15).

The basic questions of my research on healing in Scotland are framed well by Meredith McGuire, for she has examined healing in suburban America. McGuire argues that,

If the creation, maintenance and transformation of individuals' gender identities are indeed among the foremost identity work to be accomplished, then extensive empirical study of the many contemporary instances of gendered spirituality is very worthwhile (McGuire, 1994:254).

Hence I shall relate my empirically researched fieldwork material on Reiki, energetic healing and dowsing to writers such as McGuire, while also drawing from feminist research in the parallel fields of Wiccan and Goddess spirituality. For in the latter we find writers such as Helen Berger (1999) and Wendy Griffin (2000) who have provided us with comprehensive evaluations of how women may form new and empowered, "healed", identities.

Overall I will hence examine how "the subjective and collective meanings of women and men as categories of identity have been constructed" (Scott, 1988:6) within healing circles and the relationship of these constructions to significations of power. This shall be located alongside an examination of feminist critiques of patriarchal structures and the relevance of these dialogues to 'contemporary spiritualities' and 'holistic health'.

I will argue that discourses of power and authority are multivalent operating within academic, religious, bio-medical and holistic healing circles and at the individual level. For example debates abound in relation to the prioritisation of text and the benefits of quantitative or qualitative approaches to academic research, while in healing circles,

some aspects of experiential practice also appear to be in tension with male textual reformulations of healing theology.

In general, I shall regard “healing” as being an aspect of popular religiosity – popular in that healers “adopt practices which may be at odds with the religious [and bio-medical] specialists’ views” (Thomas, 1995:37). For if one locates “healing” as such, then this should enable an examination of counter hegemonic discourses of identity and power. This is important in that healers at the grass roots level are predominantly female.

As part of this research I shall specifically examine the healing practice of Reiki and explore representations of the “energetic body”. I will also introduce the technique of dowsing, for this “intuitively based” medium appears to offer additional confirmation for healers of their ability to work as autonomous agents.

My personal position throughout this work will be that of a *bothsider*, an academic writer and practicing healer. Being a *bothsider* has, as we shall see, raised its own particular set of theoretical and indeed personal questions. For I have been changed by my experiences within healing circles as here we find Western science, rationality and objectivity being critiqued with regard to their appropriateness as interpretative frameworks. Yet this thesis is written for academic evaluation where, in part, “the empirical and logical rationality that defines knowledge as knowledge of fact’ is a rationality that is not hospitable to ‘the insights of art, religion, fantasy or dream” (Goulet citing Burrige (1960:251) in Young and Goulet, 1994:18). This means that tensions have arisen with regard to my own subjective positioning “as healer” and as academic researcher. However we would also do well to remember that academics do not sit in isolation cut off from the rest of the world. For as Paul Heelas has proposed, some academics show distinct signs of being influenced by spiritual assumptions and

experiences in the same way that some "New Agers ... write in ways which are hard to differentiate from the academic (1996:10).

My experiences of this "fluidity of identity boundaries" began primarily with my initiation as a Reiki practitioner. In learning to heal I entered a new world of meaning, a world where emphasis was placed on "sensing energy through the hands" and "trusting intuitive guidance" rather than 'seeing' solely within academic and scientific paradigms. I was taught to feel the metaphysical within the physical and to acknowledge that there are 'aspects of being' that reason cannot grasp.

Living in both worlds has hence been enlightening. For it is hard to write about "the feel" of doing healing work. Similarly, while a practical demonstration of Reiki would be readily acknowledged - and indeed expected - by a New Age audience, no such space is made within academic circles. One should therefore, keep firmly in mind the highly complex nature of sometimes competing, sometimes overlapping 'senses of self' and 'plurality of roles' and the relationship of the same to 'authoritative' discourse and practice.

Therefore throughout this work, my engagement with these sorts of tensions will be reflected in my choice of academic writers. In this chapter, for example, I draw from James Clifford as he asks important questions about the artificially constructed nature of academic text and the political positioning of the research traveller. And I introduce Talal Asad's critiques of the perceived authority of text over other expressive mediums such as music or dance. For as we shall see, in New Age networks such expressive mediums are highly favoured. Healing is an embodied experience.

Practical Matters

Primary sources: written material

I will review populist discourse within New Age textual material throughout this thesis. These will be drawn from a selection of books, healing workshop manuals and New Age web sites that promote holistic healing as part of various energetic cosmologies. Sites of reference for these include mainstream bookstores, alternative health shops, health fairs and complementary health events throughout Scotland. And I shall draw from academic evaluations of New Age, feminist, Wiccan and Goddess spiritualities.

Methodological note

It is important to appreciate from the start that within New Age networks (and on occasion within academic writing on this field of contemporary practice), there is a tendency to use terminology somewhat loosely. Religious, religiosity, religious-like, religious/spiritual philosophies, spirituality and spiritual are regularly intermingled by writers and practitioners alike. Indeed, it was only upon reading Meredith McGuire's 1994 paper on contemporary gendered spirituality that I came across the term "quasi-religious movements" (1994:273-87). The most significant point when we come to Scottish healing at least, is that "the spiritual" is generally regarded as being "personally experienced". "Religion", in turn, is generally regarded as being problematic in its institutionalised form as the location for dogma, patriarchal hierarchies and mediated access to 'the spiritual'. Hence throughout, I use the terms provided by writers or practitioners.

Ethnography

Throughout my fieldwork I have subscribed, as Paul Stoller has proposed, to the fundamental rule that even though I am going to research from the position of the “intellectualist gaze”, I also need to appreciate that “one cannot separate thought from feeling and action – [for] they are inextricably linked” (1989:5). I will therefore ground my theoretical research in descriptive ethnography. This should be a useful position to work from for, as we shall see in the ethnographic chapters, how people come to knowledge of “what it is to be a healer” is intimately tied to one’s embodied state and perceived connections with “all that is”.

It is my also my intention throughout this research to apply a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion so that I may ask, utilising gender as an analytical category, questions such as;

- ‘If New Age healers promote the balancing of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ elements within the individual, then who promotes this sort of standpoint and why? How does this relate to representations of the body “as energetic”?’
- If healers promote new forms of gender identity, how does this relate to “assertions of power, authority and privilege” (McGuire, 1994:284)?
- How do healees/healers form new conceptions of health and disease? How does this relate to reinscriptions of the body and discourses of power?
- Are New Age women engaged in a politics of reclamation with regard to healing practice and theologies of the same? How does this relate to the corresponding development of new and empowered identities “as healer”?

As mentioned earlier, when I ask questions such as these I shall keep firmly in mind the centrality of embodied experience within New Age discourses. For as the New Age body is socially constructed and trained through a diversity of practices from yoga to firewalking, an examination of its sensual responses and strategies for empowerment is essential.

Fieldwork context: Scotland

Fieldwork has been carried out primarily in 2000 and 2001. I was initiated as a Reiki practitioner at two weekend workshops in Dunfermline, the first in August 2000, the second in November of that same year. I continued to take part in monthly Reiki gatherings over the next eighteen months until these stopped with the 'retirement' of our Reiki Master. I met up with other practitioners until 2002 and still 'do' Reiki for friends and family.

In May of 2001 I also took part in a three day 'Reiki Techniques' workshop at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh (as described in Chapter Six). It was on this occasion that I gave out a brief questionnaire to the forty participants and received back thirty-three completed responses (see Appendix B). Follow up phone interviews were then carried out in May and early June of this same year with the ten respondents who had agreed to be contacted.

The Salisbury Centre was also the location for a 'Healing Circle' taught by Maureen Lockhart. I travelled to this one night a week for six weeks in the spring of 2001. It was also at this location that I participated in a 'Healing Through Consciousness' two-day workshop in the summer of 2001. Both of these events are discussed in Chapter

Three, as is my time at a 'Wholistics' weekend in Fife, held in the winter of that same year. Following the latter I also carried out interviews with five of the six participants

Time was also spent at the Westbank Centre in Fife. Here I "sat in" on a morning's 'treatment' of clients by the primary healer, John MacManaway, while also taking part in his 'Dowsing and Massage' two-day workshop in the summer of 2001. I followed this introduction to dowsing with a similar two-day workshop, this once more being held at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh. Specific information on these centres is provided at their respective chapters. I also visited numerous health fairs in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Dunfermline and have continued to keep in contact with healers in Tayside and Fife.

During this period of fieldwork I always informed participants of the general direction of my thesis – namely that I was researching healing from a gender perspective – though I did not explicitly voice my particular interest in multivalent discourses of power and representation.

However my journey into healing circles began several years before I commenced writing this thesis². For I, in similarity to many people encountered over the years of this research, had experienced bereavement, relational and health life crises. Personal dissatisfaction with the responses of mainstream religious and bio-medical approaches to my "life condition" led me to turn to a complementary practitioner. This first journey into the world of holistic health caused a shift in perceptions. For healers immediately

² I use the term 'healing circles' for two reasons. Firstly, it is a motif that is commonly used in the Scottish context. Secondly I am following Meredith McGuire in her usage of the term. For she proposes that healing circles tend to be held in members' homes and that they are commonly composed of people who believe that they "can gain power and control over their lives" (1998:26) through learning particular forms of metaphysical or psychic healing. She also observes that within such circles emphasis is placed on providing social and emotional support for members, with social interaction on a day-to-day level. This is very similar to practitioner behaviour in the Scottish situation, hence my adoption of the term.

linked “God” with practical benefits that would, or at least could, occur in “the here and now” and that I was a part of this process. Early questions put to me were...

“Do you believe in God”? and

“I can’t heal you unless you want to heal yourself. Is this what you want”?

For me, the possibility that one could actually assist one’s own journey back to physical ‘health and wholeness’ through re-connection with God was rather unexpected - though I had been brought up in the Christian church. And while I had been told by friends that Robin (the healer noted directly above), “does some wacky things like drawing runic symbols on to your belly” I was prepared to give it a try.

Over a period of the next four or five years I continued to visit various healers at some considerable financial cost and found that even when physical health was not an issue of concern it still felt empowering and exciting to visit - in my case - one particular healer in Edinburgh and ‘do’ past life regressions work and listen to narratives about “astral planing” and the “Ascended Masters” etc. To me this was a whole new world full of mystery and potential power. For I was told,

“You are now on a spiritual path. You have been a great healer...and could be again”.

“You do not need to go to university to study religions for you know all that is already”

Clearly I did not follow this last piece of advice!

Having personally engaged with and travelled along a “seekers’ path” before commencing this research, I knew the location of many New Age bookshops and I had spent time considerable time perusing the Mind Body and Spirit sections of mainstream bookstores. I was aware of the popularity of the “spiritual shopping” perspective where one could purchase crystals and incense, Buddhas and Ganeshas and place these in the home where they might be used in “spiritual practice”. However at this point I had not taken part in New Age workshops where one could actually learn to heal or dowse or where one could listen to emotional, narrated life stories of “what worked for me in my spiritual journey home”. It is to my experiences of these sorts of workshops that I turn in later ethnographic chapters.

As mentioned previously I have visited many Health Fairs in the towns and cities of central Scotland. Health fairs are an important feature of the New Age scene here. The main fairs are held in the spring and autumn of each year in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. Smaller events also take place in Scottish towns such as Perth, Stirling and Dunfermline on a similar basis. Over the last four years these have tended to be organised by the Body and Soul bookshop based in Stockbridge in Edinburgh. Here one will also find The Floatarium where one can “experience rebirthing” in a floatation tank or purchase crystals, aromatherapy oils or other holistic products.

At a recent Edinburgh fair held in the autumn of 2003, this event’s title had been changed from the “Health Fair” to the “Healing and Psychic Fair”. More space than usual (around fifty percent) was taken over by stallholders offering psychic readings. One could, for a fee of around twenty-five pounds, have one’s Goddess, African, Medicine or Celtic tarot cards read, try a session of Reiki or Indian head massage, and listen to talks and demonstrations on, for example, clairvoyance, psychic awareness, Reiki and “Connecting with your Angels in an Organic Way”. This shift towards a more

'psychic event' may have a lot to do with the fact that healing in general has become a much more accepted part of popular culture. For numerous New Age shops and healers in Scotland enable the seeker to pursue their own paths and contact healing practitioners in their own area.

This 2003 fair was however, very similar to events that I have attended over the last four years. For one found a mix of first time visitors and seasoned seekers, with white middle class women making up around seventy percent of visitors and stallholders. And as was also usual, visitors were able to collect pamphleture on workshops and centres in Scotland in general. These ranged from Lendrick Lodge Retreat in Stirlingshire, where emphasis is placed on residential workshops in yoga and holistic health, to individual healers across Scotland offering their services based on particular healing skills.

Throughout the years then, I have collected leaflets on many aspects of healing. I have learnt of the National Federation of Spiritual healers, who state that,

Spiritual healing is the channelling of healing energies through the healer to the patient. It re-energises and relaxes the patients to enable their own natural resources to deal with illness and injury in the best possible way...Healing can be given for any illness, stress or injury as a therapy which is completely natural, has no side effects and is complementary to any other therapy...It can be helpful...to a remarkable degree: indeed the medically diagnosed nature of the illness appears to be irrelevant to the outcome, and case histories range from the trivial to the terminal in which healing seems to have made an important, perhaps even overriding, contribution to recovery

(NFSH, 2000)

I have listened to talks on Herbalism, Reflexology, Iridology and Auric Cleansing. I have watched people experiencing "hands on healing" therapies with the NFSH above and have spoken with practitioners of Cosmic Healing and Sekhem. I have learnt of workshops and retreats in various centres in Scotland and have found out for myself what Experience Week was like at The Findhorn Community, spending a week there in the summer of 2001. This community, located on two sites near Forres, lists as its foundational purposes, a focus on spiritual education based on

- a) the belief that humanity is on the verge of a major evolutionary step which can be achieved through a change in consciousness, and
- b) that the essential truths of all the world major religions and spiritual philosophies are similar in nature (Walker, 1994:20).

Focus is also placed on cooperating with nature in all activities and building an eco-friendly community in support of this philosophy. Key emphasis is placed on "creating practical workable solutions that will sustain healthy spiritual communities and societies [worldwide], not to unravel dilemmas created by culture rooted in materialism" (Walker, 1994:21). While the currently accepted declaration for the Community is:

The Findhorn Foundation honours the divinity within all life through active service to God, humanity and nature to achieve individual and planetary transformation (ibid)

Hence in the above we find themes that resonate across New Age networks in Scotland. For as we shall see in later chapters, promotion of the philosophies that all life is spiritual and hence humans have possibilities for transformation to "higher levels

of reality” through “being healed”, which in turn will affect life as a whole, are commonplace.

However, it is also true that The Findhorn Community tends to draw its members, both short and long term, from England, Europe and America rather than from Scotland. Scottish seekers are much more likely to be found at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh, The Westbank Centre in Fife³ or at any of the other numerous locations where holistic healing ‘techniques’ are practiced and taught. It is perhaps the emphasis on learning particular types of healing in a weekend or evening workshop so that these can later be utilised at home for practical effect that are key drawing factors. For while emphasis is, at The Salisbury Centre, placed on the ability to transform one’s life, this goes hand in hand with ‘being healed’. Their brochure puts it in the following manner;

We believe [that this Centre] provides a valuable resource to anyone who would like to improve the quality of their life by becoming more internally conscious and aware”
(SC2: 2003 Brochure).

Long-term residency is also not the norm at the above two centres. For the wide range of courses and classes enable the visitor to pick and mix practices to suit particular stages in their life. These learnt skills are then taken back into the local community where circles of healing practice become located – frequented primarily by women. It was primarily for this reason that I chose to focus on the above two centres. These locations appear to be the starting point for many women in central Scotland on their way to “improving their life” in a holistic manner and in the forming

³ Fuller background to both of these centres will be provided in Chapters Three and Seven where I present fieldwork of workshops at these locations.

of circles of 'like minded' acquaintances. The Salisbury and Westbank Centres also appear to be so well regarded in central Scotland that they do not need to advertise at health fairs. Rather, past attendees spread news of their experiences to other men and women in a generally "why not go and try this...it worked for me" kind of format. And it was precisely this 'word of mouth' transmission of experiences of healing practice, which led me to one of the primary focuses of this thesis. For in nearly all of the locations I had visited, I kept hearing the same question. "Have you tried Reiki yet?"

Reiki is described by practitioners as being a healing practice that was rediscovered in Japan in the early years of the nineteenth century. It is highly popular within British and across American settings, with further groups practising in Japan, Europe and Asia. Therefore this seemed to me to be an ideal practice to focus on rather more extensively. My initial aims were to find out more about shared constructions of "how the world works" and look at how these ideas related to people's experiences of the actualities of healing practice; while also looking at the formation of gendered identities. In order to facilitate this research I have, for the last four years, spent considerable time within Reiki circles in central Scotland and have stepped sideways in New Age fields to learn more about auras, chakras and how one may dowse energetic pathways in order to obtain a visible picture of the state of the human body.

However before I begin to present ethnographic and literary material as found over these last four years (beginning in Chapter Three with healers' representations of the "energetic body"), it will be useful to locate this particular study of New Age healing and gender within larger methodological debates - as found in contemporary social and cultural anthropology. For as I observed at the beginning of this chapter the

theorists I have used engage with the politics of representation, ethnographic responsibility, issues of authority and the prioritisation of text.

James Clifford (1986) for example, argues that it is necessary to study people in fluid social and political cultural contexts where they engage in continual dialogues of power and representation. This positioning is of considerable relevance to this study of healing. For healers do live in a world where identity boundaries are blurred (as with, for example, my location as a bothsider). And healers do learn to represent their practices and beliefs in particular ways for particular audiences in decentralised relationships of power. Correspondingly Clifford (1986) provides us with a useful starting point in the representation of healing in Scotland. Talal Asad's (1986) examination of the prioritisation of text and the politicised nature of cultural translation fits well with the difficulties of representing healing practice in the written word. And Michael Agar's (1996) thoughts on ethnographic authority once more bring to the fore the disappearing line between the researcher and the researched.

This will be followed by a feminist critique of contemporary methodological issues drawn from the work of Henrietta Moore (1988) and Marjorie Woolf (1992). Specific feminist ethnography relating to healing in the parallel fields of Wicca and Goddess spirituality will be introduced in the next chapter. I will close this chapter by introducing feminist historian Joan Scott's (1986) 'gender as an analytical category' framework for this framework will be conceptually underlaid throughout this thesis as it fits well with Meredith McGuire's proposal that "analysis of gendered spirituality may shed light on new patterns of individual-to-society relationships, the changing nature of identity and autonomy in modern contexts, and how religion (in both traditional and new forms) shapes and reflects these changes" (1994:274).

Post Modernist and Feminist Methodology

James Clifford

James Clifford has brought into focus that writing texts is a central component of anthropological work. However he also argues that these texts should be examined not as transparent representations of immediate anthropological experience (1986:2). For these cultural accounts are of an artificially constructed nature as “there is no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation” (1997:19). Clifford locates himself as a historical critic of anthropology who focuses primarily on ethnographic fieldwork. I will draw to the fore here how Clifford describes ethnographic function and location as this will be of relevance when we come to feminist critiques of the location of power within male dominated humanities (and sciences) and respective ‘claims to truth’.

In *Writing Cultures* Clifford describes ethnography as an interdisciplinary phenomenon, which looks at varying cultural worlds while being “actively situated between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilisations, cultures, classes, races and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes” (1986:2). Clifford suggests that ethnography is part of these processes,

...for one cannot occupy, unambiguously, a bounded cultural world from which to journey out and analyse other cultures. Human ways of life increasingly influence, dominate, parody and translate, and subvert one another. Cultural analysis is always enmeshed in global movements of difference and power. However one defines it, and

the phrase is here used loosely, a 'world system' now links the planet's societies in a common historical process (1986:22).

As we shall see throughout later chapters, Clifford is absolutely correct in this assertion. For with regards to New Age healing, practitioners in these fields are influenced by historical processes and events in other cultures and do incorporate, subvert and parody 'other' human ways of life in global networks, with varying representations of power and difference. Hence science may be mixed with philosophy and psychoanalytical thought synthesised with meditative practice - with corresponding (perceived) disruption of power bases.

Talal Asad (1986) also addresses the inter-linking of human society in a global network. In accord with Clifford, he proposes that the study of societies, civilisations and culture is now firmly located in inscribed textual discourse. He argues further, that the prioritisation of text as the dominant medium of social anthropology has a lot to do with how "the notion of language as the precondition of historical continuity and social learning 'cultivation'" (1986:141) became the predominant perspective. It is also important to note here that this western emphasis on textual discourse also enables the omission or silencing of women who transmit knowledge orally and/or within demonstrations of embodied practice. Of course questions also need to be asked in relation to the power of the 'oral' or 'physical' tradition over inscription. For as we shall see in Chapter Five, Reiki historically "was made into an oral tradition" when it arrived in the West, with predominantly women initiates being obliged to memorise symbol and practice and maintain secrecy of healing techniques at all times. But let us return to Asad.

Asad is concerned with the anthropological production of cultural translation, which, he suggests, has become “an accepted part of the self-definition of British social anthropology” (1986:143). For as constructions of text form a central part of ethnography, this text should as accurately as possible portray the functions and intentions of a particular discourse, or set of practices, concepts or beliefs, in a particular context prior to these being translated into the ethnographer’s own language. Asad’s concern is whether the ethnographer should act as translator and critic at the same time for, he proposes, the ethnographer writes up his/her translation of a particular culture with a specific authoritative audience in mind.

Both Clifford and Asad have drawn our attention to the interrelationship of ethnography with discourses of power and representation. These relate to the ethnographer, the group or culture the ethnographer is ‘studying’, and to the professional body for which the ethnography is written. For example this thesis is written for an expert academic audience grounded in the study of religion, hence its primary focus is to inform that audience of New Age discourses regarding healing, power, gender and representations of the same. What it does not set out to do is to specifically promote New Age healing, though as I have stated earlier, I have learnt how to ‘do’ healing work myself as part of this research process. However the primary aim of this particular piece of work is to fulfil academic criteria for objective and ‘neutral’ methodology. Therefore the ethnographic study itself becomes part of a power dynamic of academic approval influencing (to some extent), the content of research.

But let us consider a further proposition made by Asad. Asad moves from a critique of the power dynamics of textual translation to an evaluation of whether text is always the most effective medium for the translation and interpretation of other cultures. He suggests that in certain circumstances, expressive performative mediums such as

music or dance might be better suited to this task, these being “productions of the original [alien form of life] and not mere interpretations: transformed instances of the original, not authoritative textual representations of it” (1986:159). Yet, he ponders, will a medium other than text be acceptable to an anthropological audience? For as social anthropologists are trained to translate other cultural languages into texts, seeing “culture as text” rather than “culture as practice”, then alternative expressive mediums may not be regarded as authoritative in their own right (1986:161). Here Asad shifts his focus slightly to examine the specific medium of power - the written word - for it is through this medium that culture as text is re-presented to its audience. And if we relate Asad's concern with the efficiency of text to this research on New Age healing we uncover a particular set of difficulties.

For within New Age practice there is considerable emphasis on personal experience and the expressive mediums of dance, touch, music and movement. Within this framework of alternative practice, text is not necessarily seen to be the primary medium of expression - though obviously it is of considerable interpretative value to this expression - with bookstores in central Scotland carrying large amounts of material relating to all aspects of ‘the holistic life’ and spiritual pursuits. However within New Age practice and indeed within some of these bookstores, material can be accumulated through all the senses. There may be music to stimulate, artwork to soothe the eye or inspire, and incense to burn - the body is penetrated as the senses engage in the total New Age experience.

Yet, Asad informs us, it still remains the case that the ethnographer's translation or representation of a particular culture is inevitably a textual construct (1986:163). Hence this research will, while accepting that text will be the final medium for representation, proceed from a position wherein the senses of smell, touch and sound

are deemed to be as important as sight. For as American anthropologist Paul Stoller argues,

Vivid situations of the sensoria of ethnographic situations have become largely overshadowed by a dry analytical prose. In problem-orientated ethnography, data – excluding in large measure the non-visual senses – are used to refine aspects of social theory... Lost on this dry steppe of intellectualist prose are characterisations of others as they lead their social lives (Stoller, 1989:8).

I will therefore, throughout this work, remain aware of the difficulties of representing practices such as healing faithfully, while acknowledging that I am constrained by an academic emphasis on textual representations of 'knowledge' which I have internalised.

I am going to raise here one further point Asad makes in his critique of British social anthropology's modes of cultural translation. Asad informs us that representations found within ethnographic textual constructs cannot normally be contested by the people to whom they are attributed, and that as scientific text these representations eventually become a privileged element in the potential store of historical memory. Hence for Asad the process of cultural translation is "inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power - professional, national and international" (1986:163). This is of particular relevance to this study of healing. For feminist critiques of the discipline of social anthropology have identified historical male bias, with "the neglect and/or distortion of women and women's activities"(Moore, 1988:11). In the contemporary setting, this bias still affects funding and topics of research – a point made by Griffin in relation to Goddess spirituality.

However, in this research the issues of power and representation do not relate exclusively to the realms of academia and its interpretation of New Age healing. For there is also representational tension between mainstream religions, bio-medical approaches to health and New Age holistic ways of being which one could usefully examine in much greater depth, particularly in relation to paradigmatic claims to 'truth' by these particular perspectives. Overall then throughout this thesis, I shall align myself with Stoller's proposition in *The Taste of Ethnographic Things* that his aim is to "...illustrate the benefits of grounding theoretical ruminations in descriptive ethnography. In this way theory-science is *not* repudiated, but is reduced to a non-reified tool which can help to unravel the tangled cultural mysteries of other societies" (1989:9, emphasis original)⁴. But let us return for the moment to James Clifford's concern with the production of cross-cultural ethnography.

I mentioned previously how Clifford relates to the difficulties of representing the shifting other against an equally transient self, these both being bound up in socio-political constructs. Clifford informs us that while historically the 'anthropologist as author' represented the other from the perceived position of white textual authority, twentieth-century ethnography is now produced cross culturally. Here authority may shift to allow the relocation of the western anthropologist as other. But Clifford also stresses that once we view the world as a shifting intermingling mass of cultures, wrapped up in "local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, one needs to focus on hybrid cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted native ones" (1997:24). Hence the ethnographer/anthropologist conducts fieldwork in a local

⁴ Stoller wrote the *Taste of Ethnographic Things* in part as a response to writers such as James Clifford and George Marcus who "...have cast a critical doubt on anthropological and ethnographic praxis... [for, Stoller suggests] ...This body of work has forced anthropologists to consider the representation of others as a major disciplinary problem. This writing, however, often suffers from discombobulation. Critical writers consider the rarified problems of philosophy and aesthetics in the human sciences with limited reference to real people in real situations" (1989:9).

cultural group and travels in and out of the field on a daily basis, where “the research traveller exists in a politicised prior relation to that of the people under study” (1997:67). Clifford's suggestion that “we may find it useful to think of the field as a habitus rather than as a place, a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices⁵” (1997:69) is, I feel, appropriate. For by utilising this perspective the social body of the ethnographer becomes a part of the ethnography as it is constructed, where the researchers own experiences of gender, race and sex and indeed emotion cease to be marginalised (Clifford, 1997:70).

However, closeness to the field or the subject matter of ethnography may present its own set of difficulties. If the ethnographer is viewed, or views him or herself as an insider in a particular community, then how does s/he contend with the necessity of making distance between subject and ‘objective research material’? Clifford argues that,

Criteria of objectivity associated with a detached outside perspective are strongly represented in the academic and government milieus that control resources. Thus, sociocultural anthropology will remain under pressure to certify the scientific credentials of an interactive, intersubjective methodology (1997:89).

One response that would fit well with Stoller's earlier espousal of the merits of using science and theory as a non reified interpretative mediums in ethnographic accounts - and holding a *bothsider* position - comes from Jean-Guy Goulet. He argues in *Being Changed* that,

⁵ This point is also made by Judith Okely who states that as people migrate, become refugee or live in multicultural cities, it is no longer adequate for anthropologists to equate a specific culture to a specific habitus (1996).

...the ethnographer's experiences of another lifeworld ought to be viewed for what they are, namely viable tools of research... [For] to be one with others in their society, in an ethnographic dialogue, one must become, at least to some extent, a competent member of that society (Goulet, 1994:19-20).

Therefore as a "bothsider" - a healer and an academic researcher - I have tried as much as possible in the ethnographic chapters of this thesis to portray emic accounts while keeping my voice in the background. Where my voice does come through in relation to my perceptions of doing healing 'work', I acknowledge that it may be similar, but is not identical, to others in the field. Hence I am in accord with Okely when she states that "the extent to which autobiography can be written into ethnography is a matter for creative experimentation and is appropriate for the anthropological endeavour" (1992:24). For I am no different from many others that journey into the worlds of healing practice. I am a woman, I live in Scotland, I am a mother, I work, and I am influenced by the world around me.

Of course, the sorts of issues I have described above also relate to Michael Agar's perspective on ethnographic responsibility. Agar informs us that "new ethnography" deals with issues such as the link between "ethnographic detail and political economy, new questions about ethnographic authority, the puzzling blend of different ethnographic and 'other' identities, and the disappearing line between emic and etic" (1996:3). He proposes that the 'new' ethnographer should regard the political and personal circumstances of those 'under research' as fluid contexts that intermingle with historical context in a world with constantly shifting and blurring edges. Hence it is no longer adequate to study a group of people as if they exist in isolation from the rest of the world. Rather, groups should be seen as having some common meanings and contexts, connected to some higher level of understanding that in turn has something

to do with (in my research situation) healing in the New Age (1996:12). From this perspective the ethnographer researches not just the local context of group practice and belief, but also “a variety of ‘found’ data from several different locations, all of which have become ‘local’ with reference to the ethnographer, but most of which aren’t local with reference to each other” (ibid). The ethnographer then places these various pieces of material “into a pattern that elucidates their interconnection” (1996:13).

And this is where Agar suggests that ethnographic responsibility and authority become important. For as the ethnographer builds up a picture that makes explicit the ties that link different members at each location, it is his or her responsibility to make these apparent to group members for open evaluation and “quality control” (1996:14). Further, as the ethnographer requires the help and collaboration of key individuals within the group who help to “co-author the study”, then ethnographers must acknowledge these “local teachers” and, “the roles that local colleagues play and not use their [researcher’s/author’s] power over the final product to conceal them” (1996:16). Hence Agar promotes the controlling of the ethnographer’s own authority as central to new ethnographic research, a point also made by Asad who states “in order for [anthropological] criticism to be responsible, it must always be addressed to someone who can contest it” (1986:156).

We find here that we have almost come full circle. Earlier in this chapter I observed that my research was specifically written for an expert body of religious studies scholars, rather than for the promotion of New Age healing in itself. However I also noted that even though this research was for a particular body it might as a secondary result encourage involvement in New Age healing practices. It was then proposed that a possible solution to the emic/etic debate would be to utilise Goulet’s positioning which allows the researcher’s voice to come through along with, rather than ‘over’

participants' accounts of New Age practice. For as anthropologist James Spradley argues, "Rather than *studying* people, ethnography means *learning* from people (1979:3, emphasis original).

Feminist Ethnography

A common theme throughout this chapter has been the acknowledgement that issues of power and authority are central to anthropological research. This research for example, is a first step in addressing the academic under-representation and silencing of women engaged in New Age practice in Scotland – particularly as women make up around seventy percent of participants. For power operates at all levels of 'received knowledge' and is a particular concern for feminist writers. Marjorie Woolf, for example, proposes that

The feminist's sensitivity to power as a factor in all our research, and our enhanced understanding (through political struggle) of both the ubiquity of gender asymmetry and the deep roots of male privilege, should make us even more cautious about postmodernist 'reforms' than other social sciences (1992:135).

For Woolf, the fact that the male dominated sciences and humanities "accepted reservoirs of knowledge (and the source of power for centuries)" now considers itself ready to "modestly reconsider the partialness of their truths and the ambiguities in the construction of their knowing" (1992:135) misses a rather fundamental point. While these postmodernist writers engage in the 'new' field of self-reflexive critique with its central issues of power and representation they overlook the fact that this 'new' position has come directly out of feminist critiques (ibid). Yet, she proposes, though feminist work engages critically with similar issues to postmodernists, "Feminists who

have only recently gained some academic security might think carefully about whether intense reflexivity in their research and writing will be evaluated as being in the new post-modernist mode or simply tentative and self-doubting" (Woolf, 1992:135).

Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen propose, in their critique of postmodern anthropology, that while both feminism and postmodernist anthropology "assume a self-consciously reflexive stance toward their subjects, there are significant differences between the two" (1989:23). For feminist anthropologists would address themselves to women's experiences and examine the interrelationship of these experiences to questions of power and struggle, this in turn defining their research goals. This stance would lead "the feminist scholar to design projects that women want and need" (Harding cited in Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen, 1989:23). However Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen state that though the potential of postmodernist anthropologists "with their mandate for self-reflection...is the capacity to decenter experience" (ibid) these anthropologists with their literary emphasis aim to expose power relations in ethnographic text - and then leave these imbalances as static facts. They argue that

Ultimately the postmodern focus on style and form, regardless of its sophistication directs our attention away from the fact that ethnography is more than 'writing it up'...[therefore] politically sensitive anthropologists should not be satisfied with exposing power relations in the ethnographic text, if that indeed is what the new ethnography accomplishes, but rather should work to overcome these relations (1989:33).

If we return to Woolf we find that she also questions the postmodern concern with representation, responsibility and the improvement of research methods. Does this concern, she asks, really extend to the field, or is it solely engaged with "different

(better?) ways of writing ethnographies" (1992:136). Do postmodern ethnographic authors, with their 'new' concern for responsibility still miss the fundamental point that the end result of their research should be communicable? For, she suggests "Experimental ethnography so obscure that native speakers of English with a Ph.D. in anthropology find it difficult to understand, is written for a small elite made up primarily of first world academics with literary inclinations" (1992:138). Hence some of these postmodernist writers, with their exclusive/excluding written material "contradict the ostensible purpose of experimental ethnography, to find better ways of conveying some aspect of the experiences of another community" (1992:138). If she is right in this assumption, then what does a feminist position have to offer to the field of ethnographic research and in particular this study of New Age healing?

For Henrietta Moore, feminist critiques in social anthropology and ethnographic accounts are not so much about the absence of women in texts, but rather how these women have been historically represented. So once again issues of representation are brought to the fore. Moore states that from the 1970s, with the arrival of the new 'anthropology of women', a three-tiered male bias was identified. Firstly, researchers import their own biases into fields of research in relation to "expectations about the relationship between women and men" (1988:2), hence men are seen (or are expected to be) controllers of cultural information and also as more accessible for research. Secondly, many societies have an inherently held view/bias in that "women are considered to be subordinate to men" (ibid) - this then being reported to the anthropologist. And thirdly, when researchers observe this sort of asymmetry they assume this to "be analogous to their own cultural experience of the unequal and hierarchical nature of gender relations in Western society" (ibid).

Moore argues that once the feminist anthropologist has deconstructed and corrected these layers of bias, the next problem to arise was that all anthropologists were also heirs to this sort of sociological tradition and that "adding' women to traditional anthropology would not resolve the problem of women's analytical 'invisibility': it would not make the issue of male bias go away" (1988:3). Hence problems lay at the analytical and theoretical levels, which must be reworked and redefined. "Feminist anthropology [is about] confronting the conceptual and analytical inadequacies of disciplinary theory" (Moore, 1988:4).

Feminist anthropology is more than the study of women. It is the study of gender, of the interrelationships between women and men and of the role of gender in structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems and political structures (Moore, 1988:6).

However Moore also argues that it is necessary to distinguish between the anthropology of gender and feminist anthropology. For while the former relates to "the study of gender and its cultural construction" (1988:188), the latter standpoint studies "gender as a principle of human social life" (ibid). Hence feminist anthropology must be distinguished "from those frameworks of enquiry which study gender or women from a non-feminist viewpoint" (ibid). And yet, she argues, this feminist anthropology is much more than women studying women. For as there is no such thing as a universal category, 'woman', neither is there a 'monolithic patriarchy'⁶. Correspondingly, the feminist anthropologist must not assume that patriarchal structures are the same 'the world over' but rather examine the specifics and nature of such structures in specific contexts (1988:189). And this is precisely why I am, in this thesis, going to develop a

⁶ A point I shall come back to in relation to radical feminist Mary Daly. For Daly does argue that patriarchy is monolithic underlying all 'systems' of the world.

decentralised narrative of power in relation to healing in Scotland. I intend to build up throughout, based on specific empirical evidence, a picture of how constructions of 'gendered spiritual identity' are developed and represented and the relationships of these to experiential practice. For all of these 'identities' are intimately tied to power and perceptions of authority. And I shall keep firmly in mind the "political and theoretical complexities of trying to speak *about* women, while avoiding any tendency to speak *for* them" (Moore, 1988:191, italics original).

For Henrietta Moore then, feminist anthropology has played a crucial role in the development of theories that examine the cultural construction of gender and gender identity (1988:187) and have promoted the importance of deconstructing the categories of 'woman' and 'patriarchy'. Similarly, feminist anthropologists emphasise that women experience their lives in different forms according to historical and sociocultural setting, race and class. "Lives are shaped by a multiplicity of differences, differences that may be perceived categorically but are lived relationally" (Moore, 1994:20).

In the final analysis, the contribution of feminist anthropology to contemporary feminism is simply to point to the value of comparison and to the importance of acknowledging difference... The justification for doing feminist anthropology has very little to do with the fact that 'women are women the world over' and everything to do with the fact that we need to be able to theorise gender relations in a way which ultimately makes a difference (Moore, 1988:198).

Moore's ideas, above, bear similarities to feminists in other fields of research. Feminist historian Joan Scott, in her *Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis* (1986) states that concern for gender as an analytic category only arose in the late twentieth

century “at a moment of great epistemological turmoil” (1986:1066), where there has been some shift from scientific to literary paradigms in the social sciences encompassing (at times), the blurring of genres of enquiry. For Scott, this is also the time when feminists find allies in scholarly and political circles and where feminist theory and the development of the same are of great importance.

Scott also cites Michelle Rosaldo, who states that “It now appears to me that women’s place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does, but of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interaction” (1986:1067). This is an interesting point and one worth reflecting upon as we progress through this ethnography of healing. For, I will argue, ‘doing’ healing work and ‘being healed’ *does* have a direct effect on “women’s place in human social life” (ibid).

Scott further proposes that, following on from Rosaldo, in order to provide a meaningful explanation of women’s place, we must look at the nature of interrelationships between individuals and social organisations and appreciate that these relationships are often unequal and “discursively constituted in social ‘fields of force’” (1986:1067). For,

Within these processes and structures, there is room for a concept of human agency as the attempt (at least partly rational) to construct an identity, a life, a set of relationships, a society with certain limits and with language – conceptual language that at once sets boundaries and contains the possibility of negation, resistance, reinterpretation, the play of metaphoric invention and imagination (ibid).

This statement is also of considerable relevance to this study of healing. For as we shall see, women healers do develop new identities, become part of new social circles and 'work' as active healing agents even if at times they appear to be constrained within male theological superstructures. And women healers do resist some theological representations and reinterpret these to suit their own particular 'ways of being' – this, for example, being related to Goddess spirituality.

Scott, like Moore, emphasises that feminist historians should now be willing to theorise their practice and that gender should hold a central part in this theorisation. Her position when defining gender as an analytical category is that gender is, as it has been historically, a way of signifying relationships of power. Therefore any change in social relations will lead to corresponding changes in representations of power (Scott, 1996:1068). This she suggests can be seen in (a) culturally available symbols and representations of women; both embodied and in mythology, (b) normative concepts that interpret and constrain symbolic representations of women, (c) gendered relations in kinship circles; which encompass political and economic issues, and (d) subjective identity.

I would argue then, that the use of feminist methodology as introduced above - where emphasis is placed on the culturally and historically constructed nature of gender difference - will allow us to examine how gender difference relates to other forms of perceived difference within New Age healing circles. For as we shall see, New Age healing ontologies are also drawn from many cultural and religious traditions. Each of these has its own historical 'baggage' in the form of, for example, dogmatic positioning and hierarchical forms. Hence when healing practitioners draw from particular authoritative New Age textual frameworks my etic (academic) voice comes to the fore in this thesis and evaluates how practitioners are using and representing these in

healing practice. For, I would propose, all discourses within New Age healing circles are ultimately to do with power, be this the power that heals, the power to heal, or being healed.

Chapter Two

The New Age

Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that if we are to build up an accurate and comprehensive picture of healing thought and practice in Scotland we must locate gender, representation and power as central elements of this project throughout. For as we shall see, healers are taught 'the truths' of particular ways of being which incorporates not just their healing practice, but also "the socialising of emotions and bodies" (McGuire: 1994: 273). I have also flagged up the difficulties that may be found when practices such as healing are represented in the written text and how this relates to authority. And I have noted my initial observations of the tensions that may arise from holding a bothsider perspective in relation to the blurring of emic and etic boundaries, the representation of healers' voices and 'writing up' of healing as sensual practice.

In this second chapter I will open with a review of academic literature relating to the fields of New Age thought and practice. I am particularly concerned to identify here, how various writers have interpreted the historical sources for the constructions of 'new' identities in New Age networks. With this background in place, we may move forward to examine how this specifically relates to healing practice in Scotland and multivalent discourses of power. Correspondingly I have gathered material from several key theorists, all of whom seek ways of defining the New Age. Authors include Wouter Hanegraaff who "makes a philosophico-literary case for considering New Age to be a modernistic restatement of a neglected current of Western religiosity, namely

'esotericism'" (Sutcliffe, 1998:19), while Paul Heelas proposes that the New Age's roots lie in assorted historical traditions and that "...[his] primary concern is to explore the New Age as a cultural and practical resource employed in everyday life" (1996:5) - emphasising the theme of self-spirituality. Most certainly the New Age is a cultural resource. For underneath this 'umbrella term' we do find individual teachers and groups providing a plurality of options for redefinition of the self and new (and supported) transformed identities.

I incorporate Stuart Rose's gender related findings from his dedicated survey of New Age participation, for Rose has provided us with one of the few quantitative surveys in this field. As such his material provides a useful starting point for my own evaluative research. I draw also from the writing of Steven Sutcliffe, utilising for example his motif of the New Age seeker. For even though this term is not explicitly used by practitioners in the Scottish context, implicitly it is the way that individuals engage in self-transformation.

Research in the fields of Wiccan and Goddess spirituality will also be introduced here for as noted earlier, emphasis is placed on 'transforming the self' and becoming healed and whole. This material will also assist in this project of rewriting women back into the diverse fields of contemporary spirituality. Overall, then, I will continue to build up a decentralised model of gendered power relations in New Age circles.

The New Age

Within the New Age – this term primarily being of academic construction – one finds an enormous diversity of beliefs and practices. Seekers in this field may pick and choose from a wide diversity of 'spiritual options'. They may participate in classes in

meditation or sacred dance, try out fire walking as a transformational technique related to self development and learn healing practices where crystal dowsing or “angel guidance” might be promoted as ‘additional tools’ to spiritual growth. The seeker may go on retreats or workshops with titles such as “Soil, Soul and Society”, “Universal Healing Dimensions” or “Voice, Spirit, Roots”⁷ to learn how to “connect with sources of energy deep in the body” or explore “...a new trinity which integrates the personal, the social and the natural”⁸.

However, as part of this particular evaluation of New Age healing in Scotland, I will also be reflecting upon how models of gendered spirituality are developed. By taking this positioning I hope to interpret how gender affects issues relating to agency and the applicability of a decentralised narrative of power within healing circles. I will commence this project by reviewing some of the academic material surrounding the New Age’s characteristics and its historical location. To this end I will draw from the writing of Wouter Hanegraaff, Paul Heelas and Steven Sutcliffe.

Wouter Hanegraaff

Hanegraaff proposes in *New Age Religion and Western Culture* that although the term New Age is a poorly defined label meaning different things to different people, it is the defining of its boundaries rather than its core that is problematic (1998:9). This point is of interest in that it is precisely this fluidity of boundaries that allows for active engagement in the development of new ‘senses of self’. For women, this is of particular significance in that they are not constrained in totality under patriarchal organisational structures or by normative doctrines.

⁷ These particular workshops were all run at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh in the autumn of 2000.

⁸ As found in (SC2: 2003).

For Hanegraaff, the New Age movement is primarily a product of modern Western industrialised society, the roots of which are commonly recognised as being found in the 1960s counterculture. "Indeed, many of the concerns which can still be found in the movement of the 1980s and the early 1990s were present already in the 1960s" (Hanegraaff, 1998:10). He states that while the early alternative movement was dominated by adolescents rebelling against the values of the older generation through a commitment to politically left wing radical action, this form of behaviour was no longer characteristic of the New Age by the 1980s (with a shift from awaiting the New Age to acting as if it had already come).

In general, Hanegraaff uses the term New Age in relation to "*a movement which emerged in the second half of the 1970s, came to full development in the 1980s and is still with us at the time of writing*" (1998:12) [italics original]. He employs this time demarcation due to the differing nature of the movements as "social entities" (ibid), rather than in relation to their beliefs. For while the 1960s movement was radical, politically motivated and used drugs to alter awareness, the mid 1970s movement eschewed drugs, was little motivated politically and appealed to people of all ages⁹ (Hanegraaff, 1998:11). Accordingly Hanegraaff divides the New Age into *sensu stricto*, New Age in a restricted sense and *sensu lato*, New Age in a wider sense.

Sensu stricto

Hanegraaff informs us that, "The New Age *sensu stricto* has survived as a rather clearly recognisable part of the New Age *sensu lato*" (1989:97). This New Age

⁹ This point is worth keeping in mind and may be related to healing practices such as Reiki.

sensu stricto has its roots in the 1950s UFO cult groups, these groups having strong apocalyptic beliefs. In order to elaborate on these apocalyptic beliefs, Hanegraaff draws from the writing of New Age author David Spangler. Spangler describes the apocalyptic belief system as being one where the earth and its inhabitants were perceived to be entering a new astrological Age of Aquarius. In the transformation to this New Age, materialism and corruption would be swept away despite the resistance of many materialists. This sweeping away would occur through natural causes such as earthquakes, floods or by man made events such as war or economic collapse. However at this time,

those individuals whose consciousness could become attuned to and one with the qualities of the new culture would be protected in various ways and would survive the time of cataclysms and disasters. They would then enter a new age of abundance and spiritual enlightenment...in which guided by advanced beings, perhaps angels or spiritual masters or perhaps emissaries from an extraterrestrial civilisation whose spacecraft were the UFOs, they would help create a new civilisation (Spangler in Hanegraaff, 1998:95)¹⁰.

For Hanegraaff, the late 1950s UFO cults were a kind of “proto-New Age movement” (1998:96), for in the 1960s, these proto-movements developed into alternative countercultural movements such as the Findhorn Community in Scotland. The general perspective of this community, as voiced by one of its central figures, David Spangler, was that rather than being aligned with an apocalyptic worldview, it was possible to work towards creating a New Age now. Hence communities such as Findhorn should proclaim that the New Age had already arrived “in spirit if not in form” (Spangler in

¹⁰ This sort of perspective may be seen on websites such as www.alienation.com which describes itself as an “on line community for Wanderers, Star People, Star Seeds, Star Children, Walk-Ins, Light Workers...[and for] people that have come to realise that they are on a different spiritual level from those around them...Wanderers can be earth nature or ET”.

Hanegraaff, 1998:96). This perspective would allow for anyone to “cocreate with that spirit so that the form [would] become manifest” (ibid). This leads Hanegraaff to propose that the proto-New Age and its 1960s developmental counterculture offshoots like Findhorn are typical of the New Age *sensu stricto*, for here emphasis is placed on trying to live “as if the New Age had already come” (1998:97). He also suggests that typical for this New Age *sensu stricto* “is the absolute centrality of the expectation of the New Age of Aquarius, [where] all activities and speculation circle around the central vision of a new and transformed world” (1998:97)¹¹.

Hence groups such as the Findhorn¹² community are primarily rooted in England where Theosophy and Anthroposophy are traditionally strongly represented. However, Hanegraaff also proposes that the expectation of actively ‘bringing in’ the new age “has remained a clearly recognisable part of the New Age *sensu lato*” (Hanegraaff, 1998:97).

Sensu lato

For Hanegraaff, the New Age *sensu lato* (as found from the mid 1970s) “has a comparatively strong American flavour and has been profoundly influenced by the Californian subculture. Here, Theosophical and Anthroposophical influences are not particularly prominent. Instead the influence of typically American movements in the

¹¹ For a fuller exegesis of the New Age *sensu stricto* with its intermingling apocalyptic and millenarian perspectives see Hanegraaff (1998/98-103).

¹² As I have noted earlier, I have found that within Scottish New Age circles, the Findhorn community is perceived as rather ‘alien’ to ‘native’ Scottish participants. Or, as Steve Bruce rather cynically puts it, rural centres such as Findhorn have been founded, funded and maintained by members who come from cosmopolitan, south-eastern England and Europe, for these “recruits” wish to “get back to nature and acquire cheap property which can be used to generate income through hosting workshops and residential conferences” (1995:114).

metaphysical and New Thought¹³ tradition is strong" (1998:97). Hence rather than the New Age *sensu lato* having its roots solely in the occultist worldview of modern theosophy, it emphasises "the typically American Harmonial Religion¹⁴ of the New Thought variety in which the psychological component is of fundamental importance" (1989:518). Within this tradition, the emphasis on the sacralisation of the psyche, or psychologisation of the sacred is, Hanegraaff suggests, clearly a product of the secularisation of society as a whole (1998:495). However, Jacob Needleman provides us with an interesting perspective on this psychologisation.

Needleman proposes that contemporary religion has forgotten its instrumental function. This forgetting has affected the church clergy as much as their congregations, resulting in the young becoming disillusioned with religion, leading them to turn to modern psychology (1970:18). Needleman develops this argument by proposing

What modern psychology offered as an improvement of human life was precisely that quality of life which drove men originally to the instrumentalities of religion, the only addition being the conviction that this was the highest quality of life one could realistically expect. Religion was dismissed as an illusion – and indeed the religion which psychologists dismissed was perhaps illusory because it has *forgotten its practical function and had lost its instrumental forms*. Thus psychology became more effective than religion which, pursuing the same goals as this new science, was

¹³ Hanegraaff states that the New Thought tradition was derived from mesmerism and mesmeric healing. It emphasised the potential linking of psychology and religion, and referred to psychological theories that sacralised psychology such as those of James and Jung et. al. This ideology in turn became integrated into the New Age belief that we create our own illness through our mind. This perspective can be seen in many current New Age publications on self-healing and is a commonly held perspective in healing practice.

¹⁴ Harmonial religion engages predominantly with the American 'trend' of psychologising the sacred or conversely, sacralising psychology. Hence from this perspective it was perceived that the empirical, scientific investigation of the psyche, would verify religious belief, and that religion could be explained in psychological terms (Fuller cited in Hanegraaff, 1998:495).

hampered by outworn beliefs and rituals (1970:19, italics mine).

However, Needleman also suggests that as 'man' perceived that mainstream Christianity had lost its instrumental potential, and saw the sacred becoming psychologised in a secularising Western society, he 'as seeker', to coin Sutcliffe's motif, became "...vulnerable to correction by the religions of the east" (1970:21).

We have here a typical example of "woman" being collapsed into the generic "man". This sort of androcentric positioning assumes that the generic 'masculine' automatically includes the 'feminine' and that therefore there is little need to study women's experience. Of course as Gross also argues, for this assumption to be correct there would need to be no culturally specific sex roles (1996:pp18-19). Hence while Needleman's book is a still useful representation of religious experimentation in California, his lack of inclusion of women's voices causes it to be unbalanced. For when one knows – as indeed Needleman must – that it is women who predominate in healing circles, then to silence them in his text in this way appears to be a typical example of methodological distortion. It is precisely this sort of "silencing of women" that I and feminist writers are trying to address.

However, in relation to Needleman's point that Western man became vulnerable to correction by 'Eastern' religions, Wouter Hanegraaff would add that this would only occur in so far as Oriental ideas and concepts "could be assimilated into already existing western frameworks" (1998:516). Either way, the end result has still been the same. For as I have found in my fieldwork, 'Eastern' philosophies, concepts and practices are central threads that run throughout Scottish New Age circles.

Hanegraaff also proposes that

All New Age religion is characterised by a criticism of dualistic and reductionist tendencies in (modern) western culture, as exemplified by (what is emically perceived as) dogmatic Christianity, on the one hand, and rationalistic/scientific ideologies, on the other. It believes that there is a “third option” which rejects neither religion and spirituality¹⁵ nor science and rationality, but combines them in a higher synthesis. It claims that the two trends which have hitherto dominated western culture (dogmatic Christianity and an equally dogmatic rationalistic/scientific ideology) have been responsible for the current world crisis, and that the latter will only be resolved if and when this third option becomes dominant in society” (Hanegraaff, 1998:517).

This characterisation of New Age ‘religion’ as *cultural criticism* is, I would argue, pertinent to this particular study and appears (in varying degrees) to be in accord with my research findings within Scottish New Age circles. For here practitioners do critique materialism, dogmatic religion and aspects of bio-medical treatment. I shall engage with these points more fully in relation to specific healing practices as described in the ethnographic chapters of this thesis. For the moment however, I will close this brief overview of Hanegraaff’s historical location of the New Age, by noting his use of Colin Campbell’s concept of the “cultic milieu”.

¹⁵ One should note here the problematic nature of the terms ‘spiritual’ and ‘religious’. For these are used rather loosely in the New Age movement. Hence Hanegraaff’s inclusion of both of these terms mirrors New Age practice. However one should note also that though Hanegraaff categorises New Age as a *religion*, there are many within this umbrella term that, though incorporating elements of particular religions in their spiritual (non-institutionalised) practice, would not regard themselves as religious *per se*. Rather they draw elements of Eastern religious or Native American practice such as meditation or trance to enable personal spiritual development. Perhaps one useful way out of this quandary might be to use Charles Lippy’s ‘popular religiosity’. Popular religiosity “appreciates individual blends of belief and practice without claiming that any one mix is normative. Religiosity accepts what people think and do without *a priori* judgements as to whether a specific belief or practice is really religious or not” (Lippy, 1994:9). The key point here is that people construct their own worlds of meaning, incorporating beliefs, practices and symbols in order to feel empowered. Or as Marylyn Gottschall puts it in her use of Lippy in relation to Goddess worship, “Religiosity, as opposed to religion is concerned with a spirituality that lies beyond the boundaries of institutional religions. Because the power of the sacred is often domesticated and constrained by the institutional and doctrinal structures of organised religion, Lippy sees popular religiosity as an attempt by ordinary people to reclaim access to the power of the sacred (2000:65).

The Cultic Milieu

Campbell proposes that the 'cultic milieu' is a constant feature of society and that groups within this environment all share a common position as "heterodox or deviant items in relation to the dominant cultural orthodoxies" (Campbell, 1972:121). Hence they also promote a general ideology of mutual sympathy and support for those groups that attack orthodoxy and promote individual liberty of belief and practice. And they receive "a great stimulus from the presence of the mystical tradition" (ibid) in that this tradition emphasises that unity with the divine can be achieved through a variety of paths as it "tends to be ecumenical, super-ecclesiastic, syncretistic and tolerant in outlook" (Campbell, 1972:122-123).

These points are of relevance as within Scotland, where women predominate in healing circles, it is commonplace to form egalitarian networks which resist patriarchal forms of gender roles as found in traditional, institutionalised religion.

Hanegraaff overlays Campbell's concept of the cultic milieu to the historical development of the New Age *sensu stricto*, noting that post 1975 "the New Age is synonymous with the cultic milieu having become conscious of itself¹⁶ as constituting a more or less unified 'movement' (1998:17). He argues that at this time New Age adherents began to recognise their similarities with other alternative groups. "As a result, they began to refer to this milieu as a movement, and began to perceive themselves and others as participating in this movement...[attempts also being made in the late 1970's to]...reflect on and define the central concerns of the New Age

¹⁶ This "becoming conscious of itself" appears to be rather similar to Bourdieu's 'habitus'. For Bourdieu "the habitus is, most simply, the set of habitual dispositions through which people 'give shape and form to social conventions'" (Bell: 1992:79).

movement considered as a whole” (1998:17).

For Hanegraaff, Campbell's concept of the cultic milieu is relevant to the New Age movement in that the “vagueness” (1989:16) and “fluency” (ibid) of the New Age “strongly suggest cultic tendencies” (ibid) and that as the New Age transcends specific religious boundaries it allows for a malleable inner space, wherein groups can be formed, develop, disappear and be reformed anew. While rightly pointing out that there are New Age groups that do not fit this concept, Hanegraaff still states that “it is natural to conclude that the New Age is either synonymous with the cultic milieu or that it represents a specific historical stage in the development of it” (ibid).

Several issues arise with regard to Hanegraaff's use of Campbell's ‘cultic milieu’ taxonomy. Hanegraaff proposes that “people on a wide scale began to recognise the existence of the cultic milieu”, which they referred to as “a movement in which they participated” (1989:17)¹⁷. I am unhappy with the use of the term “cult”, for this frequently conjures up popular negative media images of brainwashing or ‘deviant’ sexual activity etc., even if the term used sociologically has differing connotations. For in the latter manner, ‘cult’ refers to “a loosely knit group organised around some common themes and interests but lacking any sharply defined and exclusive belief system, each individual member is the final authority as to what constitutes the truth or the path to salvation (Bruce on Troeltsch, 1995:19).

I am also uncomfortable with Hanegraaff's description of the New Age as a movement, because there is considerable friction within Scottish healing circles regarding “truth” and efficiency of practice - a huge area of debate in New Age scholarship in its own

¹⁷ We will examine an alternative model to Campbell's ‘cultic milieu’, as proposed by Steven Sutcliffe later in this thesis.

right. Having said that, I can also appreciate why Hanegraaff continues to use this framework, for he also states that for Campbell, "...it would appear as if the organizational form most typical of the cultic milieu is not the cult but the 'society of seekers'" (Campbell in Hanegraaff, 1998:18). Perhaps the most constructive application, then, of the 'cultic milieu' or 'society of seekers' to the Scottish context might be in relation to New Age healers' critiques of conventional bio-medicine and mainstream dogmatic religiosity. For within healing circles people do seek out 'new' forms of health care and spirituality, which they then tailor to suit their own particular life circumstances. It is also common for these same people to meet up regularly so that they can share their experiential accounts of healing practice with like minded others. And while I have not heard in Scottish healing circles that practitioners regard themselves to be 'deviant', they do in general have particular responses to the 'unenlightened' mainstream society as a whole.

For example, in the early stages of research for this thesis, I approached one of the principal healing practitioners at the Westbank Healing Centre in Fife, John MacManaway. In an informal meeting he told me that he was quite used to being regarded as 'weird' by those who subscribed to conventional bio-medical and religious positionings. However, John also informed me that this perspective also changed noticeably after a person had participated in an event at their centre, such as firewalking. This appears to be the case. For subsequently, having interviewed several of John's 'patients', there does indeed appear to be a shift in positioning from sceptic to 'adherent' once a debilitating physical condition has been improved or reduced. This applies equally to many practitioners of Reiki who have experienced positive benefits initially and have gone on to learn to heal themselves. However, as I will be devoting some considerable space to ethnographic accounts later in this thesis, and will return

to issues regarding “shifting of perception” throughout, I shall move on here to an appraisal of Paul Heelas’ historical location of the New Age.

Paul Heelas

Heelas is in accord with Hanegraaff when he asserts that some New Age roots lie within ‘older’ religious traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism or Sufism, or in pagan or American Indian cosmologies. This does appear to be the case. However one might well ask questions here with regard to such reifications. Are Heelas, Hanegraaff (and, as we shall see, some key male Reiki writers) engaged in a continuing project of androcentrically constructing knowledge? For where are the women healers and other significant women in these accounts? Where are, for example, “women of the Goddess”?

Heelas also proposes that within all of these diverse beliefs and practices “one encounters the same (or very similar) *lingua franca* to do with the human (and planetary) condition and how it can be transformed” (1996:2). However, he also suggests, as I have noted earlier, that considerable rivalry exists between various practices and traditions as “adherents of particular paths not infrequently think of themselves as better than those engaging in other (possibly very similar) activities” (1996:17). Yet even having acknowledged this potential for rivalry, he still titles his 1996 book *The New Age Movement* on the grounds that “the term ‘movement’ simply refers to the assumption that humanity is progressing into the new era” (1996:7). I feel that even with this shift of emphasis Heelas’s categorisation is problematic. For to ‘label’ all those engaged in the New Age as a ‘movement’ due to the general belief in humanity’s progression ‘to a new era’ tends to minimise the huge variety of individual

epistemologies that exist within such a blanket generalisation – even if they do share some significant features such as “the energetic body” or beliefs in “spirit guides”.

Heelas also categorises New Agers as perennialists, this viewpoint enabling them to search experientially for the hidden esoteric core of a particular traditional belief system while by-passing any dogmas and doctrines as ego driven. This perspective also allows the New Age adherent to maintain self-authority as “the truths within the traditions and the New Ager are the same...[and that] the same wisdom can be found at the heart of all religious traditions” (1996:28/9)¹⁸. This point is of relevance to the Scottish context and particularly relates to my argument for a decentralised narrative of power. For as we shall see in Chapters Five and Six, tensions do arise within Reikian healing circles in relation to the perceived authority of specific male theological superstructures and their relationship to grass roots practitioners who eclectically and democratically “pick and mix” ‘practical techniques’.

As Heelas (1996) is primarily concerned with the contemporary New Age movement, he begins his examination of its development within the nineteenth century. At this time the Theosophical Society was highly influential, as was its later offshoot the Anthroposophical Society founded by Rudolf Steiner (1996:45). Heelas informs us that three key figures arose from this era; Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), Jung (1885-1961) and Gurdjieff (1866-1949). Blavatsky founded the Theosophical society. Jung has had enormous influence on the New Age with regard to his expositions on the psyche, ‘the inner child, dream therapy, and counselling from a holistic framework, while Gurdjieff was “the person who has done the most to introduce and emphasise transformational techniques” (Heelas, 1996: 47) with a corresponding shift from

¹⁸ This viewpoint is very similar to that held by the nineteenth century Theosophical Society, this being a major influencing factor on the contemporary New Age.

“writing and reading to practicing spiritual disciplines” (ibid). Hence Heelas proposes that by the 1920s much of the repertoire of the current New Age was in evidence.

He proposes that the 1950s interest in self-spirituality formed the basis for the 1960s counter-cultural Age of Aquarius, communities such as Findhorn and the Human Potential Movement (the latter focusing on psychological methods of stripping away the outer layers of experience to find the authentic self within). As during the 1960s, there was also great interest in a wide variety of ‘traditional’ spiritual teachings, at this time spirituality and psychology became intertwined into the basis for many current New Age therapies. This intermingling appears to be very common in Scottish healing circles and we shall come across specific examples of this in Chapter Three.

Heelas proposes that after the 1960s, there was less of an emphasis on dropping out by joining communes, in favour of incorporating personal spiritual development into everyday life. However, this did not bring about the demise of counter-cultural perspectives. Instead of joining communes on a full time basis, those seeking spiritual awareness continued to work in mainstream society, while taking part in activities that were counter cultural, in that they promised experiences which were not nurtured by capitalist modernity. These experiences emphasised the importance of detachment from the ego in order to reveal the spiritual realm (1996:54).

For Heelas, those involved in the ‘quest’ for new relationships with the earth/others outside of a materialistic perspective can be regarded as part of “new social movements who, while being of a broadly secular (humanistic, naturalistic) variety, have a New Age wing: spiritual environmentalism, ecofeminism, and healing, for example” (1996:56). These movements outlived the counter-cultural era of the 1960s by stressing the importance of fulfilling one’s true potential through personal

experience of the 'inner self as spiritual'. To this end, numerous courses, events and activities could/can be participated in which "enable participants to experience alternatives to what the mainstream is able to provide, most teaching the importance of going beyond the ego" (1996:57)¹⁹.

However Heelas informs us that one of the most noticeable developments of the New Age over the last twenty five years has been the proliferation of groups that offer courses and seminar training where "detachment enables participants to experience their spirituality, the depths of their nature as human beings. And this serves to unleash potential, including the ability 'magically' to obtain results" (1996:60). Put alternatively, these groups offer training in 'harmonial spirituality' "where the unconscious has the function of restoring harmony between the individual and an immanent spiritual power" (Fuller cited in Hanegraaff, 1998:483)²⁰. Heelas states that 'reaching your full potential' training seminars, are provided by organisations like 'est', (Erhard Seminar Training²¹, founded in America in the early 1970s). He also notes that groups such as 'est' have been at the fore of establishing courses that apply spirituality to business practice (which he classifies as the prosperity wing of the New Age). Here, emphasis is placed on developing a better relationship with 'the Self', which in turn will lead to greater fulfilment and personal/company prosperity. Hence for Heelas, one of the most noticeable developments of the post 1960s counter-culture has been the growth (most noticeably in the United States), of harmonial prosperity practices²².

¹⁹ For a listing of some of these "spiritually informed ways of becoming an authentic person " see Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, (1996:57). I will be noting throughout fieldwork whether/how gendered constructions of 'authentic' models of subjectivity are promoted.

²⁰ For a fuller examination of the American types of spiritual psychology and the role of the unconscious see Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* (p483-496) and Robert Fuller, *Americans and the Unconscious*, 1986).

²¹ See Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, (1996:58-67).

²² This emphasis on prosperity is of course not unique to the New Age, as 'prosperity' has been a part of most religions and a visible way of signifying power to its adherents.

I will return to Heelas' work shortly, for his interpretation of the New Age foundational 'self-ethic' is of considerable relevance to this work on the development of new gendered identities and relations of power. However, in order to complete this initial appraisal of the historical location of the New Age I shall move on to introduce Steven Sutcliffe's work in which he promotes the role of the New Age seeker. This may also provide us with a rather useful alternative model to Campbell's 'cultic milieu'.

Steven Sutcliffe

Sutcliffe argues that the role of the seeker is central to New Age phenomena, that "seeking" is not exclusive to the New Age but has been constitutive of 'alternative' religiosity since the mid-nineteenth century and that "the largely post war career of New Age is but a comparatively recent development in what amounts to an alternative network of seekers and experimental religiosity. Thus New Age can neither be understood outwith the historical context of modernist alternative religiosity, nor in isolation from the seekers who advocate it" (1997:97).

For Sutcliffe, New Age seekers are carrying on a behavioural tradition of individual personal religiosity. Hence rather than seeing the New Age as a movement it is better understood as "a populist collectivity: a cluster of seekers affiliated by choice - if at all - to a particular term in a wider synchronous and diachronous network of religious alternativism" (1997: 98). This New Age collectivity, he continues, has its roots in apocalyptic and millennialist expectations where since the 1930's, adherents have subscribed to the ideological viewpoint that "humanity is on the threshold of a New Age, an immense cultural shift analogous to the Renaissance which will dramatically augment human power in the context no longer ethnic or national, but global - even cosmic - in scale" (1997:98). However, he also correctly informs the reader that from

an emic perspective, few would see themselves as New Age. Rather “individual choice dictates usage of, or affiliation to, the term, as one might indeed expect from a phenomenon popularly received as a prime example of contemporary religious individualism” (1997:101).

Sutcliffe also argues that there is no totalitarian rejection of mainstream religiosity within New Age circles, for “strong strain[s] of neo Christian piety and mysticism have flavoured the arena...[rather]...the stance is less one of being ‘at odds’ with Christianity than with the hegemony of ‘institutional religion’”. (2003:12). This leads Sutcliffe to provide an alternative working definition of ‘popular religion’ as other than solely, criticism of high culture.

Popular religion is the quest for (a) more simple, (b) more direct, and (c) more profitable relationships with the divine (Moldonado 1986:6; cited in Sutcliffe, 2003:12, emphasis original).

Sutcliffe’s positioning above and usage of Moldonado is succinct. For emphasis is placed within Scottish healing circles on simple direct relationships to ‘the divine’ and if this involves appropriating practical elements of mainstream religiosity from Christianity or Buddhism then this is seen to be for the ‘better good’, not just of the individual, but of society as a whole. Hence we find, in the Scottish context at least, eclectic mixing of elements of mainstream religiosity such as meditation and the laying on of hands “as Jesus did”, in combination with a critique of the ‘high cultures’ of institutionalised religion and bio-medical approaches to health.

Sutcliffe also provides us with a useful framework from which to examine the network of alternative beliefs and practices in Scotland. He argues that the typical form of the amorphous network of alternative beliefs and practices extends

...both synchronically (cf. York 1995) and historically. Their webs of activity and material residue span the shortfalls and disputed lands between traditional religions, cultic and cultural enclaves, and religious and secular spheres in general. In other words, the alternative network is a largely extra-ecclesial countercultural web that both generates and supports variant religious cultures. As such it has persisted in the shadows of mainstream religion and penetrated its margins for the last one hundred years or so (Sutcliffe, 1997:102).

I would propose that examining the alternative network as “an extra-ecclesial countercultural web” may be beneficial, because regarding the beliefs and practices in this field as “alternative” rather than Campbell’s “deviant” should enable an evaluation to be developed of what the “alternative” is decrying. It is anticipated that this alternative perspective will be interrelated with issues of gender, identity and power. As to whether practitioners of healing regard themselves to be ‘alternative’ or prefer the term ‘complementary’ is a matter of personal debate. For the usage of one or other of these terms suggests to me that there is a power dynamic working in healing contexts between conventional biomedicine and ‘spiritual’ approaches to health. This I would suggest is actively being played out on the gendered body. For as Sutcliffe states, the role of seeker is popular among those individuals who are “virtuosi willing to select, synthesise and exchange amongst an increasing diversity of religious and secular options and perspectives” (1997:105).

It is important to note, however, that the role of 'seeker' in the Scottish context is very much dependent on being financially able to choose such a role. For within the Edinburgh alternative 'scene', there appears to be a predominance of white, middle class participants who are economically able to choose to develop their inner spirituality. This applies equally to teachers of healing practice but with a shift towards male dominance at higher teaching and publishing levels. Therefore, while Sutcliffe is correct in stating that there has been a shift away from seekers being located within the social group of theologians etc., it would appear initially that the New Age, and alternative health, may in fact be 'riddled' with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourse. It is important then, when we see the following sort of statement, to cast a critical eye over it and apply a feminist hermeneutic of suspicion. For Sutcliffe states that "in the alternative networks, and in connection with New Age in particular, the notion of a 'spiritual quest' has moved away from its particular prerogative of a typical social group - typically theologians, contemplatives or mystics - to become a popular egalitarian norm" 1997:106). I shall keep this firmly in mind as I progress throughout this work.

Let us return to Paul Heelas' interpretation of the New Age's essential *lingua franca*, Self-spirituality, showing how gender should be regarded as an essential component of this.

Heelas and 'New Age' Self-spirituality.

Heelas proposes that New Age teaching has three essential elements:

- (1) Your lives do not work.
- (2) You are Gods and Goddesses in exile, and

- (3) Let go/drop it. This teaching “explains why life - as conventionally experienced - is not what it should be; it provides an account of what it is to find perfection; and it provides the means for obtaining salvation” (1996:18).

(1) *Your lives do not work*

Heelas proposes that,

The great refrain running throughout the New Age, is that we malfunction because we have been '*brainwashed*' by mainstream society and culture. The mores of the established order - its materialism, its competitiveness, together with the importance it attaches to playing roles - are held to disrupt what it is to be authentically human. To live in terms of such mores, *inculcated by parents, the educational system and other institutions*, is to remain the victim of unnatural, deterministic and misguided routines: to be *enslaved by unfillable desires and deep seated insecurities*; to be *dominated by anxiety-generating imperatives* such as creating a good impression; to be locked into the conflictual demands of the ideal relationship (1996:18, italics mine).

I have italicised several points in the above where 'lack', 'desire' and 'power' appear to be central motifs. If, as Heelas proposes, the New Ager subscribes to the viewpoint that it is societal brainwashing which causes human malfunction through the institutions of the school and the workplace - where historically emphasis has been placed on the adoption of competitive and materialistic roles - then surely one must evaluate the promotion and development of these subjectivities acknowledging their gendered nature. For though many parents will promote “competitiveness” in their sons and daughters as a desirable trait, one wonders whether this will always be towards the same ends? Will for example, daughters be encouraged to adopt

'masculine' traits and career choices? Will sons be pushed towards a career in nursing or the caring professions in the same way as they would be towards a role as doctor or scientist? Will not these roles differ greatly in relation to the family's cultural heritage and location in class systems? Hence I am in agreement with feminist historian Joan Scott when she asserts that we need to analyse constructions of meaning and relationships of power while calling into question unitary, universal categories and historicised concepts otherwise treated as natural - such as man/woman or absolute such as equality or justice (1992:253).

I would argue that once we do this we can examine where women's experiences of 'brainwashing' differ from men's and how these experiences may lead men and women to seek within New Age self-developmental practices. We can ask questions such as if, from a New Age perspective, men and women are seen as "victims...enslaved by unfulfillable desires and insecurities" (Heelas, 1996:18), then who locates the male or female 'as victim'? Do women and men perceive their 'victimised bodies' in the same way? We can examine what it is within New Age ideology that appears to provide women and men with personal empowerment. And we can examine Sutcliffe's theme of "alternative practices spanning the shortfalls of religious and secular spheres in general..." in much greater depth once we approach this with a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion.

(2) You are Gods and Goddesses in exile

Heelas states that for the New Ager, experiences of the 'Higher Self' and inner spirituality stand in sharp contrast to those afforded by the ego or lower self. For "the inner realm alone is held to serve as the source of authentic vitality, creativity, love, wisdom, power [and] authority" (1996:19). For "Perfection, it is maintained, cannot be

found by tinkering with what we are by virtue of socialisation. Neither can it be found by conventional (political etc.) attempts at social engineering” (1996:19).

Heelas argues in the above that people who subscribe to a New Age worldview believe that it is to the inner or ‘Higher Self’ that one must experientially turn in order to live authentically. For the ‘lower’ ego driven self is corrupted and has by inference become detached or withdrawn, focusing on secular rather than spiritual ‘ways of being’. But what, one wonders, is this ‘authentic’ self? Who promotes this model of subjectivity and why? What is the New Ager being authentic to? Does this differ for men and women? And, if as Heelas suggests, New Agers maintain that we cannot reach “perfection” by “tinkering with what we are by socialisation...or by conventional political attempts at social engineering” then I would propose that there is serious potential within this theme for maintaining the patriarchal status quo. For to suggest that to engage in any political “tinkering” is both ego driven and invalid may promote the ideology that ‘women must accept their lot’ and look for ‘power within’ rather than ‘power in society’. This of course also relates to the last New Age motif as proposed by Heelas, that of “let go/drop it”. Once again as this teaching relates to the ego and the socialised mode of being then any engagement with this motif must also examine how this relates to men and women’s perception both of themselves and of their ‘opposite sex’ other.

(3) Let go/drop it.

Heelas argues that within this third New Age motif lies the experiential framework for actually moving “out of exile into authentic experience” (1996:20). For from a ‘Self as spiritual’ perspective one needs to learn how to re-connect with one’s inner self in order to see that authority comes from within and not from the ego “that internalised

mode of the traditions, parenting routines and all those other inputs which have constructed it" (1996:20). This is why there are numerous workshops and courses covering the "spiritual disciplines...variously known as 'processes', 'rituals' or 'psychotechnologies' for example" (Heelas, 1996:20). These various practices hence "provide paths within" (ibid) so that each person realises that the socialised mode of being, experiences of the past (in this or past lives) no longer have a hold. A new future will be enabled where the Self is liberated (ibid).

Once again we can see in the above exposition that power is of central significance. For if a person is to detach from external societal 'pressures', be these in the home or the workplace, and instead focus on their 'inner journey' through perhaps meditation, yoga, dance or shamanic drumming, then this new 'cleansed ego-free' person will also incorporate new taught ways of being so that s/he may follow this path. And while Heelas is absolutely correct to assert that for those who engage with Self-spirituality one of the most fundamental of assumptions is that "authority lies with the self" (1996:21), I would argue that this 'self' still apparently "feels that it has to be taught" what it is to be authentic and empowered. For as we shall see in the ethnography to follow, workshops that focus on teaching the person how to get back in touch with their intuition or inner voice are highly popular. And if a person is taught to stop blaming society and work on themselves through spiritual disciplines and practices, then I feel that there is potential for people to get locked into a perpetual spiral of "seeing the guru" in order to advance along the path so that one can authentically relate to "all that is" and the "natural order of things". As one New Age newsletter puts it - this coming from a "spiritual teacher who speaks from his direct experience of self-realisation" and through living in "complete surrender",

Surrender to life as it is and not how you want it to be. You've got to surrender to it and shed that, that's not real in your life – and underneath that you'll find yourself, your true nature: joy. It's there. It's shedding, not adding, that sets you free (BP: Bernie Prior, 2002:3)

Within Heelas' three 'essential elements' then, we have a wide diversity of themes that must, I would argue, be examined from a gender perspective. For failure to do this will provide only a partial picture of the development of New Age models of subjectivity. I shall return to some of the points raised here in the last chapter of this thesis, where I shall apply a gender centered critique utilising writers such as Meredith McGuire, Joan Scott, Helen Berger and Wendy Griffin.

New Age women

Throughout this chapter I have begun to examine how when writers such as Heelas, Hanegraaff and Sutcliffe examine the New Age predominantly from a gender blind perspective, they fail to tease out how gender affects individual epistemologies and practices²³. This is significant, for when, for example, we come to examine the specifics of New Age healing in relation to Reiki initiation rituals or "learning to dowse the aura", the inclusion of gender as an analytical category will allow us to examine whether women have constructed these for particular 'gendered ends'. Do women's rituals have different focuses than men's? How does this relate to gendered representations of the body, emotions and power? What relationship does socio/historical context have to current representations of the role of the gendered healer? Do frameworks of meaning have gendered elements? If so, what are these?

²³ For example Hanegraaff in his *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, dedicates only a few pages to an appraisal of gender. This he relates in particular to the New Age theory of polarity and complementarity with its two poles of masculine and feminine.

I would also suggest that a predominantly androcentric approach to the interpretation and representation of New Age healing allows for, at best, a study where women are not included or acknowledged, and at worst, the potential for women healers/ healed to be doubly subsumed; being seen as either gullible due to their non-scientific 'belief' in the efficiency of such practices, or as charlatans, due to their promotion of such practices to fee paying clients. This relates intimately to constructions of knowledge as truth – science being a key example here.

For example, James McClenon has argued in *Wondrous Healing* (2002) that human therapeutic rituals (healing) have been based on evolutionary processes and natural selection. Humans with genes which 'enabled' hypnotisability would have been favoured, these humans developing healing rituals and forms of religion, which would be connected with medical practice. "Unlike the prevalent theories explaining the origins of religion, these arguments are amenable to scientific evaluation" (2002:45). Hence it appears that healers and "those adhering to New Age spiritualities" are located under the "over-arching paradigm of knowledge and experience... [of] scientific empiricism" (Corrywright, 2003:61), even if at times science is drawn from and developed into 'new science' in populist works such as David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicit Order* (1980) or Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (1996). It is also worthy of note that writers of 'new science' appear to be predominately male, though in the fields of energetic healing, Barbara Brennan's psychological approach is highly rated. We shall look specifically at Brennan's writing in Chapter Three.

However I shall further elaborate on the importance of utilising a feminist hermeneutic of suspicion at this point, with an appraisal of Stuart Rose's survey of New Age participation in 1994/5 and his later 2001 paper entitled *New Age Women*:

Spearheading the Movement? This I shall initially relate to one particular New Age writer, Marilyn Ferguson.

Rose's examination of the New Age movement encompassing primary beliefs and practices is based on a material sample of 908 individuals - these having completed his questionnaire in 1994/5. The aim of this questionnaire was to "establish the socio-demographic characteristics of participants [while] bringing to light how they describe their spirituality" (1998:5). Rose states that, while a 1993 monthly Gallup survey (aimed at reflecting the population at large) showed that only 3% of the British population reported "spiritual well being" as being of primary importance to their lives, and only 25% of respondents reported that spirituality was of major importance, this was not in accord with his survey findings within New Age circles²⁴. Here Rose found that 56% of participants indicated "that spiritual affairs are always involved in their activities" and "more than 90% report that they are actively pursuing a spiritual path" (1998:12).

These findings are of considerable importance to the study of complementary health in Scotland. For if, as Rose proposes, spirituality is of such central concern to New Age participants, then I can examine how this relates to popular religion as more simple, direct and profitable relationships with the divine and the relationship of gendered identities to the same.

Rose bases three claims on the responses in his questionnaires. Initially he proposes

²⁴ Rose's survey appears initially to be fairly representative of the New Age as a whole, for he drew his survey material from questionnaires inserted into *Kindred Spirit* which, he states, is the widest selling New Age magazine in the UK. However, it may also be the case that those who bought and answered this questionnaire are more committed to a 'spiritual lifestyle' than those who partake in alternative health for its physical benefits. It is also necessary to appreciate that 'being spiritual' may mean different things to different people.

that the New Age tends to be amorphous in nature, as participants are drawn from all age groups, socio-economic backgrounds and genders. His first significant gender related finding is that “as New Age ideology emphasises a shift from male dominated society to one in which the female content is much greater, there is a much higher level of women participants than men” (1998:6)²⁵. Secondly, Rose states that as there are large numbers of women participating in the New Age, “there is likely to exist a significant number of ideas and activities which have a heightened or even specific female content and appeal” (1998:6)²⁶. When he relates this to specific practices, he finds that women tend to favour activities that have a high healing and bodywork content (offering practical physical benefits) such as aromatherapy, homeopathy and massage and healing workshops (that engage with spiritual belief), or that women practise the divinatory arts such as astrology and Tarot reading (which from the New Age perspective are for personal holistic guidance) (1998:7).

Rose's third point is that while women predominate in New Age activities, “in the mid 1990s among important teachers, women are still outnumbered two to one by their male counterparts” (1998:7). This finding bears marked similarities to the make-up of highly regarded male teachers in Reikian circles. For as we shall see, four of the key writers within this field are indeed men; these same men being engaged in an ongoing project of rewriting ‘authoritative’ Reikian theology.

But let us return to Rose's contention that “female content” within New Age frameworks is significant.

²⁵ In Rose's sample of 908 New Age participants, 70% were women, 30% men.

²⁶ It is very important to note that many ‘mainstream’ churches also have a predominance of women participants, even though they do not emphasise the importance of a specific female content.

There is a much higher female participation²⁷ in the 'New Age' than male, as 'New Age' ideology promotes the relevance of a higher female 'content'

Rose argues that "participants themselves are fully aware of the increasing female content of the New Age movement" (2001:331). He cites several questionnaire responses from women in relation to this. These persons attributed women's predominance in New Age circles to "a resurgence of the female principles of caring/nurturing', 'a better balance between the male and female principles in the human race' and that as 'male is no longer so dominant...female energies, gifts, visions, etc., [are] now more free and influential in hopefully leading to correct [the] balance between male and female" (ibid).

This sort of positioning above relates rather well to influential New Age writer Marilyn Ferguson's evaluation of models of masculinity and femininity. Her 1980 book *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980) is viewed by many New Age practitioners as being transformational in its own right. And though this text is not as popular in Scottish healing circles as it once might have been, her particular standpoint regarding models of masculinity, femininity and transformation still appears to underpin much New Age thought in Scotland. This book is also frequently cited by academics writing on the New Age. For example, Heelas sees it as "authoritative" (1996), for Hanegraaff it is "the most characteristic manifesto of the New Age *sensu lato*" (1998), while for Albanese, it is "the now classic description of the harmonic model" (Albanese in Lewis and Melton, 1992).

²⁷ It would appear from Rose's paper that 'participation' for women involves hands on healing practice of the body which incorporates 'spirituality'. This claim has been examined in the field and has been confirmed.

Within this text then, Ferguson promotes 'alternative thought' as a transformative tool, effective both at individual and societal levels. For, she argues, when one begins the transformative process towards autonomy and "connectedness" then the self will be re-born, enabling the individual to "transcend cultural roles and defy custom as authority" (1980:389)²⁸.

Ferguson proposes that cultural roles are often underpinned by ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman. This leads her to state that for many men, "the women's movement was important in their own change - not only because it focused on the trampled potentials of half of the human race but also because it questioned the supremacy of those masculine characteristics valued in society: competition, manipulation, aggression, objectivity"²⁹ (1980:389). For on an individual level, "As women in transformation are discovering their sense of self and vocation, men are discovering their sense of relationship. During these equalising shifts, the basis for male-female interaction is being redefined. Men are becoming more feeling and intuitive; women more autonomous and purposeful" (1980:389).

Both Rose and Ferguson acknowledge the centrality of 'balancing male and female elements' within New Age cosmologies. This is most certainly the case within Scottish circles, as we shall see. However Ferguson also proposes that "According to very old wisdom, self discovery inevitably involves the awakening of the traits usually associated with the opposite sex" (1980:389). Now while she is correct in her assertion of this to some considerable extent, I would argue that in the Scottish context at least,

²⁸ One wonders whether Ferguson's transformative model of subjectivity where she encompasses both 'autonomy' and 'connectedness' is either simply paradoxical or if it is iconoclastic?

²⁹ Hanegraaff makes the valid point that as *The Aquarian Conspiracy* was written in 1980, it should be viewed as representing "the earlier cultic milieu as becoming conscious of itself as a movement and not authoritative (as many academics view it) on later New Age developments" (1998:106).

much greater emphasis is still being placed on the 'feminine' attributes of "caring and nurturing" than on developing, for example, the 'masculine' trait of competitiveness. And while Ferguson sees women as now recovering from centuries of male domination by 'reintegrating' themselves into society now that "the basis for male-female interaction is being redefined" (1980:389), I would still suggest that this redefinition needs to be looked at most carefully. For when Ferguson makes statements such as "Women are neurologically more flexible than men, and they have had cultural permission to be more intuitive, sensitive, feeling" (1980:226), then who exactly 'in culture' is giving women this permission? And surely her sweeping generalisation that women are neurologically more flexible requires further unpicking. For 'neurology' relates to the scientific study of nerve systems and genetic traits etc. as much as it does to matters of 'free choice'.

If we move on to examine the specifics of Rose's survey in relation to actual participation, we find a significant emphasis on practices with a high healing and bodywork content, which offer practical physical benefits. As we shall see in the next chapter, this most certainly appears to be the case in Scotland. However Rose informs us that his findings show "...that men appear less interested in the majority of New Age ideas and activities – and participate less in them – in relation to women" (1998:8). That "women's healing activities involve high levels of physical touching and movement while men's healing activities appear to be more cerebral" (2001:340) and that, with regard to "differences between men and women in general ... women [are] much more aware and in tune with their bodies than men" (2001:342).

What we appear to have in place in the above is the promotion of New Age men as being more cerebral, with New Age women being more bodily orientated. This requires further thought. For are we seeing here the continued reinforcement of the same

men/mind, women/body dualism that many New Age women find so abhorrent? Or is it the case that women are consciously choosing practices with a bodily emphasis as a counter hegemonic discourse to location of the female body 'as less'?

Rose also points out that "even though women appear more populous than men in the movement, the most mentioned teachers are still outnumbered two to one by their male counterparts" (2001:330). So are we beginning to see the patriarchal re-acquisition of bodily healing practice from women by 'cerebrally orientated' male teachers in the same way that the Christian church, bio-medical and therapeutic perspectives have done so historically? For, in this case, women may be being taught that it is wise to continually return to a male New Age teacher to learn how to become even more ego-less – while purchasing one of his self-help books to aid her in this process.

Shoshaner Feher suggests there are two theoretical themes that explain women's high levels of involvement with the New Age. Firstly she argues, women are drawn to this field of practice for here they are allowed to move out of their traditionally defined religious roles and "have a voice" (1992:183). This 'finding a voice' is a common theme in feminist critiques of patriarchal traditional religious structures and society in general. For example, Ursula King suggests that 'finding a voice' "has much to do with a newly discovered and newly developed sense of self. It is the expression of a new identity among contemporary women" (1992:2). However she also makes the point that there is an underlying theme in women's voices. This theme engages with issues of power, responsibility and concern, for...

Some people consider the [women's] voices as truly prophetic as they express a vision which links together the personal, social, spiritual and political dimensions of human

life...In other words feminism seeks a change in consciousness and a change of the organisation, power structures and fundamental values in our society - a new culture and a new civilisation (King, 1992:3).

Secondly, Feher proposes that women find something appealing within New Age structures that they cannot find in other religions (1992:183). So let me once again relate these points to Rose's survey of New Age adherents.

Rose states that the majority of women engaged in the New Age are white, over thirty, and from the middle classes (1998:11). This is of some relevance in that these women are more likely to be economically comfortable and reasonably well educated. Further, the majority of these white middle class women will have either directly or indirectly been brought up within, or have knowledge of, Christian frameworks of reference. Within this Christian framework, God is espoused as a male deity who is 'other', being not of this world but "omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, static, unchanging in his perfection" (Bednarowski, 1992:169).

And, as within Christianity it is predominantly male clergy who are perceived to have access to the sacred, it also becomes necessary for women to utilise this clergy as intermediaries; they having been authorised by the Church to provide 'divine salvation' to those that repent. This also requires the sinful women to be saved from an 'embodied' state, for "To be saved means salvation from the world, from the body...from one's very humanness. Saving power can only come from without" (Bednarowski cited in Lewis and Melton, 1992:69).

Bednarowski also proposes that established religions maintain control over women by portraying them as "even more fallen than men, more fleshly, more trapped in matter.

Thus women are not only more susceptible than men to sin; they are objects of temptation as well, for they pull men down into matter - into the non-sacred" (1992:169). At the same time, established religions find ways to maintain control over access to the sacred, as they are "fearful, particularly, of ongoing revelation and of mystical experiences that cannot be controlled" (1992:169)³⁰. Hence women are located by established religious traditions as sinful, fleshy, corrupting and trapped in the body, while men may gain access to the sacred through intellectual training and practice as provided by male clergy "in ways that are hierarchical and excluding" (1992:169).

Yet many women that I have met in the Scottish New Age scene no longer accept traditional religion's emphasis on male supremacy in 'all things spiritual'; this applying equally to 'Christian New Agers' or those of differing religiosities. For rather than only allowing women access to the sacred through male derived and male focused ritual, the New Age appears to emphasise the God within and the self as sacred; hence the self is perceived as capable of discerning its own unmediated spiritual truth for it becomes "the way, the truth and the life" (Partridge, 1999).

Now Rose proposes that,

the means of spiritual empowerment employed by New Age women appears to stem from contact with, or synthesis of, a number of teachings or influences. The resulting spirituality appears not to be rigid or inflexible but fluid and malleable and developed according to the progression of each person's spiritual quest, In fact...it would be rare

³⁰ This 'control of the mystical experience' is examined by Grace Jantzen, who, in examining Christian mysticism's historical roots, notes how "the delimiting of mysticism through the centuries was crucial to maintaining male hierarchical control in church and society" (1995:3).

indeed to find one teacher or teaching that could completely encompass this path (2001:338).

What we see in this above quote, once more, is that women may choose for themselves to visit a variety of teachers in order to progress spiritually. This may well be a good thing and certainly allows the individual to pick out elements that personally suit. But equally there might be the danger of getting on to a kind of treadmill of 'spiritual therapy'. And though for the New Ager, the 'self', as we have seen, is not to be regarded as being an isolated entity for "most often, spirituality in the New Age is seen as some form of connection with an all pervading 'Force' or 'Energy.'³¹ How this Energy is described and "to be connected with" is once again the stuff of numerous workshops and publications. All of these to be purchased – the New Age is big business.

Ultimately then, though New Age teachers eclectically pick from a variety of traditions which they then mould into new forms according to their own empirical testing of their efficiency, the 'spiritual visitor' to any particular teacher must at least initially put their trust or faith in that person as an expert of sorts, until they test the 'truth' of that path for themselves. And as within the New Age there are competing theories about how one should think or act, with the corresponding development of written cosmologies, which very often relate to older religious traditions. I would propose that one should also look carefully at how these 'new' forms of spiritual practice are being developed and promoted. Particularly as it is men who are, in the majority, the authoritatively regarded teachers.

³¹ This issue of power is central throughout the New Age and will be engaged with continually throughout this research.

Before I draw this chapter to a close I am going to introduce feminist anthropology in the fields of Goddess spirituality and Wiccan circles. For within these fields women have turned from mainstream religions which are deemed to be patriarchal and have developed personal rituals that have led to healing, self empowerment, new senses of identity, revaluing of the female body and renaming reality. Correspondingly there are marked similarities with women's spiritualities and practices within New Age healing circles, even if within Reiki and similar spiritual healing practices "the Goddess" is not the central 'motif' for empowerment.

Goddess Spirituality

Wendy Griffin argues that even at the time of editing her *Daughters of the Goddess* in 2000, there was still a decided lack of research into the practices of Goddess spirituality and that academic funding for this was very difficult to obtain. She further posits that funding for research into religious groups seen as being "dangerous cults [which threaten] to kidnap children or kill themselves or others" (2000:14) is more readily available.

This may be particularly ironic, as most practitioners of Goddess spirituality believe it is a serious threat to traditional religion and customs, not in the way that most people expect, but in its insistence on using very different frameworks of meaning and its reconstruction of gender and identity (ibid) [*italics original*].

If Griffin is correct in her assertion regarding the availability of academic funding for research into Goddess spirituality, then this suggests that the field of religious studies as a whole has a tendency to locate popular contemporary spiritual practices at the 'lower end' of the academically important continuum. One might easily regard this as

another example of women being silenced. For as we have seen, women predominate within the fields of contemporary spiritualities where they critique traditional forms of religion. And yet further questions should be asked with regard to the lack of male writers in this area. For many of the academically acclaimed writers who have produced feminist ethnographies of women in contemporary and popular fields also tend to be other women. All of these facts are indicative of an ongoing discourse of power. This is why, as was observed in Chapter One, feminist writers are so concerned with the continuance of patriarchal paradigms within academic research and publication and actively engage in locating women back into text. However for the moment, let us return to Griffin.

Griffin states that while Goddess spirituality does not have an authoritative text this, in itself, is a positive boon enabling a fluidity of practice. For this 'lack' enables women to worship singly, communally in covens, at home or at the garden altar and devise rituals that suit personal, particular needs (2000:14). This sort of 'individualised' practice is also rather similar to that of Scottish healing circles. For here too one need not be affiliated to any particular organisation or fixed practice even if, as with the case of Reiki, a male theological superstructure is in place (and in the process of ongoing revision) with men being in the process of re-writing 'authoritative text'. Hence questions will be asked later in this thesis in relation to Reiki regarding whether women are, for example, being reconstrained when emphasis is placed on "woman as caring and nurturing". For this emphasis is rather different from representations of women in Wiccan covens. Here, the "Mother [is regarded as being] sexual, powerful, loving and demanding...a whole, integrated adult" (Griffin, 2000:18). And though this last quote relates particularly to the High Priestess's role, it is still the case that these same Priestesses promote a radically transformed image of mothering for all women – this at odds with traditional patriarchal constructions of the same.

Furthermore,

Wicca, while questioning moral issues, is part of the process in late modernity of reembedding moral issues through lifestyle choices. Ritual practices, community activities, and spiritual quests help to define lifestyle choices and are part and parcel of the re-creation of the self within Wicca (Berger, 1999: 6).

This Wiccan positioning is also akin to the emphasis in New Age cosmologies of developing and transforming the self to fulfil its 'divine potential' so that one may, in turn, have a morally (and practically) beneficial effect on the world as a whole. This we shall see, is particularly relevant in healing practices such as Reiki where the trained practitioner may communally "beam healing energy" to places where conflict and disaster has occurred. This recreated self as active healing agent stands, according to influential New Age writer Caroline Myss, radically apart from Protestant notions of predestination as preached by John Calvin in the sixteenth century. For according to this framework,

...our purpose in life is to fulfil the duties and responsibilities that God has assigned us, but because human nature is essentially corrupt, we cannot achieve salvation (the reward of Heaven) except by the grace of God. Moreover, to the Calvinists, God has predestined certain people to receive that grace and not others, leaving us dependent on a kind of luck controlled by the Divine, which has already decided our fate. Acting morally is all but reduced to a form of hoping that one is already among the elect (Myss, 2002:40).

Myss however, argues that each person when consciously acting out of right intention, makes life choices based on motivations that are "compassionate and sincere"

(2002:41) for these “reflect our intimate connection with the Divine” (ibid). We shall see in the ethnographic chapters to follow, the significance of “right intention” when healing self and others and the popularity of ontological standpoints like Myss’s in Scottish healing circles.

Marylyn Gottschall makes a further point, which very much relates to this ethnography of New Age healing. For Gottschall, “those who denominationalize Goddess worship make a case too strongly” (2000: 61). She argues that while there is a general continuity within Goddess worship of a “gynocentric symbol system and a canon of popular feminist spirituality writings, its inherent vitality and inherent instability make it difficult to contain” (ibid). The Goddess movement is a “...highly syncretic, dynamic and increasingly diverse form of popular religiosity” (ibid). Gottschall’s positioning above, mirrors Sutcliffe’s thoughts on New Age seekers. For here too fluidity of boundaries and syncretic dynamism are the norm. Correspondingly, once again I would argue that the development of a decentralised narrative of power relations in healing circles is a more fruitful way of evaluating this vibrant and diverse form of popular religiosity.

I would however like to raise a couple of key points here. When we enter the fields of healing in Scotland, what we find is a general emphasis on *women’s spirituality* rather than Goddess spirituality. This appears to be a lot to do with the fact that some women do not support the anthropomorphisation of deity or ‘All that is’, often regarding the same as “love” or “energy” rather than as God or the Goddess.

Secondly, as succinctly stated by Emily Culpepper and on a theoretical note, the term ‘spiritual’ itself is highly problematic (as I have observed in relation to Hanegraaff earlier in this chapter). For it also carries “a heavy load of dualistic, anti-body

associations behind it which feminists recognise as ultimately being a key component of the androcentric oppressive dichotomy between female and male" (cited in Puttick, 1997:200). This positioning may be found historically within religions such as Christianity, where transcendence (out of the body) and immortality (the body may die but the well trained soul will live) are goals. And yet it is the body through which we experience life. We identify ourselves with our bodies. "Our *agency* as active personae in society is accomplished through our bodies" (McGuire, 1990:284). Hence our "engendered" body is...both the instrument of power and the site of struggles over power" (McGuire, 1990:293).

As we shall see, this statement is also of relevance when women learn self-developmental 'techniques' that actively engage with the *energetic* body - the chakra and auric 'systems' as described in Chapter Three of this thesis. For here emphasis may be placed by workshop participants on "developing their higher spiritual chakras" rather than their root 'sexual' chakras.

Having noted these two points, let us return to some specific examples of how women's bodies are portrayed as empowered within feminist, Wiccan and Goddess spirituality circles - remembering that some New Agers are also Goddess worshippers. For all of these adherents locate their spiritual practice within social and political realms and see the Goddess as a liberating force from patriarchal mainstream religion.

Women 'involved' within Goddess spirituality form new narratives of "what it is to be a woman" and how to relate to, and understand, people and the world in general. Emphasis is placed on "the personal as political", a theme common in feminist thought, and on becoming liberated from dualistic patriarchal paradigms where the sexual body is seen as 'less' or sinful. This is a major shift of positioning from traditional Christian

representations of deity as male and transcendental. Rather, the Goddess is acknowledged as being imminent, “the flow of energy linking all things and making the whole biosphere sacred” (Griffin, 2000:77). As human beings are also part of nature, then the female body becomes sacralised. This sort of thinking breaks down traditional patriarchal understandings of the gendered body and respective moral codes and ‘guidelines’ for behaviour.

The Goddess may also be identified with as a symbol of self-healing and planetary healing. In the latter (though the two are intertwined) she is often referred to as Gaia. “She is also an important symbol of female empowerment, legitimating women’s own power and independence, and inspiring them to formulate and realise their own potential and goals” (ibid)³².

Therefore, within Goddess spirituality there is a breaking down of male dominated paradigms relating to the female body and, for example, its age related reproductive processes; menstruation, gestation, lactation and menopause etc. All of these life events are reconfigured positively. The menstruating woman should still worship and work in the world. The post-menopausal woman is honoured. She does not have to hide “distasteful... age spotted flesh and sagging skin” (Griffin, 2000:79).

In writing the body, whether this is done through verbal or nonverbal messages, women in Goddess spirituality are deconstructing patriarchal religious metanarrative. They transform gender identity by subverting traditional meaning and representation of what it means to be female, simultaneously creating new definitions of appropriate

³² The Goddess is also inspirational for some men and may be “communicated with” or “called forth” in some New Age locations, where ‘the boundaries’ between healing and Paganism may be blurred.

gendered behaviour for women. This process redefines the boundaries of what is acceptable.

Done in a spiritual context, this writing of the body provides 'truth messages' (Ellwood 1993) that encode the world-view of Goddess spirituality. The body thus represented tells a new cultural narrative, one where Divinity is immanent, the female body is sacred, women are strong and authentically beautiful, mind and body are part of an integrated whole, sexuality is celebrated and not always linked to reproduction, and patriarchy is a temporary aberration rather than a natural condition (Griffin, 2000:84-5).

The key characteristic that links Goddess spirituality, Wicca and New Age spiritualities is an emphasis on healing. By learning techniques to heal self and others, women are transformed and develop new ideas of what is to be a 'whole woman' and may begin to break out of patriarchal patterning. For though there is diversity of thought about bringing politics into practice - some Wiccans for example seeing Wicca as non-political while feminist Witchcraft "by its very nature is a challenge to the political system of patriarchy" (Greenwood, 2000:144) - there appears to be fairly general consent that for the woman to become empowered and healed she must look within for her connection to the Goddess. She must regard her body as the locus of power because of this connection and see it as "the source of self affirmation and identity" (Greenwood, 2000:139), rather than being possessed by "...alienations of patriarchal culture. Healing involves coming to understand the way that domination has become internalised" (Greenwood, 2000:145).

Greenwood's evaluation, though applying to feminist Witchcraft's critique of the internalisation of patriarchal culture, resonates with Paul Heelas's "self ethics". For

even though Heelas appears to ignore the patriarchal dimensions of these self ethics, both writers do engage with notions of the role of the 'ego' in illness and health³³. We shall also find this concern running throughout ethnographic chapters where New Age practitioners stipulate that internalised 'ego-driven mores' cause blockages in the energetic body and dis-ease.

And though within New Age circles healing may appear to be de-politicised initially, I would argue that it is impossible to separate "the healing body" from its sociopolitical context and with the issues of power and gender. For if one of the primary drawing features for women in Scotland who become involved within New Age networks is "healing", then why exactly is this the case? Are New Age practitioners equally concerned with patriarchal structures as causes of dis-ease? If, as Rose found in his 2001 appraisal of New Age women, thirty two practices showed a strong bodywork content with twenty two of these having a female participation bias (2001:230), what is this saying about women's development of new "senses of self" and empowerment? Why did Rose find that "almost four out of five practising therapists" (ibid) or 78% were women aged between thirty-five and fifty-four? (these findings being in accord with Scottish healing contexts). But it is with the following statement that, for the moment, I will close this chapter. Rose proposes that, in relation to his survey findings indicating multiple usages of New Age therapies,

Many practices are used regularly rather than on a short term or ad-hoc basis – that is, at times they are used habitually as part of everyday life. This leads to the speculation that such New Age practices are thought of as a healing requirement for the maintenance and nurture (likely to be in tandem with their spiritual paths) rather than as

³³ Greenwood states that within feminist witchcraft there is an emphasis on shaministic healing where internalised patriarchal structures are broken down in the ego and new senses of identity are developed (in Griffin, 2000:145).

a 'distress' or shorter-term requirement to relieve temporary illness or disease (2001:339).

Certainly in the Scottish context healing practices are adhered to in the long, rather than the short term even if many women do appear to become involved initially with the same due to chronic dis-ease and corresponding distress, which they feel has not been treated successfully by bio-medical approaches to health. In order to look at these questions more fully I shall, in the next chapter, introduce my Scottish based fieldwork. This will allow us to gain some awareness of how the energetic body is represented in this context. In turn, we can then reflect upon how evaluations of "states of being" relate to medical anthropology and specific writings on healing, energy work and the New Age in general, the focus of Chapter Four.

Chapter Three

Energetic bodies

Introduction

The body “as energetic” is a central motif within New Age healing circles in Scotland. Therefore within this primarily descriptive chapter I shall provide a picture of how this has been variously represented in relation to, for example, the agency of the gendered body. Overall I shall provide a conceptual framework for further ethnographic material (as found in Chapters Five to Seven) where I shall ‘mix and match’ New Age textual material with experiential accounts of Reiki healing and dowsing practice. In turn these will be related to academic evaluations of healing, gender and power.

My first introduction to the body “as energetic” was in Edinburgh in 1995. I had travelled there to visit a healer and chiropractor following a period of ill health. This healer successfully, over several months, not only enabled me to be dis-ease free but also introduced me to a whole new way of regarding my body, my self and my life. Until this point I had no awareness of “auras” or “chakras” and how these formed the “energetic whole”, hence I found these ideas to be most interesting. For if there was a whole new ‘hidden world out there’ that could be seen and felt by some people - they being able to utilise this knowledge to heal the holistic body - then this I felt was worthy of much fuller investigation. This search began for me with the perusal of textual material in this particular healer’s waiting room and discussions of the same with friends. One of the texts that was highly recommended to us was Barbara Ann Brennan’s 1988, *Hands of Light*. This training guide is still commonly used in healing circles in Scotland, its focus being “how to see auras” and “how to heal through the

human energy field". After much practice, guided by Brennan's book, I learnt the basics of how to see auras myself. This caused a major shift in my sense of "how the world works". It also enabled me in turn to feel empowered in that I could 'read' others' energetic bodies – and hence could learn to do healing work - and feel the interconnectedness of all life.

Hence within this chapter I shall show how Brennan's book provided the basis for a healing workshop at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh³⁴. Correspondingly I shall mix her textual accounts of healing to descriptions of practice. Following on from this I will provide further ethnographic material relating to an evening "Healing Circle" also held at the Salisbury Centre and a "Wholistics" weekend workshop in Fife. For at all of these gatherings "the energetic body" was the central interpretative medium for practical work and healing "through the aura".

The Salisbury Centre

William Sawbridge, his wife Ludivina, Doctor Winifred Rushforth, Mrs Anne Macauley and Reverend Peter Lewis initially set up the Salisbury Trust in 1972. The trusts aims were,

- The advancement of education in the unity of religious ideals in particular by the provision of courses in comparative religion and metaphysical and associated religious and spiritual subjects.
- The help and education of young people to develop their physical, mental and

³⁴ I shall also return to her writing in Chapter Eight where I argue that healers 'work' within dynamic, decentralised and fluid "fields of force" (Foucault, 1980)

- spiritual capacities and their self-discipline and loyalty to mankind so that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society and that their conditions of life may be improved in particular (*inter alia*) by the provision of courses and instruction in techniques of self discipline in the interests of social welfare.
- The provision of and research into spiritual healing to those in need and the relief and prevention of suffering caused by mental and physical ill-health or by social or economic circumstances.
- To co-operate fully with any other organisation having similar objectives.

(Extract Registered, Deed of Trust, The Salisbury Trust, 1972).

In accord with the above objectives, The Salisbury Centre was set up in Edinburgh, this currently having a resident staff of three. It is now one of Edinburgh's most popular New Age locations. Their quarterly brochure³⁵ portrays this large house as a "Holistic Education Centre for Body, Mind and Spirit" (SC1). It is a place where the visitor can take part in many types of evening or weekend workshop. There is a constantly changing range of these, some regularly presented options being pottery, sculpture, sacred dance, meditation, yoga and the "traditional Chinese internal arts of Tai Ji Quan and Qi Gong" (SC1). Workshops are run every weekend of the year apart from during the Christmas period, when centre staff are on holiday. Each of these workshops has on average ten participants with many return 'seekers'. There are also weekday classes where one may learn, for example, baby massage, yoga for

³⁵ All pamphleture, brochure and workshop manuals are drawn from the researcher's personal files. These are referred to in the text by abbreviations and are detailed in 'Appendix A, Primary New Age Sources', this preceding the bibliography.

pregnancy, Pilates and relaxation techniques and regular evening classes in yoga, meditation, and self-developmental 'techniques'. There is also a resident Sufi group which meets bi-weekly, and a weekly healing group, The Salisbury Healers. Both of these groups are open to newcomers.

In accord with the Trust's objectives, emphasis is placed in all courses on a holistic approach to life and health, with visitors reflecting similar concerns. As one woman visitor in her thirties put it to me, "I have come here to learn how to live life as it should be lived...fully...with love ...and in the here and now".

It was then, to this centre that I travelled in the summer of 2001 to participate in a weekend workshop based on Barbara Ann Brennan's teachings. This was entitled 'Healing Through Consciousness' and the facilitator was a cheerful woman in her forties called Helen who, I felt, put most people at their ease with her sense of warmth. Helen had trained in Brennan's school in America for several years.

This was very much an experiential workshop with emphasis being placed on "trying it out for yourself". In practice this meant that participants would take part in an exploration of the human body where "the dense physical aspects" were seen to be just the visible part of the "energetic whole". For most people present, though they had heard of the aura and chakras, knowledge of how to actually feel or sense these aspects appeared to be minimal. The ten participants, seven women and three men were all between the ages of thirty and sixty-five.

This workshop was held in the large and airy first floor teaching and practice room. The floor was of polished wood and piles of brightly coloured cushions lay stacked against the walls. A large bay window overlooked wooded gardens. Upon arrival we

were asked to remove our shoes and find a comfortable place to sit. Most participants collected a cushion and sat in a circle facing Helen. A few chose to sit resting their backs against the walls.

Helen opened the weekend by telling us that what we would learn at this workshop should be regarded as a good basis for any further practice of “healing through the energy field”. We would learn how to restore health to the physical body and that all of this would be based on Barbara Ann Brennan’s lifetime of energy work. As a starting point, Helen informed us that “from a scientific viewpoint everything, including our physical body, is made up of energy. Your physical bodies appear solid for here this energy is very dense”. But she added that there was more to our bodies than this interpretation. For, as we then read together from her workshop manual, the human body is more than this,

the physical energetic body actually grows on the matrix of the aura so that whatever is happening in your energy field you will develop in your physical self. This means that a healer will work on damaged or blocked areas in the energy fields in order to heal corresponding dis-ease in the body...Healers across the world know this energy by many other names such as Chi, Prana and Yin-Yang complementarity (WMH, 2001).

Further details were provided.

The aura shows all thoughts and emotions. Those who can see the aura describe it as a flowing field of colours and feelings.

When our thoughts and feelings are healthy and clear the physical body follows suit, but as this is the real world life has a tendency to get in the way.

If we are suffering in some way emotionally these feelings are then taken on and held by the physical body. Every cell in our body has a memory bank, as well as our brain, and all of our experiences are held somewhere in this cellular memory.

If enough so-called negative emotions are held the body can erupt and become ill – whether in an emotional or physical sense...

Bodywork, whether it be massage, healing, reflexology, or many other therapies help the body to clear the emotions it no longer needs to hold on to, and thus helps the body to return to a state of balance and health

In most instances we are unconscious of what is happening, and healing is about us becoming conscious of what we are holding and doing in life. When we are conscious we have something to work on and the map of ourselves becomes a lot more readable (WMH, 2001:2).

Helen advised us that if we wished to learn how to sense the aura for ourselves then Brennan's *Hands of Light* was an excellent book to learn from. For in this text Brennan describes the ability to see or sense the aura as High Sense Perception or HSP. With this sense one perceives things beyond the normal range of the human senses. Once a person has re-learned HSP, they will see revealed "...the dynamic world of fluid interacting life energy fields around and through all things...this energy supports us, nourishes us, gives us life. We sense each other with it; we are of it; it is of us" (Brennan, 1988:5).

Brennan argues that the way to develop HSP is to "enter into an expanded sense of consciousness" (1988:6). This she states can be achieved through meditation or by simply "silenc[ing] the noisy mind...[so that] a whole new world of sweet harmonious

reality opens up to you” (ibid). For if one visualises oneself as a candle, the physical body is the candle and the mind the candle wick, while the candle flame is our consciousness. The light emanating from the candle flame is our expanded consciousness or HSP. There is, she states, according to physics, “no boundary to the candle’s light it reaches out to infinity” (ibid), for where does the light from the candle end and the light from the room begin? Therefore the more a person expands their consciousness, the more they can see with HSP, the more they will appreciate that there is a reality out there, a reality which previously was outside their perceptual range. She also argues that a person’s individuality is enhanced in this process (ibid). This appears to fit into the ideology that individual ‘wholeness’ is enhanced as one becomes re-aware of the underlying connections with every other being in a universal whole.

It was hence to an exercise in “sensing energy” that Helen first turned in the early stages of her ‘Healing Through Consciousness’ workshop. For this participants were to use a dowsing crystal to provide a visible representation of the energetic states of the chakras in the human body. The chakra system was presented in the following manner:

The chakras play a role very similar to the organs of the physical body. In fact they are the organs of the energy body... The word Chakra means Wheel, and the chakras do in fact have movement, which is very important to understanding how the chakras work and their importance to our health (WMH, 2001:2).

Helen described the seven major chakras as running up the front and middle of the body from the “tailbone” ending at the crown of the head. Each chakra was said to resemble “an ice cream cone” with the base of each being located in the spinal

column. It was from here “in the vertical power current of the spine” that the wheel-like motion of the chakra would draw energy into the body. This energy would in turn dissipate through the spinal column to the rest of the body. I have summarised some of the further characteristics of the chakras as given.

1. Each governs a physical region of the body and an emotional state.
2. Each chakra is also “governed by a colour, and the colours follow that of the rainbow”, with the root chakra at the base of the spine being “seen” as red.
3. Hence this red root chakra “helps keep us close to the earth [while] as we move further away from the earth the colours become softer and lighter”.
4. There are partner chakras at the back of the body as “all areas of the body should be in balance if a person is healthy”. Therefore “much can be discovered by examining the balance between the front, and back of the body”.
5. Each chakra has a “screen on the wide part furthest away from the physical body. This screen literally does screen information, and often times can become torn or disfigured in some way. When this happens the protective element of the screen is removed, and information that is in some way harmful can be absorbed” (WMH, 2001:1-2).

Helen also advised us that these “screens” vary at different times in a human being’s life. For example, newborn infants do not have protective screens on the surface of their chakras, it being for this reason that “babies and young children need the protection of an adult’s aura to keep them safe”. However, she added that adults will also have daily changes in the state of their auras according to what is happening in their lives. “For generally you will find that there are certain patterns which remain [in the energetic body] until our process has evolved and cleared” (WMH, 2001:3).

This last statement again ties well into the commonly held New Age perspective that illness is first reflected in damage in the energetic body and that trained healers can pick up signs of this before actual physical illness manifests. It ought to be noted however that, in the Scottish context at least, the majority of people visit a healer when their body is 'displaying' some sort of physical dis-ease. I have not heard personal narratives from people who have visited a healer with 'auric trauma' before this manifested at a physical level. Rather, once a person has incorporated 'new' energetic epistemologies into their 'way of life' then they are more likely to describe a period of personal dis-ease as being attributable to "blockages in the chakras".

It is with statements such as Brennan's, "It is essential that we deal with the deeper meaning of our illnesses. We need to ask, what does this illness mean to me? What can I learn from this illness?" (1987:7) that a framework is set up wherein the nature of 'being dis-eased' is further signified. For writers such as Brennan also state that illness is simply a message from the physical body that some life situation is being ignored. Therefore the way to resolve this situation – which does not necessarily mean the negation or removal of physical/emotional 'symptoms' but may also mean the acceptance of the same, is couched very much in an evolutionary sense. From this perspective then, a person evolves as a 'true' individual when s/he returns to 'walk a spiritual path'. Note Brennan's following positioning.

A return to health requires much more personal work and change than simply taking pills prescribed by a doctor. Without personal change you will simply create another problem to lead you back to that source that caused the disease in the first place. I have found that the source is the key. To deal with the source usually requires a life change that ultimately leads to a personal life more connected to the core of one's

being. It leads to a deeper part of ourselves that is sometimes called the high self or the spark of divinity within (1987:7).

I would propose that this sort of thinking needs to be examined in relation to the agency of the gendered body. For on a very simple level, while it promotes the idea that an individual must look at life circumstances and change them, this I would suggest might not always be possible. For while certainly an individual may make beneficial changes in relation to their diet or exercise regimes, when it comes to 'bigger picture' issues such as marital disharmony or financial difficulties then these kinds of dis-ease inducing actualities may be seen to be more 'fixed'. For I have found in Scottish healing contexts that there appear to be many layers of perception relating to one's potentiality to return to a state of health. Those women that I have met who have chosen to change their life circumstances have, in the majority, been economically able to do so. They have come from white, predominantly middle class, financially comfortable lifestyles with good educational qualifications. They have been able to afford to visit a New Age healer in the first place so that they can enable their, to use Helen's words, "process to evolve".

Writers such as Brennan also often incorporate into their healing practice emphasis on the scientific location of the same. For there is a tendency to interpret the spiritual body and the sacred psychologically. Hence in Brennan's case, "enabling one's process to evolve" would be rooted in an awareness of our "character structure" or psychological type. This she bases on Wilhelm Reich's research to which she adds an energetic overlay of aura and chakra patterns. Brennan states that Reich found that the people he treated could be fitted into five major character types. For Reich

... people with similar childhood experiences and child/parent relations had similar bodies... people with similar bodies had similar basic psychological dynamics. These dynamics were dependent not only on the types of child/parent relations, but also on the age at which the child first experiences life so traumatically that it begins to block its feelings and therefore the flow of energy and to develop the defence system that will become habitual. (Brennan, 1988:109)

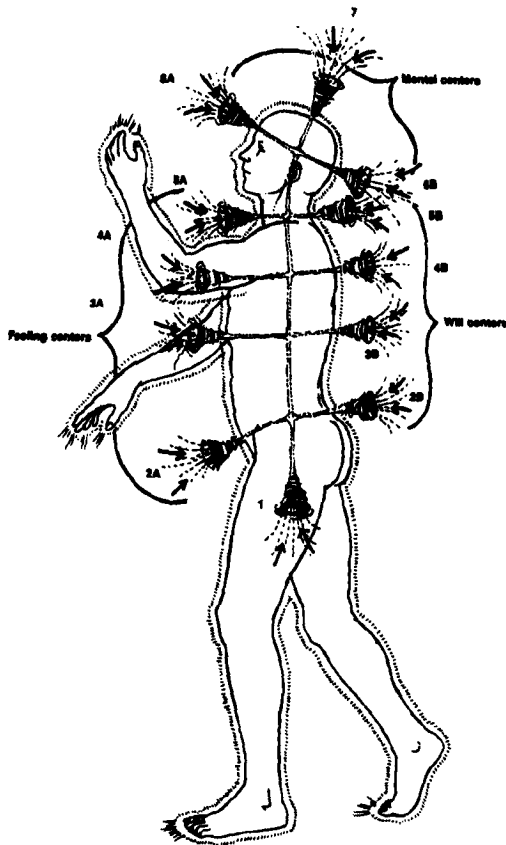
I do feel that it becomes problematic, however, when Brennan uses a framework that categorises people into Schizoid, Oral, Psychopathic, Masochistic or Rigid character structures (1988:110-128). It is not clear why she is choosing a psychological framework to underpin her potentiality to heal the energetic body by seeing auras. What are the hidden socio-political discourses that cause her to choose to frame her arguments within such a scientific perspective? Why is she representing 'the person to be healed' within this sort of typology? For as Carrette states, "psychological facts" arise out of and are part of particular historical conditions (2001:116). "In this sense psychological theory as much creates its objects and subjects as discovers them. Psychology sets up certain disciplinary conditions through which a particular body or subject can be defined" (ibid) and through which it will later be represented.

Hence once more I would propose that it is necessary to acknowledge the interrelationship of the socially constructed gendered body with power, agency and knowledge, in relation to both the healer and healee. For in the healing context, and more specifically in the writing of Brennan, the healee is located within a 'psychologically typed' body through which they must complete their 'life process'. This will involve the individual in 'getting back in touch with their true nature' through following a spiritual path which will enable a deep reconnection with the "high self" or "divine spark" (Brennan, 1988:7) within.

We will see how these points raised above relate to Helen's interpretation of 'defences and masks' later in this chapter. So let us return to the Salisbury Centre and take a further look at the chakra system and its relationship to emotional states.

The chakras and emotions

The presentation of the chakra system in Helen's workshop saw them being tied into two initial sets of groupings, these offering "insights into our individual makeup" (WMH, 2001:4). The first grouping encompassed "Reason, Will and Emotion". For "by looking at our chakras we can understand whether a person works from a position of reason, will or emotion" (ibid). Therefore front chakras 2,3,4,5, are emotion chakras, 1,2,3,4,5, back chakras are will chakras and chakras 6 and 7 - both front and back - are reason chakras. The chakras are described as the 1st being at the root of the spine while the 7th is at the crown of the head.



The Seven Major Chakras, Front and Back Views (Diagnostic View)
 (Brennan, 1986:46).

The second grouping was, Helen stated, whether these chakras were of the earth or of the spirit. "Our first three chakras are very much about our dealings and issue with earth based realities, whereas the top three chakras are a reflection of our spiritual abilities". Hence the earth based chakras "give us the support to move into the higher worlds, and the spiritual chakras the insights to help us deal with life on earth". In commonality with most 'energetic frameworks', Helen proposed that the heart chakra "was the transforming centre for earth and spiritual energies to meet and express" (WMH, 2001:6). This I have heard as being commonly described as the need to "open the heart to give and receive unconditional love". Helen also proposed that for a person to be healthy, all the chakras, both front and back, must be "in balance and

support one another". For "when all the chakras are aligned we can move into the fullness of our individual essence – which is of course our life work" (WMH, 2002:6).

Now Barbara Ann Brennan also states that "the process of healing is really a process of remembering - remembering who you are" (1987:147), where,

No matter how miraculous the result, the healer really induces the patient to heal himself through natural processes, even though they are beyond what is considered to be natural for those who are not familiar with healing...When all the energies in each body are balanced, health occurs. The soul has learned its particular lesson and, therefore, has more cosmic truth (ibid).

We have in the above statements three clearly articulated standpoints. Firstly, though the 'patient' is induced to heal him or herself this possibly 'miraculous' event still relies heavily, initially at least, on the expertise of the healer and the acknowledgement of what are "natural processes" by all involved. As Helen put it "...along this journey of ours we often need helpers to assist in translating this map of ours, so it is important to find therapists with whom you resonate and feel safe" (WMH, 2001:2). Secondly, health is seen to be intimately related to the soul and its level of "cosmic truth" (Brennan, 1987:147) in relation to each person's "life work". Now Brennan's elaboration on this is that the "life task" has two forms.

First, on a personal level, there is a personal task, which has the purpose of learning to express a new part of one's identity. The parts of the soul that are not one with God help form the specific incarnation in order to learn how to be one with the creator and still be individuated. The world task is a gift that each soul comes into this physical world to give to the world (1988:109).

This whole set of suppositions rest on the premise that “the energy fields contain the task of each soul. The character structure can then be seen as a crystallization of the basic problems or personal task a person has elected to incarnate and to solve... [with the basic malady being] self-hatred” (Brennan, 1988:110). Now as it is to trained healers such as Brennan that many women and men turn, what we find at least in the Scottish context is that the healee must learn to recognise for him/herself, based on the healers interpretative frameworks, what is their ‘true life path’ and how this can be realised. This interpretative framework was represented to workshop participants in the following manner.

Chakra Characteristics

<i>Chakra number</i>	<i>Physical place on body</i>	<i>Endocrine Gland</i>	<i>Area of body governed</i>	<i>Meaning to emotional health</i>	<i>Statement made</i>	<i>Colour</i>
1	Base of the tail bone	Adrenals	Spinal column, Kidneys, bladder	Quantity of physical energy, will to live	I want to live	Red
2	Just above pubic bone	Gonads	Reproductive system	Relationship to self and sexuality- feelings of self esteem	I love myself	Orange
3	Solar plexus, stomach	Pancreas	Stomach, liver, gall bladder, nervous system	Intellectual clarity. Who you are in the universe. Feelings towards health	I think	Yellow
4	Heart	Thymus	Heart, blood, vagus nerve. Circulatory system	Love for self and others. Ability to open to love. Openness to life, Ego	I love mankind	Green
5	Throat	Thyroid	Bronchial, Lungs, Vocal Apparatus, Alimentary canal	Communication, Sense of self in life. Connection with the divine.	I connect with divine will	Blue
6	Brow, forehead	Pituitary	Lower Brain Left eye, ears and nose, nervous system	Feels love for all beings. Capacity to visualise and carry out ideas	I love all. I see clearly	Indigo
7	Crown of head	Pineal	Upper brain. Right eye	Integration of life and spiritual aspects of mankind	I know	White (violet)

(Tabulated from information in WMH, 2001)

Helen emphasised to us that it is important that each of the chakras is worked with to clear any imbalances for all are of intertwining significance. Yet I have noted that there also appears to be a tendency with some healees to regard reconnection with 'spirit' through 'healthy crown and brow chakras as of more initial importance than working on root and 'sexual' lower chakras. And though Helen did state that this sort of thinking was attributable to a "faulty belief system" it is still, I would suggest, a possible legacy of dualistic notions of 'higher spirit' and 'lower body' so prevalent in western Christian cultures. Where, to use Helen's words, "earth based realities" may be passed over or accepted, in favour of 'the spiritual quest'.

Dowsing the Chakras

In order to personally experience "the state of the chakras", workshop participants were given dowsing pendulums and were asked to work in pairs. None of us had used a pendulum prior to this. Helen told us that pendulum dowsing "is an effective way of seeing how the energy is flowing in each particular chakra". She also proposed that it was important to keep a clear mind when doing this practice and to not "try for results" as "the ability to accurately read the chakras comes with practice".

The basic dowsing responses were presented in the following manner and have some similarity to Westbank Centre interpretations of the same (see Chapter Seven of this thesis for further evaluation).

Dowsing responses

Clockwise circle	Open and receiving
Anti-clockwise circle	Blocked, and not receiving
Side to side (horizontal)	Putting a lid on
Up and down (vertical)	Avoiding through escapism
Still (no movement)	Not taking in energy, much fear

According to Helen, the larger the circling of the pendulum, whether clockwise or anti clockwise, the more “open” or “blocked” the chakra. The general comments coming from participants on trying dowsing for the first time were “will I be able to do this?” and “it will be really useful to actually see what the chakras are doing”. This sort of feeling I found to be common among participants on this and other workshops where dowsing was practised. For, while it appears to be commonly accepted that the energetic fields practically exist, to actually ‘see’ a representation of the same through a visible medium is of considerable importance in the confirmation of energetic ontologies.

However an interesting exercise that I have not encountered before in fieldwork was included as part of this dowsing practice, for we were asked to pair up and “feel colours with our hands”. In this instance one partner was to lie on the floor with eyes shut in a state of “gentle relaxation” with the mind in an “unfocused state”. The other partner was given pieces of fabric about five centimetres square, which “were the colours of the rainbow and of the chakras”. Initially the ‘active’ participant dowsed each front chakra on their partner’s body to deduce the state of these. In my case - for I had volunteered to be the initial ‘guinea pig’ for demonstration purposes - Helen’s

'readings' had shown that my lower chakras were "negatively open". This meant, I was told, that "you are not as rooted as you could be but have a tendency to spiral off into the spiritual realm whenever possible". This evaluation was supported by my partner who also found that my root chakra was "vertically capped"³⁶. My second and third chakras both indicated a "small anticlockwise circle" while upon dowsing my upper four chakras my partner found that all of these "appear to be fully open as the pendulum is swinging in a large clockwise circle". Helen, who was watching proceedings at this point, suggested that these too were the same as her evaluation "of my auric state".

Having dowsed and ascertained the state of the chakra system, the partner holding the small square of material (she having just been dowsed upon) was asked to "explore [their] relationship with that colour" while holding the cloth in their closed palms. The partner was then to be told what this felt like. Helen advised that we should be sensing whether the cloth felt "warm or cold", whether it felt "light or heavy". "Would you feel comfortable wearing that colour," we were asked? "Would it make you feel energised or tired?"

Upon completion of this exercise there appeared to be considerable surprise among participants when, upon re-reading the noted responses there seemed to be reasonable accuracy in "getting the colours right". In my case, my partner had written down that, for example, I stated that "red material feels tense and hot" and that "I would not wear this colour". Now on a physical level I do not wear this colour or have anything red in my home, while an energetic interpretation of the same would fit with Helen's comments that it is precisely this First root chakra that I needed to work on. Hence my avoidance of the colour would, within her analytical frameworks, be

³⁶ Which according to Brennan meant that I was "Moving feelings and energy toward the spiritual to avoid personal interaction" (1988:84).

regarded as practical proof of this particular healing ontology. Similarly when I described the white material as feeling “airy and light” and it being “the sort of colour I would wear while taking a winter’s walk” this too was regarded by my partner as a correct response. For the crown chakra is generally described in Scottish healing circles as being either white or violet. I would propose that these sort of sensual interpretations cause a shift in ‘mind set’. For example my partner suggested to me that “if you can feel colours then there must be a lot of things you can know through your body that we have been told to disregard by doctors and scientists”.

Exercises such as these above suggest that the possibility of self-validating certain practices in the healing context is of as much importance as “healer presented” belief systems regarding the same. For while it is common to hear healers recounting ‘privileged wisdom’ such as “what the angels, spirit guides or Ascended Masters have said to me”, these appear to often be regarded as a personalised interpretation or addition to the development of ‘natural’ intuitive healing and divinatory abilities.

Therefore what we appear to have in the Scottish healing context is an emphasis on empirical experiential practice, which may, from an insider perspective, open conceptual doorways to “other levels of awareness”. For example in Brennan’s case, she reads the colours of the auric layers as guides to particular “soul levels” (1988:238). This she achieves through clearing the mind through deep meditation (ibid). Within her analytical framework the colours of the aura have meaning.

Accordingly a lot of green in the aura would indicate a soul level of the nurturing compassionate healer with energy levels applicable to this state of being – this involving the heart chakra and its corresponding ‘function’ of “love for self and others”. Similarly, a person with a lot of gold in their aura would be regarded by Brennan as having a “...connection to God and the service of humankind with godlike love” (1988:239).

The Aura and healing

Helen picked up on Brennan's evaluation of the auric layers in the second day of her 'Healing Through Consciousness' workshop. Again emphasis was placed on "experiencing for yourselves what the aura feels like" and "becoming conscious of the energetic defence systems that you utilise". The aura was presented as having seven levels.

Levels of the Aura

<u>Level</u>	<u>Structured</u> <u>Unstructured</u>	<u>Appearance</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Distance</u> <u>from body</u>
1,2&3	<u>Relates to earth</u>			
One	Structured	Blue Light Lines in grid pattern	To form a physical body	¼ - 2"
Two	Unstructured	Coloured clouds in fluid motion	Emotions relating to the self	1-3"
Three	Structured	Bright yellow lines in grid pattern	Thoughts and mental processes	3-8"
	Unstructured	Fine coloured clouds –softer than 2 nd level	Emotions relating to others	½ - 1Foot
5,6& 7	<u>Relates to Spirit</u>			
Five	Structured	Cobalt blue light lines in grid pattern	Blue print for 1 st level to form	1 ½ - 2 Feet
Six	Unstructured	Shimmering Pastel colours	Emotional level of spiritual plane	2 – 2 ¾ Feet
Seven	Structured	Tiny threads of gold/silver light	Mental level of spiritual plane. Holds the aura together	2 ½ - 3 ½ Feet

(WMH, 2001:18)

The significance of these levels, as I have mentioned earlier, is that each is described as 'showing' a person's particular physical and spiritual state. I am not going to

evaluate these in depth here as the aim of this chapter is to provide the conceptual framework for further ethnographic material. What I am going to 'flag up' is how Brennan articulates the relationship between the energetic body and the practice of healing. For throughout the fieldwork chapters of this thesis one will commonly find healers either supporting or critiquing various healing types in relation to the depletion of energy in the healer's body.

For Brennan, and indeed for all the healers that I have met, in order to do healing work on others one must first 'work on self' while having an ethic of self-care. Working on self is generally presented as taking time out each day to do a little meditation or visualisation with a corresponding emphasis on "letting go" of troublesome, often "ego driven" life issues or "energetic defence systems". This is, as I have mentioned, often regarded as being an evolutionary process. Brennan describes the healing act as being one where healing frequencies are passed through the healer's body, these having a particular vibratory rate. Hence the healer's energetic body is to be regarded as a conduit that should vibrate at the same rate of frequency as the healing energy.

Thus in order to give healing, you must run your field like a roller coaster. You will be constantly varying its frequency of vibration. You will be constantly transmitting different intensities of light. This will affect you. It will be good in the sense that it will speed up your evolutionary process, because changes in the frequency and intensity will break up your normal holding patterns and will release the blocks in your field. It may deplete you if you do not keep in top condition. In healing, you do not generate the energy you transmit, but you must first raise your frequency to that of the patient in order to entrain the energy from the Universal Energy Field. This is called harmonic induction and takes a lot of energy and focus to do. As long as your voltage of energy is higher than that of your patient's, you will transmit to him. If however you try to heal when you are very tired, the voltage you are able to produce may be weaker than the

patient's. If you are very healthy, your system will just clear them by energising them or repelling them. If you are worn out, you may take longer to clear the low energies you pick up. If you have a tendency to a particular illness, you could exacerbate your own situation. On the other hand, if you take care of yourself, healing someone with the particular disease that you have tendencies toward may very well help you learn to generate frequencies needed to cure yourself (Brennan, 1988:185).

However, according to Brennan, the healer must also "...open and align to cosmic forces...in her life in general. She must be dedicated to the truth and meticulously honest with herself in all areas of her being" (1988:187). Further, Brennan suggests that in order to do healing work, the healer needs "...some form of spiritual discipline or purification process" (ibid). She promotes the idea that meditation and focusing on a mantra such as "Be still and know I am God " (1987:198) prior to the healing process is beneficial, as is some form of physical exercise to stretch and open the chakras.

This raises for me some interesting questions in relation to healing, gender and power. For what exactly is this truth that one must be open to? What are these 'cosmic forces'? In Brennan's case this appears to be dependent on a Christian heritage. For prior to healing she draws energy up the chakras before making "...an affirmation to align myself with the Christ and the universal forces of light" (Brennan, 1988:203). She also prays "to be a channel for love, truth and healing" (ibid). Now while she also proposes that the healer should, if not having "a connection with the Christ" (ibid), utilise their connection to "Universal Wholeness, God, the light, the Holy of Holies, etc" (ibid), emphasis still appears to be placed on drawing down healing, 'male, light energy'.

Mary Daly states in *Gyn/Ecology* that “Western society is still possessed overtly and subliminally by christian symbolism...Its ultimate symbol...is the all-male trinity itself” (1991:37). Within this symbol for Daly, the

...first person, the father is the origin who thinks forth the second person, the son, the word, who is the perfect image of himself, who is co-eternal and ‘consubstantial’, that is identical in essence. So total is their union that their “mutual love” is expressed by the procession (known as ‘spiration’) of a third person called the “Holy Spirit” whose proper name is “Love” (1991:38).

Daly further proposes that this sort of symbolism leaves no place for “female mythic presence” or “female reality in the cosmos” (ibid). These points should be kept in mind in relation to this study of New Age healing in Scotland. For as we shall see throughout this thesis, again and again healers state that they “draw down love, light and power” in the practice of healing. From a Dalyian perspective, these symbols could be regarded as eminently male and patriarchal. For Daly argues that,

It is significant that certain male-defined feminine qualities are attributed to the holy ghost of christian theology. Thus he is called Helper and Healer – which makes him an appropriate paradigm for the ‘helping professions’...presently [being] perpetuated by the therapeutic establishment in the name of psychological help (1991:230).

Conversely, do Reiki writers such as Diane Stein (who I shall introduce more fully in Chapter Six of this thesis) have an awareness of the potentially patriarchal nature of New Age teachings, this being why she locates healing practice within the realm of women’s spirituality? And how might women healers respond to Dalyian accusations of their being locked into ‘patriarchal systems’ of healing practice? Might not they bring

with them their own strategies for self-empowerment and self-definition as active agents? I shall engage more fully with these propositions in Chapter Eight. So let us return to the aura and look at how Helen described to us our “energetic power plays”.

Defences and Masks

I found Helen’s representation of Brennan’s evaluation of “energetic defences and masks” to be rather similar to the interpretation of ‘how humans use energy’ in James Redfield’s *The Celestine Prophecy* (1994) – this being a much read New Age book with several following works and training packs. Again this book had been recommended to me by my Edinburgh based healer as “a really great read and an accurate interpretation of our auric states...it tells us how we know what others are feeling through the interaction of our energy fields”. For Helen told workshop participants that,

Communication is only 10% verbal – the other 90% visual (such as body language) and energetic communication through the energy field is very accurate, energy can’t lie (WMH, 2001:22).

Because energy can’t lie our own energy system always picks up on other people – if we encounter a situation where we are not totally comfortable we will automatically go into our defence pattern. The person or persons we are with will pick up that we are not being authentic and go into their defence patterns and truthful communication can become almost impossible (ibid).

Therefore the more we can learn about our own defences, the reason that we act the way we do, and how not to can make the world a much easier place to live in. But with this knowledge comes responsibility - we have to be the ones who consciously change

how we react in the world, and so help others to move into their own light in safety and confidence (ibid).

From this perspective then, it becomes imperative to understand our own defence systems so that, as Helen put it, “we can communicate from a position of truth and clarity”. Once again we have here an emphasis on “truth”, where the trained healer is perceived to see others’ “untruths” and then enable these people to go into “their own light”. Hence questions should be asked regarding how and why particular sets of representations are utilised in relation to “our true essence” and the historical background of such interpretations.

Helen stated that there are four primary ways in which humans use energy for, we were told, we either “push, pull, stop or allow” with our energy or engage in a combination of these defences. A person operating from a “push” position will push people away from him/herself with the perception being that as s/he is “energetically stronger” than those around. A “pull” person will try and draw energy into their aura. “Stoppers” put up an “energetic defence field”, while those operating “out of their true essence will have an open heart chakra and will allow energy to flow through and around themselves while maintaining a grounded position”. Hence, according to Helen, one partner in a relationship may be operating from a “stop, you can’t touch me” defence position while the other operates from a “pull, energy leaching” standpoint.

Within these four primary “defence types” Helen listed thirteen ways that an individual’s energetic body ‘reacts’ to encounters with others. These included “The porcupine”, where the aura “appears prickly and sharp”. To others this “can feel like spines going through you. So a person’s reaction is usually to distance themselves”,

while in “the hook, one person hooks on to the head of another. This feels like you can’t escape and is used in confrontation. It feels very threatening”.

Barbara Ann Brennan writes in *Hands of Light* that to the untrained eye, these sorts of auric defence behaviours appear as if the aura is just one mass.

However, through the therapeutic process or any other growth process, the layers of one’s being become more distinct. The client is much more able to distinguish between base emotions, thought processes and the higher emotions of unconditional love associated with the higher auric levels... That is, the client begins to understand how his belief system affects the ideas on the mental body, how that, in turn, affects the emotions, then the etheric and finally the physical body. With this understanding, one can then distinguish between the layers of the auric field... [which] become clearer and more distinct as the client becomes clearer with more self understanding between physical feelings, emotional feelings and acts accordingly (1988:56).

Having outlined the defence systems, workshop participants were asked to answer several questions about their own ways of being.

1. Which defense(s) do you normally use?
2. How do you feel when you are using this/these defense(s)?
3. Do you feel safer, less safe when you are in defense?
4. Do you use different defences at different time, i.e. with parents/children/intimates/friends?
5. If so, which ones for different groups and why?
6. If you let down your defences what do you think would happen?
7. What are you protecting by being in defence?

(WMH, 2001:24)

In conversation with other participants following this self-evaluation, it was commonly voiced that “in reality we all know that we are coming from one or several of these positions” and that “if we deny this, we are not being true to ourselves”. Hence even though none of us had visibly seen our auric ‘behaviour’ the perception stated was that “we really do know who we intuitively are, and can change our ways of being and be more responsible to self and others”. Hence within dialogue such as this above, belief in the visible representations of our behaviour in the aura is based on a trained healer's discursive frameworks. And because the questions above would sit just as easily in the psychological therapeutic context, this being acknowledged by most as scientific and hence as authoritative, then authority might appear to be transferred from this field with the presentation of questions in this way.

This sort of conceptual framework is a familiar one in Scottish healing circles where ‘the spiritual’ is often psychologised. For example Barbara Ann Brennan also tends to present her experiences of learning to see and feel auras in a ‘scientific’ framework. For she proposes, “More than we want to admit, we are the products of our western scientific heritage. How we learned to think and many of our self definitions are used by physicists to describe the physical universe” (1988:21). There appears to be a tension in the above statement with her “more than we want to admit”. This relates to questions I raised earlier in this chapter with regard to the perceived need for writers like Brennan to couch their healing evaluations - or at least to support the same - within psychological interpretative paradigms. For she, like so many Scottish healers, also regards it to be just a matter of time before, as one healing practitioner put it to me, “science catches up and proves the reality of what healers have always known”. Yet Brennan also argues that we need to move from mechanistic, rule-governed

Newtonian notions of the basic laws of nature to a position where “we broaden our frameworks of reality...[and acknowledge that] Our experience exists outside this Newtonian system” (1988:23). These sorts of propositions will be kept firmly in mind as I progress through further representation of ethnographic material. And I shall return to the ‘relationships’ between science and healing in Chapter Eight where I argue that New Age women subversively engage with scientific and bio-medical approaches to health.

The Brennan based healing workshop finished with an introduction to how we not only use auric defence systems but also “present masks to the world”. I shall very briefly note this material here before moving on to present further fieldwork material - again at The Salisbury Centre - this being based on a six week healing course run by Maureen Lockhart.

Types of Masks

According to Helen “our mask self is a further extension of our energetic defences. We use it to hold back further still from the world and try and protect ourselves from getting hurt”. This occurs because “you don’t want to show your true face to the world because you feel this to be flawed and imperfect”. Helen emphasised that most human beings feel the need to conform to an idealised image of “what we ought to be” and that this “keeps us agitated and at a distance from the peace of self-acceptance”. However, we were advised, “on an energetic basis the more we hide behind our mask the more difficult it becomes to sense the real authentic person.... And so with relationships communication can become from mask to mask, instead of truth to truth” (WMH, 2001:27). Three types of masks were presented as being “how we deal with the world”.

Firstly, if we are wearing “the mask of love we try to get love from others by appearing to always be a loving person. We project niceness and goodness”. Helen stated that the second commonly worn mask was “the mask of power. The wearer of this mask will attempt to control others by being aggressive, domineering and independent”. This will then lead to feelings that self-esteem comes from winning at all costs with a corresponding denial of human need and weakness. “We use this mask to escape from vulnerability experienced in childhood...[and our] denial of real needs for warmth, love and affection result in an inability to accept life and self as they really are” (WMH, 2001: 27). The third mask is, Helen stated, the “mask of serenity”. The wearer of this will appear to others as serene and detached. “This mask is chosen because as a child we may not have gained love or power through the other masks, so we choose to withdraw altogether from our problems. Energetically this means that our life force becomes shut down until we learn to deal with these issues” (ibid).

Helen suggested to us that “when you are using your masks you will find that it will actually cause people to reject you because they can feel that you are not being genuine. This results in exactly what you fear the most – being rejected and feeling unloved”. However we were also advised that “the mask or masks that you use are always a distortion of genuine high self qualities. For we do have strong resources of love, power and serenity. These are our natural gifts. We need to be our true selves”.

The main antidote to the mask is simple – to learn to love and accept our selves, and release our fears around others' views of us – a simple task but one that can take a lifetime to achieve, so be gentle and supportive of yourself. Remember that you do not have to be perfect (WMH, 2001:28).

Each participant was then asked to think what kind of mask they used, what it looked like to the rest of the world and how it felt to wear it. Responses to these questions were rather hesitant. The four people in my group felt that these issues were personal and private and appeared to feel rather uncomfortable discussing the same. One man in particular withdrew from the group and said that he wished to take no further part in the discussion as "it is nobody's business but mine how I feel". This occurred after we were asked to be open with each other and talk about "what we were afraid that the world would see under our masks". However the remaining three women did, after his departure, openly talk about their fears of being "not good enough to do what they really wanted to do". All of the women had gone through some life crisis – one had just been through a divorce, another a parental death, and the third a loss of work due to health issues. There appeared to be also a general perception that it was difficult to accept oneself "as you really are" and not pick out all one's perceived weak points, such as lack of confidence and dependence on others for approval. It was also voiced by the women in my group that they felt that doing a course such as Helen's enabled them to become more aware of "what life is really about". For example, Alison stated that she had always felt that she had been on a spiritual path but that after she had got married and become a full time working mother, she had no time for herself any more. This she stated, led her to "feel always hassled...feel guilty that I was not happy...and feel really tired trying to hold down a job as well". Now that Alison had been divorced and her children were more independent - her son being eighteen and her daughter twenty - she felt that it was time to return to [her] spiritual side. "So I've been doing meditation, I've learnt Reiki, and I go on workshops like this as often as I can".

This sort of personal profile is rather common in Scottish healing circles, where the majority of seekers regularly attend courses and workshops on self-spirituality and self-development. There does appear to be a slight shift in emphasis between the

Edinburgh and more rural Fife and Tayside contexts in the formulation of the seeker's path. For in these latter contexts it appears to be the practical nature of healing courses that draws participants initially. Here emphasis tends to be placed on learning the practical aspects of healing work so that these can be applied to self, family members and friends, rather than on spiritual development as an end in itself; this being the more predominant Edinburgh perspective. This point is worth keeping in mind in relation to later ethnographic material. The final course I participated in at the Salisbury centre in the spring of 2001 was Maureen Lockhart's 'Healing Circle'.

The Healing Circle

This healing circle ran for one evening a week over a six-week period. The facilitator Maureen was well spoken and had been awarded a PhD in Complementary Health some time previously. She had lived for many years in India and appeared to have extensive knowledge of Indian health techniques and meditation practices. Maureen represented the human body in the following manner.

Each of you has an energy field and this will be...at any one time...in a particular stage of the cyclical healing process. The three positions in this cycle are (a) where you are just surviving often after a major trauma (b) where you are in the middle ground and think that you are OK even though you may not be and (c) where you are thriving. Often when you are thriving you are thrown back to surviving. This should not be viewed negatively but rather be seen as part of the cyclical process.

In the survival stage of healing you will always feel low on energy. This is the dark side...the Mother side...the nurturing side. The healing side is the light side...the

Father side...and is about travelling to the light and the sky. This is the inspirational side of the healing process.

The way to connect Father and Mother is to BREATHE. For when you expire, you draw energy down through the body. When you inspire, you draw energy up. Breathing balances the body and is earthing. Healers must learn how to breathe properly in order to heal effectively.

Maureen suggested that many healers often work from the wrong chakra when doing healing work, in that they focus on the solar plexus chakra as the channel through which healing energy travels. This comment ties in with other healers' perspectives in the Scottish field. For I have listened to many discussions about the potential for healers to become drained in the healing process as the client has "aurically linked in to the healer's solar plexus chakra and leached energy". For this reason some healers wear metal amulets over this chakra or fasten a belt around this area with a large buckle over the chakra itself. Maureen emphasised however, that rather than healing through the solar plexus chakra the healer should become attuned to the higher spiritual energies. This would be possible once one had developed awareness of "the six chakras inside the head which are to do with the soul's purpose and mystical experience". These were described as being in, for example "the roof of the mouth and the back of the head". We were also advised that there were several chakras in the aura above the head. Hence "awareness" and "the breath" were presented as important elements of walking a 'healer's path'.

For Maureen, it was with an awareness of the chakras above the head that one began the "dark side" of the healing process. For it was at this "spiritual level" that energetic imbalance began, this leading to disease. "Therefore you should start at the eighth

chakra [above the head] and work down noting blockages and imbalances in the chakras by breathing through them". The auric levels were described in the following manner, with level one being the 'furthest away' from the body.

1. The Causal Level, where we contact our spirit guides and those of the client we may be working with.
2. The Soul Body, where we may deal with past life issues, the continuity of life consciousness and relationship issues.
3. The Astral Body which is to do with relationships in the here and now.
4. The Mental Body, where we may engage with states of mind, thought processes and stuck attitudes.
5. The Emotional Body which is the level where we need to engage with unexpressed emotion, fear etc.
6. The Etheric Body which is related to physical processes.

Throughout the six weeks of this course we regularly practised breathing techniques where we visualised drawing breath up 'from the earth', this to be expressed through all the chakras progressively, or drawing breath down through the auric chakras, again expressing in the same manner. The joining point of this exercise was to draw breath/energy up through the root chakra, down through the crown chakra and express both 'streams' through the fully open heart chakra. "In this way you can send healing to anywhere you want, be this a client, place or situation".

Spirit guides

Like many other healers in the Scottish context, Maureen emphasised the importance of "connecting with your spirit guides". In order to do this focus was again placed on

“being at one with the breath” and being “centred and calm”. For when one is in this state the “greater senses or Mahabuttas” become available, and one can learn to “hear internally with the inner sense” this being “at the same level as the spirit guides”. Maureen proposed that all healers need to develop the ability to listen to their inner hearing and “feel” others (spirits and humans) around them. She also emphasised the importance of “intention” to the act of healing “For right intention and sincerity of spiritual purpose along with your spirit guides will protect you while you are doing healing work”.

Maureen stated that her first “sense of presence” of having spirit guides was when she was doing osteopathy and bodywork many years ago. For she “could feel them working through [her] hands... I knew I had a guardian spirit too, even though I hadn't seen him”. She described her process of becoming aware of the ‘nature’ of this latter entity in the following manner.

I had my bag stolen and was very upset by this so I went to meditate at an angel altar [in a Christian Church in England]. I was jolted out of this meditation when I saw a big pair of very frightening eyes. I returned to a friend's house as I wanted to focus on who this guide was but I was unable to get a clear picture. Some time later I returned to India and found in a book that this guide was the fierce king of angels, Metatron. Metatron is with me at all healings and is as an all-seeing eye. He only actively helps me at times of crisis. At other times my two other spirit guides are present.

Maureen described the first of these other guides as being a woman whose purpose is to “give love”. Maureen ‘sees’ this in visualisation as a “pale pink rose...the symbol of divine love. All I need to do to gain this guide's help is to visualise this rose”. Her second guide is a street child from India. This boy she described as having a crippled

leg and that she “knew him from a past life”. She also added here that the female spirit guide had been validated to her by a psychic medium at a fair (though the drawn image was somewhat different), while she had also spoken to an elderly doctor in India who had known the street child.

The feminine guide always appears at my left when I am healing, the masculine on my right. The male guide’s image is as a globe of light, which feels ecstatic. The female guide is always there when I meditate and both guides are freely available whenever I need them.

The experience of having “energies” or “spirit guides” was a commonly voiced fact to several of the participants at this healing circle. Take for example the following statements describing these experiences.

From a French woman,

When I am meditating I feel a strong energy pushing from inside which then moves outwards. My body shakes once the energy has left. There is a feeling of heaven being inside me... a sense of great happiness.

I feel that the healing force comes from some sort of higher power and that I shouldn’t resist this.

From an English woman in her fifties,

I have had the experience of seeing Tibetan bowls when meditating. The sound and the energy travels when these bowls are played. The whole room feels full of energy

when these bowls are being played. There is a feeling of pure joy and a sense of being in an ecstatic state.

I also have an Indian guide who wears two feathers in his hair. He gave a white one to me as a gift from a sage. Whenever he is with me I feel safe.

As part of this workshop we were asked to go into a meditative state and, if we had not met our guides already, to allow pictures of these to come. We were also to see if our guides wanted us to have a gift from them. Here is what some people experienced.

From a male self-defined shamanic practitioner,

I have met this guide before. He gave me a black feather...I can't remember his name but I think it is something like Black Hawk and he's a Native American tribal chieftain.

From a woman in her sixties,

This time [in this meditation] I was in a forest in the Himalayas. I was in trouble. I was lost. A female guide arrived just as a huge sun came up...and there was golden light coming down from her crown. I was aware of a great sense of gentleness as she gave me a red rope, a crown and a sceptre and she said to me that I was 'to step into [my] life mission'.

Maureen interjected here that the gifts one receives from a guide might vary according to the "message to be heard" and "the work to be done".

From a woman in her thirties who was a Reiki practitioner,

I saw a sensual green light and a female child. I felt she was telling me that I need to put more fun back into my life. I'm not sure of her name but she gave me a white rose and a chalice

From a woman in her sixties,

I saw a cow and a milkmaid. This was a flashback I think from childhood, She gave me a gift of self-contentment.

Maureen proposed that images such as these are archetypal and that the "higher self has wisdom and will tell you things in altered states of consciousness that you wouldn't otherwise know. I want you to go back into a meditative state and ask what these gifts mean".

Responses to this some time later were that for the English woman who received the gift of a white feather, this meant that she was to work on "purity of character". For the male shaman, the black feather meant "journeying", while for the Reiki practitioner, the chalice symbolised "purity of spirit"

We can see then, in the few examples described here that, as Michael Brown has stated following his research among channellers in America, "Mediums and channels bypass religious specialists to establish direct contact with the spirit world" (1997:10) - though one could of course also argue that to some extent the process of "communicating with your spirit guide" was facilitated and later interpreted by Maureen. However Brown further proposes that "The messages that they [channellers] find there reveal local concerns that have not yet breached the walls of institutionalised religion, which in its search for permanence tends to respond slowly to changing social

conditions” (1997:10). This is of some significance to the Scottish healing context. For here healers do very often call on spirit guides or angels to help them in their healing work. And they do regard these entities to be useful guides who personally assist by “showing where to place the hands” or by providing “an energy boost” in the healing process – these being ‘activities’ that mainstream religions and conventional medicine would not countenance.

Healing narratives encompassing spirit entities tell us a lot about how healers see the world and how they “frame their personal search for meaning” (Brown, 1997:10). For the descriptions above utilise Christian, Native American and Buddhist symbolism and reflect the common New Age tendency of mixing and matching according to need. And though, as Brown has suggested, personally received channelled messages do to some extent bypass mainstream religious institutions, these representations are most certainly historically reconstructed to suit the individual from particular religious and spiritual traditions. Hence they implicitly tell us about discourses of power.

As a final example of the representation of the human energetic body in the Scottish context I am going to briefly overview here a Wholistics perspective. This workshop was to have been held in the Salisbury Centre but was relocated to a house in Fife due to low numbers of applicants. This appeared to be because of the ‘scientific’ way in which this course was presented in the programme without the usual emphasis on experiential healing practice.

Wholistics

Attending this weekend workshop were six women ranging in age from approximately twenty five to seventy years. They had travelled from across Scotland to come to this

event, had a history of spiritual seeking and practice and three were practising healers. All were friends of the house owner. This one day workshop was entitled 'Wholistics' and was run by Rob, who has taken the Sufi name of Bari.

The underlying theme of this workshop was that we should all live within a Wholistic paradigm where each cell is to be seen as holographically mirroring the whole. In turn each individual should regard her/himself as interrelating with all other members of humanity "as one". Bari proposed that "healing" should be seen as "the resonating of the healer to the universal frequency of the earth and the universe", rather than as the channelling of spiritual power, love or energy through the healer. Therefore for Bari, a primary prerequisite for effective healing "is to live in a balanced state". He illustrated his trademarked Wholistic framework with various diagrams and drew briefly from Sufi, Taoist and 'New Physics' frameworks.

The Wholistic Whole

Bari introduced four elements which, he stated, interrelate with the 'self' to form a Wholistic whole. These were to be visualised within a Tetrahedron (pyramid) model with all parts touching. These elements were (a) emotion (b) intellect (c) creativity and (d) intuitiveness. He proposed once human beings were seen in this way then one could remove oneself from a "Descartian positioning" where "intellect and reason are seen to be more valuable than the body and the senses". Hence in order to live Wholistically "you need to value each of these four elements within yourself equally".

Bari illustrated his tetrahedron model by overlaying it on a diagram of a standing person, vertically divided down the centre of the body by the *ha ra*³⁷ line - this commencing above the head and ending below the body. The body was overlaid by three oval spheres one encircling the head and shoulders, the second the heart and stomach areas and the third encircling the abdominal cage. In turn these three 'energy ovals' constituted, we were advised,

- the 'higher self' which encompassed the crown, brow and throat chakras (with a prism colour of purple),
- the 'whole self' which encompassed the heart and solar plexus chakras (with a prism colour of green),
- the 'lower self' which encompassed the sacral and root chakras (with prism colours of red and orange).

Bari proposed that each human should be regarded as being in fundamental accord with yin yang polarity and that the healer works through this energy field³⁸ "...where the yin is behind the person and content while yang is in front and pushing out". This positioning led Bari to suggest that "this is one reason why few men attend New Age workshops, for men emphasise their yang 'doing' side and continually strive at the expense of balance".

³⁷ Diane Stein describes the *ha ra line* as being the central energy channel through which chi or *prana* flows (1995:80).

³⁸ It appears that Bari subscribes, in general, to a view of the *yin-yang* polarity in the same way as Capra, where a patriarchal positioning of *yang* as masculine and active and *yin* as feminine and passive would be incorrect. Wouter Hanegraaff's interpretation of Capra's positioning is that according to Capra "ancient Chinese thought did not entertain the idea of passivity as understood by us. Both the masculine and feminine pole are active, but *yin* corresponds to 'responsive, consolidating, co-operative activity' and *yang* to 'aggressive, expanding, competitive activity. Yin action is conscious of the environment, *yang* action is conscious of the self [*Yin* and *Yang* are also associated] with "...two kinds of consciousness; the intuitive and the rational." Hanegraaff (1998).

Bari locates health and wholeness as being centred in the middle auric field encompassing the heart chakra, this also being “the root of balance on the vertical pole of intentionality on the *ha ra* line”. He also suggested at this point that “a good exercise to balance the aura is to spin like a Dervish, with one palm up and one palm facing down”.

Wholistic healing

Bari proposed that healing takes place when the healer resonates with the earth’s frequency. He sees the earth as a capacitor that stores energy and gives out ‘sparks’ that may be seen “as lightning”. Hence a person starts to heal him/herself spontaneously once s/he consciously tunes in to this earth frequency. For Bari therefore, seeing healing as an individual process is a misnomer, for “every person is part of the four elemental holographic model. Healing occurs when the higher self comes down the *ha ra* line of intentionality, where it resonates with the Yin which has travelled up from the earth and permeated the body through the endocrine glands associated with the chakras on this line. And, according to Bari, intentionality is also central to the healing process and the healing crisis. Hence a person will intentionally choose their life situation and either a state of balance leading to health, or imbalance leading to dis-ease.

In the above framework we can again see how a New Age healing framework is an eclectic mix of religious traditions and New Age philosophy. Bari presents his tetrahedron model as a holographic reality and emphasises the importance of valuing the senses and the intuition as much as one would the intellect. He also, like many Scottish healers, suggests that intention is crucial to ‘our place in the world’ and the healing process. His particular search for authenticity leads him in the direction of

'new physics' and holographic paradigms – these being rather dense 'scientific' fields of thought – which he then mixes with various religious traditions. This emphasis on the 'scientific' may be why he appears to be rather more favoured in New Age academic circles such as the Centre for Human Ecology in Edinburgh. However, for participants at the above workshop his material was regarded to be, as one participant told me, "rather too complicated. I wasn't sure where he was coming from and if I'd got him right".

As we shall see in later chapters on specific healing practices, many of the discourses introduced here fit well into each of these ontologies. For claims to authenticity in relation to both self and healing practice, holistic connectedness and the nature of reality are central themes in healing discourse. As I progress through these chapters I shall expand from the microdynamics of Salisbury Centre workshops to other contexts and healing networks. In order to relate these to academic theoretical evaluations of healing I shall, in Chapter Four, pay particular attention to the writing of Meredith McGuire. I shall also draw in medical anthropological evaluations of healing, power and the body. Overall, I shall continue to build up a picture of the construction of gendered identities and their interrelationships to power.

Chapter Four

Healing in the New Age

Over the last three chapters I have begun to paint a picture of the New Age scene, with a mixture of textual and 'in the field' enquiry. As we have seen, one of the most visible aspects of New Age thought and practice is the widespread concern with health, this being conceptualised within "energetic healing" cosmologies. In this chapter I will begin to relate my research to the healing typology of Meredith McGuire. For she has provided us with a methodologically sound qualitative study of ritual healing in suburban America. In this she examines the role of the healer, transformations of the self and help-seeking beyond bio-medical models of health. Her work is significant in that she evaluates the widespread use of alternative medical systems by middle class persons and their notions of health and wellness, sources of healing power and associated healing practices. Correspondingly her writing forms a useful basis for this examination of healing in the Scottish context and the construction of a decentralised narrative of power.

I shall also introduce here medical sociological evaluations of the body, healing and society, placing emphasis on these writers' usages of Foucault to unravel the power dynamics of these fields. However initially, it will be useful to examine how the term "healing" itself has been used. For in the Scottish context, "healing" is often defined against biomedical "curing" models of health and hence intimately relates to identity and power.

Healing

Wouter Hanegraaff proposes in *New Age Religion and Western Culture* that his etic evaluation of the meaning of the term 'healing' is more precise than emic interpretations of the same. He adopts the medical anthropological terminology of Arthur Kleinman in relation to 'disease' and 'illness' in support of his position. For Kleinman,

DISEASE refers to abnormalities in the structure and/or function of organs and organ systems; pathological states whether or not they are culturally recognised; the arena of the biomedical model.

ILLNESS refers to a person's perceptions and experiences of certain socially devalued states including, but not limited to, disease (cited in Hanegraaff, 1998:43).

Hence for Hanegraaff, while diseases are biophysical conditions which medical practitioners aim to cure, the state of illness is more than just a physical malfunction but involves the "social, psychological, and spiritual condition of the sick person...and constitutes the proper domain of healing" (1998:43). He is correct to assert that in traditional cultures the healing of illness is of considerable significance, while probably, in the west, it is on specific diseased conditions that the bio-medical practitioner concentrates – the latter approach being critiqued by some due to its loss of emphasis on healing the whole person. This most certainly is a common criticism in Scottish healing circles. For within this field of practice healers will try to restore health to the whole person – she being seen as having spiritual, emotional and physical aspects, which are intimately related to all of her surrounding environmental factors and influences. As Hanegraaff states, "The scope of factors relevant to healing, illness and

health is therefore extended far beyond the reaches of conventional western medicine” (ibid).

I would like to raise a couple of points in relation to Hanegraaff's above proposals. Firstly, many healers would dispute that his etic interpretation was more precise than their own, for he is applying a medical anthropological interpretation of 'healing' that does not fit well to New Age representations. Healers in the Scottish context often refer to the “dis-eased” body. This dis-eased body is not at ease with its self and with its way of life. It is not in harmony with its spiritual path. It is constrained and limited by its ego-driven needs and materialist tendencies. It is fragmented. It is not whole. Disease is not solely a pathological state. It is a de-valued state. For the dis-eased person will often express feelings of suffering and loss in relation to “how I am perceived and how I perceive myself”. We saw an example of this in the last chapter where Alison expressed guilt at being “not happy” as a working, married, mother. For though she was secure in a material sense, she was experiencing feelings of suffering due to lack of connection with her spiritual side.

Hanegraaff proposes that “traditional and New Age approaches to healing share a concern with meaning...illness is typically given symbolic form by being interpreted in the context of general cultural beliefs” (ibid). This ties well into my findings. For within Scottish healing circles a person's physical health is seen to be intimately related to its holistic state and the connections between self and others. This of course relates to the social constraints and roles that each person 'plays'. However as has also been observed, mind, body and spirit 'states' are given further depth within Scottish New Age healing circles in that they are regarded as 'energetic'. Therefore if a person visits a healer for help with a dis-eased condition, this will be attributed to imbalances or blockages in that person's energetic pathways in the esoteric body. Consequently

there are numerous courses within the Scottish New Age scene, such as the one that I attended, which cater for the healer who wishes to learn to see and interpret auric and energetic states. This is the central interpretative framework for New Age healing work in Scotland and is, I would argue, intimately related to the engendered body as both instrument and site of power.

For when a person is advised that they are an energetic holistic entity, and that in order to be healthy this must be “worked on”, then this leads the individual to seek courses that practically teach this way of being. Hence they draw from a wide diversity of interpretative frameworks, eclectically picking and mixing and what has most relevance personally. But once on this course of personal redefinition, they also find that they have (or at least ought) to become disciplined in their holistic practice. Note the Salisbury Centre’s Deed of Trust, where one of its key objectives was to “help and educate young people to develop their physical, mental and spiritual capacities and their self discipline and loyalty to mankind”. In order to fulfil these objectives teachers help the New Age student to learn appropriate thought, behaviour and practice until they themselves can self regulate their emotions, attitudes and spiritual practice. Hence ‘appropriate’ bodies are produced in healing circles as they are in other areas of society.

Having begun to set the scene, let us now return to the representation of healing in Scotland. I shall relate this initially to Meredith McGuire’s taxonomy of “healing types”, bearing in mind however that there is considerable blurring of boundaries between these in the Scottish context. I would suggest therefore, that these ‘types’ might be more usefully regarded as being constitutive elements of healing practice, which relate to the formation of various models of subjectivity – of energetic being in the world.

McGuire notes that one significant New Age emblem is that of “Jesus as healer”. As this motif is popular in Scottish healing contexts, I shall initially present a picture of this positioning with some reflection on how her theoretical ideas may inform this particular Scottish ethnography. I shall also relate here, to some relevant points as made by Hedges and Beckford in *Holism, Healing and the New Age* (2001). For these writers rightly propose that though “self -healing” is of considerable importance in New Age circles, so is the emphasis on healing other people’s bodies. This will lead us into the latter part of this chapter where I shall review some medical anthropological interpretations of holistic health.

In *Ritual Healing in Suburban America* (1998) McGuire presents her investigative, interview-based research, among some one hundred and thirty healers and healing groups in suburban Essex County and New Jersey. She proposes that that there are five main types of alternative healing thought and practice:

- Healing as practised by Christian groups, in accord with the teachings of Jesus ‘as healer’, emphasising the importance of healing to the early church.
- Healing as afforded through harmony within, this found through practices such as meditation, which focus on inner spirituality and contacting the ‘true self’.
- Those healers who acknowledge the role of the ego in generating illness.
- Practices concerned with healing through the use of ‘external powers’, such as spirit guides, psychic groups or crystal usage.
- Practitioner techniques where the patient is treated through a specific practice such as shiatsu, chiropractic or acupuncture (1998:18 - 31).

Christian 'elements' and healing

According to Hanegraaff, in spite of the New Age's common critique of mainstream Christianity, its interest in Eastern religion and its religious inclusivity of thinking, "it is still Christ who dominates New Age speculation wherever the need is felt to explain the relation between God and humanity by some mediating principle" (1998:189). This leads important international healing figures such as Bruce MacManaway, Richard Gerber, Caroline Myss et. al. to acknowledge the importance of Jesus as healer par excellence while also incorporating Theosophical and 'Oriental' elements in their healing practice.

New Age literature on 'Jesus as healer' is also commonplace. For example New Age author David Harvey states in *The Power to Heal* (1983), that while references to spiritual healing are to be found in the pre Christian era and within the Old Testament, as far as the West is concerned the best-known healer is still Jesus. He proposes that Jesus' life and teachings established a new phase in the history of healing while providing at the same time a link with older traditions. For "Jesus was the apotheosis of the healer-priest who had played such a central role in Egyptian, Greek and other religions. He cured the sick through the laying on of hands, by command, by anointing them with his saliva and, as in the case of the centurion's servant, by the power of his mind at a distance...In the most dramatic way he showed that the physical body could be healed by spiritual means" (1983:38).

These sorts of positioning in relation to 'Jesus as healer' are highly characteristic of the eclectic tendencies of New Age "historiography" (Hanegraaff, 1998:318). For as Hanegraaff proposes, "It seems that New Agers are not interested in incompatibilities between fine (and even less fine) points of historical detail; what matters to them is

only the very general belief that Jesus was an Essene...[and that] the rise of Christianity has been one big mistake, based on regrettable misinterpretations of Jesus' message and intentions" (1998, pp318-20).

As we move into a review of Meredith McGuire's 'healing types', noting how her ideas will inform the design of my fieldwork, we would do well to keep Hanegraaff's statement in mind. For while he is generally correct in this assertion, he has also based this positioning solely on textual enquiry in Holland between 1990 and 1992. Accordingly, he has, though providing an excellent account of New Age thought, not brought out in entirety the nuances of experiential 'fluid' practice in the field. For these 'nuances' to be brought into the study of religions we must, I would argue, promote empirical research so that we can find out more precisely what New Agers actually do in their, in this case, healing practice, and then relate this to gender, reformulations of identity and agency. Hence I would be in agreement with Dominick Corrywright when he states, "The history of religions is an object lesson against over-reliance on texts as expressions of religiosity" (2003:pp26-27).

Christian Healing Groups

McGuire proposes that healing for Christian groups (fundamentalist, Pentecostal, neo-pentecostal, healing cults and non-denominational groups) is primarily based on "new testament descriptions of Jesus' ministry and the place of healing in the early church" (1998:19). Membership is primarily white female with "men [being] conspicuously predominant in number and influence among the leadership of all groups (ibid). This applies even if membership is entirely female as, for example, in Women's Aglow International. Here "the international organisation requires that each chapter's advisors

be men (since they believe that Scripture teaches that women should be submissive to men's authority" (ibid)³⁹.

Healing activities in groups such as Women's Aglow usually involve the "laying on of hands" and prayer and are often related to marital or family problems with a mutual network of support developing.

A key difference with this form of religiosity and the New Ager in Scotland appears to lie in the former's interpretations of health. For while the New Ager usually goes to a healer because of dis-ease, the recruit to the Christian group (as above) typically does not have a pre-existing condition; "rather through the experience of the prayer group, members come to realize their needs for healing and to believe in dramatic healing power" (McGuire, 1998:38). The concept of health is in turn centred around the group's beliefs that even if the physical body is healthy, the 'person' might not be. For "health refers to attitudes that are ultimately linked with spiritual sources" (ibid), to be healthy is to have a good relationship with God...and Jesus is "the embodiment of their ideal of health" (McGuire, 1998:39).

In the above (Christian healing groups) we can clearly see that women are located 'as less than men' - their location as such being based on doctrinal 'truths'. They have two 'male' figures as role models of health, Jesus and God, and are told that it is not possible to reach "their" perfect state in this lifetime. Correspondingly the group member must regularly attend healing meetings so that to enable a progression along the path to health "until the final 'healing' – death" (ibid). This does not initially appear to be an empowering situation for women. And yet emphasis is placed within these

³⁹ Women's Aglow fellowships have developed worldwide with over thirteen hundred groups. It takes its name from scripture, namely Roman's 12:1, where Christians are admonished and told to 'Be aglow and burning with the Spirit' (McGuire, 1998:19).

sorts of Christian groups on healing emotional, spiritual and relational problems with a mutual network of support being built up. Healing is done for family members and friends and for others in the healing group. Society as a whole is seen to be in need of healing “ in the sense that it [is] not in the right relationship with God” (McGuire, 1998:41), leading to violent crime, “alcoholism, adultery and abortion” (ibid). This form of healing then, appears to be bounded by patriarchal structures and moral codes and a ‘literal’ interpretation of the Bible ‘as truth’, with the foremost cause of illness being sin (McGuire (1998:46).

“It’s because of [personal] sin that we derive all the illness in the world” (Women respondent, McGuire, 1998:47)

While it has been outwith the scope of this thesis to examine Christian healing groups in Scotland⁴⁰, McGuire’s material above is useful to note in relation to notions of the causes of health and disease in Christian groups and the location of ‘healing power’. For these appear to differ from the ideas I have encountered in Scottish healing circles. Here emphasis is placed on negating the ‘principle’ that sin causes dis-ease, while Jesus becomes “healer par excellence” and a role model, rather than the unattainable embodiment of perfect health. This shift in positioning appears to allow women more space to heal self and others on a ‘more level playing field’ in that they appear not to be locked into traditional hierarchical, patriarchal leadership structures. However for the moment let us return to McGuire’s second motif, that of “harmony within”.

⁴⁰ I have not spent time with Christian groups primarily because, as Heelas has argued, they place emphasis on external healing agencies with a corresponding shift of authority from the Self, this taking “us away from New Age Self-spirituality” (Heelas, 1996:81-2).

Harmony Within

McGuire states that within this motif considerable emphasis is placed on inner spirituality where one works to “get in touch with one’s true self” (McGuire, 1998:24) through practices such as meditation. This kind of ‘thought’ she locates within ‘Metaphysical Groups’ such as Christian Science, Religious Science and Unity, (Unity School of Science). Membership of these sorts of groups is more diverse than Christian groups with black, white, young and elderly members. In Unity - a prime example of this sort of group - middle class white women predominate in membership and leadership roles. “Members [are] not particularly sectarian about their beliefs, compared with Christian healing groups, but they [are] not as eclectic as adherents of meditation, human potential, or occult beliefs” (ibid). Unity differs from the aforementioned Christian groups because of its emphasis on the self as transcendent. Life’s events are not chance affairs but intuitively known to the “inner spirit” as activities of God. If one is true to the moment and learns the lesson from life’s experiences, then one opens the way for divine experiences. Hence emphasis is placed on the “here and now” and individual responsibility, while power is seen as being located within the self (McGuire, 1998:22-24).

Most importantly, illness, for metaphysical Groups, is not regarded as being “a result of sin”, while Divinity is imminent rather than transcendent. Hence health is attainable. As members told McGuire, “We’re made perfect; it’s what we do – its our wrong thinking that brings about the imperfections “ (McGuire, 1998:81). For a healthy mind equates to a healthy body, health is not solely spiritual and one should regard oneself as being inherently moral, kind, thoughtful and caring because “we’re a likeness of God” (ibid).

These sort of groups hold 'philosophies' rather similar to those I have introduced in Scottish healing circles. Here too we find emphasis on meditation as a tool to clear the mind from "the obstructions of negative thinking" in favour of positive thought and speech. Similarly, metaphysical groups' emphasis on experiential individualised practices such as "positive visualisations" is also commonplace in Scotland. McGuire notes that members when suffering from severe arthritic pain, may visualise themselves in active roles such as dancing - now pain free - to support their positive affirmations for the same. Or they may visualise themselves in a stream of healing white light, which may be seen as representing Christ, (1998:224) this in turn 'removing' pain and increasing flexibility.

McGuire also tells us that group members may visualise a carefully self-constructed room or garden, which one may 'visually alter' according to need. The member may go to such "imaginary space" as a retreat "and these visualisations are clearly part of a believer's prevention and healing of illness. However "they [are] not typically images of action. Most visualisations used in Christian, meditation and psychic occult groups involved imagining action or interaction which produced change " (McGuire, 1998:225). This is an interesting point and shows the blurring of boundaries between 'healing types' of practices and beliefs in both America and Scotland. For I have found in similarity to Tanice Foltz, she having researched healing with a Hawaiian Kahuna in California in the 1980s, that visualisations of quiet spaces such as gardens may "be active". For *actual* healing of self or 'a client' may be visualised and effected within this 'imaginary space'. This occurs as a result of focusing on one's vibrational rate to, as Brennan advised, align it with the patient's energy so that energy from the Universal Energy field may be entrained. The key points here are that visualisation and "mental channelling of energy or vibrations" (McGuire, 1998:226) have enormous "appeal in

contemporary society... Especially important is the extent to which these uses of imagery are creative, individualistic and active" (McGuire, 1998:226).

And we would do well to reflect that in the Scottish context, the emphasis on "restoration of order, harmony and perfect peace to mind and heart" has multiple representations. For example, some healers tend to relate 'harmony' more to yin and yang complementarity within the energetic body, while also focusing on techniques of the breath to "still the mind". The focus on correct breathing was clearly visible within Maureen Lockhart's "Healing Circle" classes (as in previous chapter) where we were taught to draw breath/energy up through the root chakra, down through the crown chakra and express both streams through the fully open heart chakra so that healing energy could be sent to a client, place or situation. We found evidence of "harmony" and "balance within" being tied into vibrant, energetic, auric states, the latter being visible evidence of harmonious connected to the universe at large. Healthiness is the natural state of life, dis-ease is due to lack of connection and faulty thinking. For in order to "realize one's place in the universe, and accept this position 'as where one is destined to be now'" (McGuire, 1998:136), one must also discover (and have a balanced perception of) the particular reasons and meaning of "why I am here".

This is why I feel that, as mentioned earlier, McGuire's 'types' would be better seen as constitutive elements of healing practice. For once one enters the province of "quieting the noisy mind" then one may also find a multiplicity of opinions regarding the role of the ego in dis-ease generation.

Ego-generated illness

McGuire's third category of healing type, where adherents regard illness as being in some way ego-generated is not uncommon in Scottish healing circles, though again multitudinous representations abound. For as we saw in the last chapter, McGuire found this sort of positioning to be common in Eastern meditation groups where human potential philosophies also prevail. She also found 'fuzzy boundaries' within these sorts of groups and indeed on the individual level "Typically ...respondents wove together complex, and continually changing strands from several approaches for their personal belief and practice" (McGuire, 1998:95).

This finding is in accord with the Scottish context where eclecticism reigns supreme in healing circles, as is an emphasis on the social causes of illness. For New Agers would have little difficulty in subscribing to the view that "ego-involvement and its concomitant attachment to illusionary sources of happiness misdirect the individual's energies and produce illness" (McGuire, 1998:106). As a respondent informed McGuire,

I keep in my mind a lot of affirmations to help me live in the world, but don't be of it, because it's only a transient experience. We're here to accomplish certain things and certain purposes on this earth... But people shouldn't get tied up in the physical things of living, the mundane things like greed, with money (in McGuire, 1998:106-107).

This emphasis on the individual having "a certain purpose on earth" may also be found in New Age writing and teaching. We saw this with Helen Stott when she stated that when all the chakras are aligned and supported in the body then one could "move into the fullness of our individual essence – which is of course our life work" (WMH,

2001:6). For New Age author Helen Myss, this “life’s work” is a “sacred contract”. She argues that every person on earth is here to fulfil a sacred contract and she relates to our “archetypal inheritance”. I feel she is worth quoting at this point, as her work is rather popular within Scottish healing circles as ‘transformatory tool kits’ for the Self.

Our archetypal inheritance is prehistoric, primal. It comes from our own energy origins in the Divine, which is also the source of our Sacred Contract - the guided plan for our life. We co-create our Contract with divine guidance, and it includes many individual agreements – or subcontracts – to meet and work with certain people, in certain places, at certain times (Myss, 2002:35-36).

It is this focus on having a purpose in life, which is spiritually guided, that underpins a lot of New Age thought. We need, so the narrative goes, to let go of ego-driven mores and selfish, self-serving behaviour and get back in touch with our higher spiritual purpose. And while yes, this may lead some New Agers to emphasise “working on the self” and withdrawing to ‘retreats’ such as The Findhorn Community, in general, emphasis is placed on taking responsibility for one’s Self and actively healing the social factors that are causing distress and corresponding dis–ease, such as problems at home or in the work place. The individual is regarded as an empowered being that intuitively knows the right choices to be made in this life and realises that negative thoughts (whether internally or externally imposed) will lead to ill health.

Correspondingly there is also often a sense that one should actively engage politically and “through the raising of world spiritual consciousness” effect changes on a global level. In turn, this will lead to less materialism, violence, corruption, exploitation and pollution. In general, as a healer in Edinburgh informed me, it is felt that once one gets back in touch with the inner or higher self, one “becomes aware that in order to truly

be, it is necessary to let go of limiting ego-driven 'I' issues...for these will prevent you from coming home"⁴¹.

This sort of statement also requires, of course, some unpicking in relation to gender, power and representation. As I mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, in relation to Paul Heelas' New Age self-ethics, how a person sees him or herself will have a lot to do with the socially constructed nature of this journey through life encompassing family history, educational opportunities, race, class and gender. For as we shall continue to see in the Scottish context, the majority of practitioners are white middle class women, while at the 'higher' levels of some published teaching on healing thought and practice there is a tendency towards male domination. In the latter, as with the "aristocratic" Reiki Master Frank Petter, one finds a predominance of people who have travelled extensively and whose family background suggests a privileged lifestyle. One should also note that, in relation to "I" issues, the development of a 'sense of self' is also implicitly related to gender. For in Fife healing circles where women predominate, it is common to hear practitioners locating themselves as wives and mothers – that is defining themselves in particular domestic, relational roles – before they see themselves as an individual 'in their own right'. Correspondingly, if ill health issues arise, how these are related to by the healer and healee is also intimately associated with the socially constructed gendered nature of the persons involved.

External Powers

McGuire observes that psychic and occult healing is an enormously diverse field of practice with extremely individualistic and eclectic beliefs, where new meanings are

⁴¹ This perspective was given to me by Rob, a male healer practising in Edinburgh.

attributed to older religious cosmologies (McGuire, 1998,130-31) For example in the Scottish context, one might find the practitioner doing past life regressions in order to heal damage from earlier incarnations, this being carried into this life, and tying this in to “karmic debt”. However, McGuire correctly notes that an underlying emphasis within Psychic or Occult groups is “on a notion of a transcendent healing power – something outside and greater than the individual” (McGuire, 1998,130).

She locates within this category Spiritualist groups who have a long historical tradition of ‘asking’ for “individual guidance via mediums and spirits” (1998:131); where the ‘spirits’ may be turned to for personal assistance and assurance in life choices (and, often, in the Scottish context, as “healing guides”). For as we have seen in Chapter Three, practitioners do call on their “guardian angels” when doing healing work or ask their spirit guides for assistance in decision making regarding where the hands should be placed to maximise the efficiency of “healing energy”.

How these “external forces” are perceived and are represented again appears to relate to the socially constructed nature of the person involved. For as we have seen at the Salisbury Centre’s ‘Healing Circle’, angels are often described as being white and with Christian names such as Metatron and Michael, while spirit guides were depicted as being Native American, shamans, Tibetan monks or as acquaintances from past lives.

Ideals of health and wellness for Psychic and Occult groups relate to ideas of “the ability to be in control of one’s daily life and to handle crisis situations” (McGuire, 1998:135). Emphasis is also placed on realising one’s connections with the universe in general and being open to the realisation that one is placed in the universe for very particular reasons (remember Myss’s Sacred Contracts here) and that “the goal is not

to change the current situation, but to discover the meaning of it" (McGuire, 1998:136)⁴².

McGuire also found that psychic adherents regard the healthy, alive individual as energetically connected to the cosmos or universe with a healthy energy field or aura. These ontologies are also central to Scottish New Age thought as we shall see in the next chapter as is the emphasis on "love", as a "necessary quality for healthiness" (ibid) alongside a good mental outlook. Therefore, "For most psychic adherents... health and wellness meant wholeness of body in conjunction with mind, emotion and spirit... Healthiness is not merely the absence of disease in body-mind-spirit, but real health requires a balance of all three" (McGuire, 137).

Sources of healing power within psychic groups also appears to resonate with the Scottish context. For as I noted in Chapter Two, some practitioners object to the anthropomorphisation of deity instead favouring energetic notions of "All That Is" and indeed, as McGuire has found, God being described as "cosmic consciousness" or "white light" ; the latter being more identified with when doing healing work.

McGuire also locates crystals within her "external powers" categorisation. As I have introduced in the previous chapter, crystal dowsing is a popular medium/tool through which the practitioner may see visible 'evidence' of the aura and of chakra energetic states. For here dowsing was used to enable the practitioner to see what is "known intuitively". Crystals are also not infrequently used in rooms where healing is carried out to enhance "positive energy" or in the healing itself where they may be used to

⁴² We appear to have a tension here in relation to how one should act in the world. For how does one actively bring about social change in self and others' life circumstances if, at the same time, one's place is predestined as a "learning lesson"?

“draw out negative energy” or “clear energy blocks in the chakras”. So though crystals may be utilised in their own right, one often finds that they are part of “practitioner techniques”, McGuire’s last healing category.

Practitioner techniques

Within Scottish healing contexts practitioners utilise a multiplicity of techniques to enhance healing in self and others. Within Chapters Five and Six I shall look more closely at the Japanese derived practice of Reiki, for this form of healing is very popular in Scotland, as it is in Europe and America. But Reiki healers also commonly bring to this practice additional ‘therapeutic’ techniques. Hence the reflexologist may learn Reiki to enhance healing power, as may the aromatherapist or the person doing Indian Head massage. It is worthy of note however, that it is again predominantly women who learn bodywork techniques such as these above, that these practices are non intrusive physically - the healee is not required to undress, for example – and they are perceived to be powerful yet gentle remedies for soothing out often stress related dis-ease and dis-comfort in people of all ages. This is why healing modalities such as Reiki are also often used on babies and children, and on plants and animals. Hence further research would, I feel, be valuably enhanced by looking more specifically at non-adult human healing in relation to issues of self in healing and, for example, the placebo effect.

It is impossible to describe fully all the variations of healing thought and practice here, or indeed in this thesis as a whole. What I have tried to bring out in the above introduction to McGuire’s typologies, is the relevance of her material to the Scottish context, though noting considerable blurring of her boundaries. For her statement that “all of these forms of healing...involve an alternative understanding of the nature and

etiology of illness; healing power and the essence of health”(1998:18) is of great significance. For new understandings of health are of major importance in the Scottish context and should be examined, I would argue, from a feminist positioning so that we may find out how and why women are drawn to these practices and how this relates to debates between biomedical approaches to health and holistic approaches to the same in relation to, for example, authority and power. I shall return to McGuire (and other theorists) in the final chapter of this thesis, where I also reflect on how the experience of fieldwork has affected my assessment of various standpoints – feminist or otherwise. So let us move on now to Paul Heelas, James Beckford and Ellie Hedges and their academic interpretations of the significance of individuality and authority within New Age ontologies, which can be related to medical anthropological evaluations of the complementary medicine. For these writers have provided us with useful material that can be referred to the Scottish healing context.

Healing and authority

Paul Heelas proposes that,

The greater the importance accorded to inner spirituality, the more clearly healing is 'New Age'. When healing relies on external agencies, that is to say, power, authority and responsibility is taken away from the person and his or her Self: and this takes us away from New Age Self-spirituality. The authority shift - from without to within - associated with New Age epistemological 'Selfism' is what ultimately characterizes New Age healing (1996:pp81-82).

This perspective appears to fit well with regard to Scottish New Age epistemologies – and, as we have seen, McGuire's American context - where emphasis is indeed

placed on the “Self-as-spiritual” with, Heelas usefully puts it, “bodility-as-spirituality/energy” [sic] (1996:82) being intrinsically healing. Now he also states that within New Age networks the emphasis on inner spirituality is allied to the premise that all human beings are inherently spiritual and as such that the human body has a ‘natural’ will and fundamental tendency towards health “given the proper conditions”⁴³ (Coward in Heelas, 1996:82). Therefore a person visiting a healer with a dis-eased ‘condition’ will generally, in the Scottish context for example, spend some considerable time initially presenting their life history and personal health narrative before healing work is undertaken. Heelas further proposes that,

In the detraditionalised and anti-authoritarian world of the New Age, the healer clearly cannot have the kind of authority exercised by the conventional science-informed doctor, the person who draws on an established body of knowledge – derived by logic-dominated ego-operations – to diagnose and prescribe (1996:pp82-83).

Rather, he suggests it is the inner or Higher Self – this ‘knowing’ one’s optimal health state – to which the healer tries to become aligned. We observed this positioning in Chapter Three with Brennan’s ‘life tasks’ and Myss’s “sacred contracts”. The healer will also as Heelas has proposed, very often have personally experienced periods of dis-ease where “listening to the true inner voice” (1996:83) has enabled a return to health. Hence the healer will carry out spirit/ual works on others having empirically tested the efficiency of this for themselves as ‘patients’. This empirical testing is, I would propose, a central theme in Scottish healing circles. For as Heelas has suggested, here healees do indeed generally perceive their healers to be spiritually authoritative and that ‘spiritual connectedness’ will manifest visibly in one’s state of

⁴³ One should note here though that questions most certainly need to be asked with regard to exactly what are these “proper conditions” and how they relate to the socially constructed gendered body.

health , For even if at times there are health crises, the healer will relate his/her swift recovery to “being energetically connected”. The body hence becomes the immediate visible representation of “oneness with all that is”. And as we shall see in ethnographic material, though the healer may initially work to remove ‘ego driven energy blocks’, ultimately,

The authority of many healers rests on their claims to be spiritual... the entitlement logic running, ‘at heart we are all spiritual beings; I am in closer contact with my spirituality than you (I am healthy you are dis-eased); since we both belong to the same spiritual realm, I speak with your inner self when I suggest that you do this and that; instead of speaking as an external voice of judgement I speak as your guide’ (Heelas, 1996:83).

Common critiques of New Age healing and spirituality often suggest that such practices are excessively individualistic. For by focusing on one’s own health and self-spirituality there is a corresponding tendency towards “self-absorption” (Schur, 1974) and “narcissism” (Lasch, 1979: cited in Hedges and Beckford, 2000:174). This then leads to a corresponding disengagement from socio-political issues, so the argument goes. However in healing circles in Scotland, while there is considerable emphasis on the ‘healed self as spiritual’, when it comes to ‘doing’ healing work this is usually expressed in terms of the healer being “a balanced, grounded and open channel” through which healing energy - by whatever name - can flow to the healee. Now, while this may appear at first glance to be individualistic on the part of the healee receiving “healing energy”, and the healer “working towards spiritual openness” in a sort of ‘vertical hierarchy’, I would argue that in the Scottish context, this is not the case in totality. For central to healing ontologies here, one finds continual emphasis on the spiritual and sacred connectedness of all animate and inanimate life. This fosters a

sense of social responsibility and care for the same, as we shall see in ethnographic material later in this thesis. This is why I find Hedges and Beckford's appraisal of holistic healing most useful.

For Hedges and Beckford, holistic healing represents a "fascinating re-mix of tradition, expertise and modernity" (2000:175). They state that it is wrong to regard holistic healing as excessively individualistic, for within New Age ideologies "The true self ... is only one part of a much larger whole...[which] involves commitment to values of benevolence and justice" (2000:172). They characterise the "New Age representation of the 'true self' as naturally social, compassionate and attuned to the rhythms of the natural world, working on self-actualisation through interaction with others and directed at the restoration of a sense of wholeness" (2000:178). Hence for Hedges and Beckford holistic healing would be better seen as a 'process' related to the notions of "flow" and "tuning in" (2000:169) which depends "upon forms of sociality and ideas that [are] collective and holistic" (2000:170).

They relate this to the experiences of eight female nurses who as part of their tuition in aromatherapy and holistic massage from a Roman Catholic nun and nursing tutor, 'developed' as healers. The study was initially conducted in 1982 by Ellie Hedges in relation to the integration of complementary therapy to nursing practice (2000:185). And as Scottish healing also appears to skirt the boundaries of both conventional medicine and mainstream religiosity, then this study is relevant to my ethnographic material. For here too (as we shall see specifically in relation to Reiki practice), it is very common to find women health care workers across all fields engaged in healing both professionally and in the home. While with regard to, for example, Christian ministry, there are many churches in Scotland where healing services incorporating the 'laying on of hands' are regular events.

Hedges and Beckford conclude, in relation to their above noted study, that “healing’ activities...cut across the banal associations characteristic of rationalised and bureaucratised healthcare and the sensual solidarities evoked by the experience of healing” (2000:184). The process of holistic healing,

...provides opportunities for the expression of values such as love and compassion, albeit within the ambit of professional nursing care. Through a mutual tuning-in relationship between the healer and patient and the source of healing energies, there is a blurring of the boundaries between selves which, as inter-subjective construction of transcendence, may bind people together. For some people this would also have sacred significance (ibid).

Within the above then, we have several core themes to be found in Scottish healing, themes similarly noted in McGuire’s American healing research.

- An emphasis on “love” in healing
- The self as being “naturally compassionate”
- The predominance of women in healing
- The importance of healing in/for community
- The interconnectedness of all life raising issues of responsibility for the same.
- The centrality of tuning in to healing energies with corresponding sense of transformation of subjectivities

For within Scottish healing circles as we shall see, the primary critiques of society encompass expressions of dissatisfaction with mainstream religiosity and its negation of the body ‘as less’ and the predominantly male mediated nature of cognitively

privileged theology. Similarly, with regard to conventional bio-medical approaches to health, many Scottish healers express deep dissatisfaction with this field of practice in relation to the body being symptomatically cured, with minimal attention being paid to the embodied and gendered nature of health and dis-ease. It is to the critique of bio-medical approaches by New Age circles that I turn next.

The Body and Medicine

According to Keith Bax in his (1991) discussion of the increasing popularity of contemporary folk medicine⁴⁴ in western society, this has a lot to do with parallel transformations in the economy and cultural practice. He states that “popular dissatisfaction with biomedicine has increased [and that] the cultural gap between biomedical practitioners has become much more visible in recent times” (1991:20). The two key connected elements of the term ‘folk’ in relation to medical practice are that of “culture” and “choice” (Bax, 1991:21) in that “medical practices are intimately related to consumer preference patterns that operate within specific cultural milieux” (ibid). He proposes that many members of Western societies assume that folk medicine has been eclipsed in western countries by bio-medical approaches to health in similarity to the demise of ‘community’ and ‘religion’. That is, the decline in folk medicine is seen as being “inversely proportional to the index of urbanisation or modernisation, themselves ‘self evident’ measures of the development of capitalism” (Bax, 1991:21). Bax critiques this standpoint. He argues that in the same way that secularisation theorists have failed to see that a decline in mainstream church attendance does not necessarily mean a corresponding decline in religiosity, so too should sociologists of health appreciate that folk medicine is not dying out but may be

⁴⁴ Bax uses the term folk medicine in relation to “all of those practices which lie outside the ‘normal’ sphere of orthodox medical practice” (1991:20).

just as vibrant having simply taken on new forms of expression. "...far from being in its death throes, folk medicine is currently providing a viable alternative to biomedicine which is undergoing a major crisis" (1991:22).

This statement is of relevance to healing in Scotland. For here holistic (mind, body and spirit) approaches to health do appear to be widespread with the emphasis on spiritual connectedness and apparently non-judgemental 'treatment' being primary drawing factors. Bax further argues that the continued popularity of folk medicine has a lot to do with the sense of alienation that biomedical approaches to health have induced among those consumers that use its services (1991:26). This sense of alienation is a commonly cited critique among those who venture into Scottish healing circles. For, while people entering this field of practice commonly acknowledge the usefulness and indeed the centrality of conventional medicine to acute operational and emergency situations, they also strongly feel that plurality of choice in relation to how one 'treats' one's own health is of considerable importance. They want to choose how they maintain their health and deal with disease in the same way that they can choose to consume other goods and services.

How then do bio-medical practitioners respond to these sorts of encroachment on their subject matter, the human body? Bax states that it is predominantly in urban areas that professionals (such as medical practitioners) mount their claims for legitimacy over more 'traditional' practices (and here one could potentially locate healing) seeing

the latter as non scientific and superstitious with little to prove that it actually works⁴⁵. Certainly perspectives such as this do hold sway to some considerable extent and may be commonly heard in central Scotland. However if one listens carefully to these dialogues one can also sense a feel of shifting power relations. For example, as Neerav, an Indian bio-medical general practitioner in my locality put it to me, “we medical practitioners tend to regard alternative health practitioners as barefoot doctors”⁴⁶. Yet he also added that as far as he was concerned, alternative practitioners should be regarded as useful additions to the health market. For “many patients go to see their doctor with conditions that don’t need treating medically. These people would be much better off going to alternative practitioners who can spend time with them...and just listen to what they have to say”. Therefore here Neerav appears to make a distinction between types of illness and dis-ease, with ‘significant’ pathological conditions requiring bio-medical treatment, social and psychological dis-ease, alternative therapies. Hence there appears to be in Fife and Kinross at least, some disharmony between bio-medical and holistic approaches to health with regard to the complementarity of the latter to the former.

And while consumers of ‘medical care’ do have options when it comes to the treatment of their bodies, it still appears to be the case that bio-medical approaches to health are often regarded as *the* authoritative discourse. For while, as Bax has suggested, western consumers can, and indeed do, resist bio-medicine’s monopoly on health it still appears to be the case that it is very common to turn to this first with a problematic

⁴⁵ This sort of positioning leads academic writer John Drane to propose in *What is the New Age saying to the Church* (1991), that conventional, rationalistic, scientific medicine could be seen as being more at odds with the Christian viewpoint than New Age healing. For conventional medicine’s rationalism “consistently denies that there is anything that might be labelled a spiritual dimension to the human personality, and insists that the body is a totally self contained and independent mechanical system. At least the New Age outlook affirms that people have a spiritual dimension, however muddled and mistaken the New Age concept of that spirit might be” (1991:160)⁴⁵. Therefore for Drane, New Age healing may appear to provide the Christian seeker with a spiritual dimension to bodily health, a dimension that is missing in conventional medicine.

⁴⁶ The fact that this practitioner is Indian is of interest in that he also espoused the value of Ayurvedic medicine. Hence one wonders whether non western bio-medical practitioners hold the same positioning on folk medicine ‘as less’ as is common in the west.

health condition, while the complementary health practitioner will be “the one to see” with chronic and unresolved conditions “as a last resort”. I shall revisit some of these points later in relation to new ascriptions of meaning with regard to health. So let us, for the moment, return to a primary underlying theme in all discourses relating to health and the body – power.

I shall introduce initially Foucault’s discourse on “power”. My primary focus here however, will be on medical sociologists use of this theorist in relation to health, medicine, power and knowledge. For as Brian Turner states, Foucault’s analysis of power/knowledge has had a major impact on medical sociology, shifting this under-theoretically directed discipline “towards a sociology of health and illness, that is a critical epistemology of disease categories as elements of the moral control of individuals and populations. This movement was based on an implicit slogan, namely that the “body is historical” (1997:ix).

The Body and Power

Foucault’s theory of power

Foucault has critiqued historical conceptualisations of power “as a macro structure such as the state which functioned to support industrial capitalism and which was displayed through the major public institutions such as the police, the law and the church” (Turner, 1997:xi). For power, he argued, was not located in a central point from which “secondary and descendant forms would emanate” (Foucault, 1994:163). Rather, power’s “condition of possibility” (ibid) lies in fluid, unequal, unstable, local, force relations, where it is continually produced and exercised in innumerable day-to-day interactions. Hence there are multiple relations of power embedded in the work place,

in institutions, within families, and in sexual relations and knowledges – these causing divisions, inequalities and cleavages within society as a whole. For power is always exercised with a set of aims and objectives (Foucault, 1994:164).

Foucault further argues that within power relationships and networks one will also find multiple points of resistance. Such resistances are inscribed in relations of power as an “irreducible opposite” (Foucault, 1994:165) and that they cause shifting societal cleavages and regroupings at local and individual levels.

Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised to them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible...It is in this sphere of force relations that we must try to analyze the mechanisms of power (Foucault, 1994:166).

I would argue that we would do well to look within the ‘umbrella’ of “healing practice” to see if there are codifications of healing points of resistance. For as I have shown, healing practitioners do resist dualistic notions of mind and body, inscriptions of the female body as less and the ‘containment’ and ‘treatment’ of the body and spirit by bio-medicine and mainstream religion respectively. Healers also promote ‘new’ ideas and definitions of what it is to be a ‘whole’ human being within multivalenced discourses of power. Hence we must also examine, with a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion, the production of such discourses within “the field of multiple and mobile power relations” (Foucault, 1994:166).

One starting point would be to look at local centres of power and knowledge and to examine how specific discourses of healing have been constructed, by whom and why? For if healing/being healed, is “constituted as an area of investigation this [is] only because relations of power [have] established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it” (Foucault, 1994:167). Hence at the local level of healing one finds multiple discourses of power relating to “self-examination, questionings, admissions, interpretations, interviews [which are] the vehicle of a kind of incessant back-and-forth movement of subjugations and schemas of knowledge” (ibid). There are local resistances to bio-medical and religious constructions of ‘the body’ by holistic notions of the same. And there are incorporations and regroupings of holistic healing, bio-medicine and religious ‘influences’ on health - the incorporation of therapeutic touch into nursing practice or the incorporation of Christian elements into healing practice being possible examples here. For “Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are ‘matrices of transformations’” (ibid).

Foucault also proposed that ‘power’ is intimately connected to ‘discipline’, in that disciplinary practices produce individuals and institutions. His interests in power were also very much tied into an evaluation of how, historically, human subjects have ‘been made’. For societies have always produced ideals of ‘proper’ bodies, minds and souls in order to define their own boundaries and identities. In *Discipline and Punish*, he describes discipline in the following manner,

...‘Discipline’ may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology. And it may be taken over by ‘specialized institutions’, (the penitentiaries or

'houses of correction' of the nineteenth century), or by preexisting authorities that find it a means of reinforcing or reorganising their mechanisms of power " (Foucault, 1984).

"Disciplinary modalities of power" (ibid) have continued to infiltrate all levels of society to the present day and may be found in, for example, schools, hospitals, psychiatric and psychological services at the micro level. No area of society is left untouched. "On the whole, therefore, one can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society in this movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines, a sort of social 'quarantine,' to a indefinitely generalizable mechanism of 'panopticism'" (ibid), where the principles of the same are "institutionalised through everyday routines and mundane arrangements" (Turner, 1997: xii). A brief overview of the Panopticon would hence be useful here.

The architectural principle of the Panopticon (prison) was that of a central observation tower from which the warder could see each inmate in his/her single cell (these in a semicircle facing in towards the tower). However the inmate could neither observe the warder, know when he was being observed, or see any other inmate⁴⁷. The principle underlying this construction was that of constant observation alongside a highly disciplined work regime with the aim of producing a remade 'ordered' individual who could, upon release, contribute to society as a whole. However "the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce to the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977, 201) was also intimately related to "self-discipline". For in order to be released the prisoner had to internalise and act out 'normal', regimented behaviour at all times and be subjected to the anonymous gaze.

⁴⁷ Bentham, the Panopticon's eighteenth century proposer also envisioned the same basic structure for schools, hospitals, madhouses and barracks.

A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. So it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of regulations. He who is subjected to the field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (Foucault, 1977, 201-202).

It is outwith the scope - and indeed the intention - of this thesis to provide a Foucauldian analysis of healing in Scotland. However what I wish to bring out in the above is Foucault's concept of the "all seeing gaze" and the corresponding "subjection" of the observed; this occurring in bio-medical approaches to health and mainstream religious observance of the moral condition and disciplining of the soul. But it is not just in these fields that 'the gaze' may be observed. Within Scottish healing circles the healee is also submitted to 'the energetic gaze' in the form of auric reading. Hence questions should be asked in relation to the multiple discourses and resistances to knowledge and power? I shall return to some of these issues in Chapter Eight. For the moment, let us examine some writers' use of Foucault in the fields of medical sociology, noting their relevance to this particular study.

Medical Sociology

Sarah Cant and Ursula Sharma propose "it is possible to consider the general significance of complementary medical knowledges within the context of larger theoretical debates about the nature of knowledge in contemporary societies" (1996:2). They are particularly interested in how and why some discourses of

knowledge are publicly legitimised while others are discredited and how this relates to the perceived authority of experts. They also propose that “complementary medical knowledge operates on a number of levels (formal and informal, local and general)” (1996:3) and that it would be wrong to look at complementary knowledge solely in abstract and codified forms for “knowledge is always ‘knowledge in practice’” (ibid).

As we shall see in later ethnographic material, there does indeed in the Scottish context appear to be many levels of healing “practice as knowledge” as Cant and Sharma have proposed. Yet healing knowledge in Scottish healing circles, while having common underlying themes such as “the energetic body” and “the connectedness of all life” does differ in its application according to local/informal or urban/formal settings and in relation to written ‘theological’ accounts of “divine energy as healing power”. Hence they are absolutely correct to argue the case for always locating knowledge in practice for, as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, tension does exist in relation to hierarchies of power and the healthy or dis-eased body across not just between bio-medical and complementary perspectives but also within complementary fields in themselves.

Cant and Sharma state that since the nineteenth century, healing and folk medicine has been relegated to the realms of unscientific naivety or even quackery by orthodox fields of medical knowledge and practice. Being located as such has led complementary therapists to “operate from a position of needing to establish their own credentials as ‘experts’ and their own worthiness” (ibid).

They draw from Foucault's (1975) *Birth of the Clinic* to elaborate on how bio-medical practitioners have promoted their status as experts while also progressively impersonalising the human body. For Foucault they state, medicine is a form of

discursive practice where from the eighteenth century, medical practitioners have objectified the patient's body, gazing upon it to decide upon a course of treatment. In turn this form of medical observation considerably negated the value of the patient's own experiences of his or her bodily symptoms. For Foucault,

The rise of a medical practice based on [the] objectifying 'gaze' is related to the requirements of more precise modes of surveillance and control of populations (Foucault, 1975: 1977). However the exercise of the medical gaze is not simply 'influenced by' or 'a product of' the needs of the state or any other agency. Chez Foucault, the exercise of the medical gaze is the exercise of power itself, for power is dispersed and embedded in practices – the practices of the clinic as much as the practices of the state bureaucracy, the militia, the police, even the family (Cant and Sharma, 1996:11).

However, Cant and Sharma also argue that Foucault "comes close to identifying medical knowledge as what Mauss called a 'technique of the body', a socially learnt way of using the body, albeit experienced as entirely 'natural' by those who practice" (Cant and Sharma, 1996:11). This, they argue, may be seen in the way that medical students learn from their teachers in relation to "cultivate[ing] a certain kind of moral subjectivity...for example, learning how to write up a case, to look for signs and symptoms, to 'think anatomically' about people" (Good in Cant and Sharma, 1996:13). I would propose therefore, that as in this case, "Biomedical knowledge in its abstract form is presented as the scientific and generalizable knowledge of every-day body and no-body which may obscure the fact that it is nonetheless socially produced and reproduced" (Cant and Sharma, 1996:13) one should also include gender as a category for analysis in any evaluation of health and the body.

For example Margaret Shildrick states that women may complicitly support bio-medical and societal strategies of normalisation 'over' their bodies with the acceptance and promotion of some forms of health care – these being seen by women as beneficial for women. From this perspective modern bio-medical 'surveillance', as found in the ultrasound of pregnancy or the triannual check up for the elderly woman "...is characterised by the strategies of normalisation which constantly measure, assess, record and project the limits of health" (Shildrick, 1997:57). However Shildrick also proposes that once women recognise that "strategies of normalisation" are in place, then "If it can be demonstrated that what has been naturalised as the truth of the female body is merely the discontinuous outcome of a complex series of normalisations, in which health care has been pre-eminently implicated, then it becomes possible to dissolve that devalued identity and theorise new constructions of female embodiment" (1997:59).

The issues that Shildrick raises here are of considerable importance to this study of New Age healing. For the inclusion of this sort of analytical framework in relation to, for example, the 'naturalness' of the female body can usefully be transferred to the fields of complementary healing practice. The adoption of this perspective allows us to examine whether women develop new models of subjectivity within healing circles and if so, how these 'relate' to earlier 'incorporated' bio-medical interpretative frameworks.

I would further argue that once we continually employ a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion, we can ask questions regarding the formulation of 'alternative' models of health and see whether there are in situ in this field of practice, normalising concepts and discourses relating to identity, power and the body. For in this field one finds that the complementary practitioner's knowledge of his or her clients is based on information taught and practice obtained in particular training schools, where the

practitioner learns “how sickness is caused and cured, and how bodies work with minds” (Heelas, 1996:13). And as very often that school is far from local being, for example, based on Eastern or Hindu philosophies, or in the case of Reiki coming from Japan, then it is important to appreciate there will be several layers of representation between ‘source’ material and end ‘knowledge as practice’. Therefore while New Age healing may appear to provide a new holistic framework where the intellect, the body and the sacred may be interrelated with feelings, emotion and touch, we still should be aware of the underlying, often hidden discourses of power and their effect on the ‘local’ individual.

Brian Turner proposes that one of Foucault’s key theoretical contributions was his examination of how early civilisations and the Christian church “produced the self through practices of self-subjection” (Turner, 1997:xii). This was related to the ethical systems underpinning Christianity and consisted of three processes. Firstly, an ethical substance such as desire was identified, this to be “shaped by moral activity” (Turner, 1997:xii). Secondly, the individual had to feel morally obliged to subject him or herself to, for example, God. In turn ethical codes and discourses were constructed around such ‘moral obligations’. “These discourses of subjectivity then produce identities or roles...[and] become the object and focus of medicalisation and normalisation” (Turner, 1997:xii).

These practices of subjection and self-formation also involve the emergence of complex pedagogies of self – transformation and education... Finally, subjection requires the production of a moral order and an ethical ethos which becomes the organising principle of practices of the self; a moral code evolves by which moral identities are shaped and guided. In contemporary society, these goals typically include not only the ideology of self-fulfilment through self-knowledge, but a range of

preventative health policies and measures which can be seen as an extension of these self-regulatory activities” (Turner, 1997:pp, xii-xiii).

I would like to pull out several threads here. I would suggest in relation to healing in Scotland that there are several “ethical substances” which have been identified as “in need of shaping”. The primary emphasis in this field relates to the mind and the ego and the subjection of these to ‘allow through’ the ‘divinely inspired attribute’ of “love”. For this to occur the healee subjects herself to God - or whatever name is used for the same - in that she “allows herself to become a free channel through which healing energy may flow”. This sort of discourse of subjectivity then, produces roles and identities. In healing circles this is often “the compassionate and nurturing healer”. For the healer is taught that in order to progress along the healing path s/he should continually work in a disciplined manner towards greater openness and receptivity so that s/he can be self-transformed and free from the desire-ridden drives of the ego. In order to assist the healer in this process and provide moral order and ethical guidelines there is a whole range of self-regulatory activities, these being provided by, at the higher levels of teaching and writing, predominantly men. And as Turner further proposes that for Foucault, “power and knowledge [are] always inevitably and inextricably interconnected so that any increase in knowledge and every elaboration of knowledge involve[s] an increase of power” (1997:xiii) then one should, I would propose, bring to the evaluation of these discourses a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion⁴⁸. This is why I shall be bringing in to the later evaluation of healing ontologies the writing of Daly, Joan Scott et al.

⁴⁸ We shall also see in Chapter Five of this thesis how one Reiki writer, Diane Stein, has ‘bust open’ closed systems of “knowledge only for the initiated” in her disclosure of the Reiki symbols, so that anyone can learn Reiki without the necessity of a teacher.

Feminism and New Age spiritualities

Dominick Corrywright argues that “feminist enquiry includes, ever increasingly, women’s spirituality, an area which pertains especially to the field of New Age” (2003:62). As we have seen, feminist enquiry is also central to Goddess spirituality, where traditional patriarchal religious representations of the woman’s body and health are rejected in favour of an alternative worldview where the woman’s body is resacralised due to the ‘intimate, imminent, connection with the Goddess’. But feminism does more than this. Feminism as a field of study “can be seen as a method of study which creates the object of its study. It uncovers a field of research, and un.masks reasons for the oversight of this field” (ibid). Think back here to Griffin’s statement that it was very difficult to obtain academic research funding into Goddess spirituality and my comments on the general absence of women (apart from in quantitative surveys) in academic writing re New Age thought and practice.

Corrywright also observes that feminism is engaged in two projects, these projects closely resembling New Age spiritualities. Feminism negatively critiques existing patriarchal forms of societal structure while simultaneously creating a positive, harmonious vision of the future; this relating to postmodern concern, perceived decline in institutional authority and the “relativisation of knowledge in conflict with juridical and scientific truth...[This involves for women] *active challenge*, whether or not that role is the final objective” (2003: 63-64, italics mine). Hence practitioners of both feminist and New Age spiritualities

- Develop a structured critique of past and present religious practices

- Engage in the historical recovery and appropriation of belief, practice and human exemplars for a feminist spirituality
- Develop and apply a methodology which reflects women's interests, knowledge and biological skills (and here Corrywright refers to mothering and menstruation)
- Elaborate a new 'mystical feminism' or 'feminist spirituality' (Corrywright, 2003:64)

These themes are observable in the Scottish context though with varying emphasis on particular themes. However all women healees do regard themselves as active agents, in that they are reconstructing notions of gendered identity, not necessarily as "of the Goddess", but there is emphasis in general on the female - and indeed male - body "as sacralised" and in constant contact with "all that is".

Meredith McGuire has examined in the American context how religion and "religious-like" beliefs, practices and rituals are being used in nonmedical healing groups and "quasi-religious movements"⁴⁹. For here too emphasis is placed on gender identity transformations. This becomes a possibility with the creation of rituals and the construction of "new images of what it means to be a man or woman" (1994:274). She makes the point that "gendered spirituality may be a prime example of ...new work for religion to accomplish" (ibid) as individuals reflect upon and develop new ideas of personal identity and autonomy. This may be of particular relevance as non-medical healing rituals often address "gender-specific physical-emotional-spiritual needs of members" (ibid) and may be carried out for stillbirths, reproductive problems, hysterectomies and sexual or spousal abuse. These are obviously immensely

⁴⁹ McGuire describes quasi religious movements as forms of non-official religious expression, historical examples being "folk healing cults, witchcraft and spirit possession cults" (1994:276).

traumatic events for the person concerned and surely flag up personal dissatisfaction with mainstream religious and bio-medical responses to the same. Correspondingly issues of power must be central here and the re-empowerment of women. This is an area of research that women would want and need, and must be addressed with urgency so that practical assistance can enter the human arena (rather than stay on an academic shelf).

McGuire observes that while “gendered spirituality movements” appear to be related to healing movements in that “healing” is a prominent motif in both, she notes that they do differ in their emphasis on the possibility for *transformation* of ‘gendered identities’. For some healing groups maintain traditional standpoints in relation to gender roles and moral constraints. This is relevant to the Scottish context in that within Reiki circles there does appear to be some fixity of gender role with women often locating themselves relationally as wives and mothers in the first instance. However McGuire argues that “Both responses [traditional healing and gendered spirituality] are necessarily active, because traditional gender roles and moral constraints can never be taken for granted” (1994:275). Similarly, her observation that the “core nature of gender identity and its expression has become open, fluid, even voluntary. Individuals have multiple options of what it is to be a man or a woman” (Ibid) is also of relevance to this study. For healers do regard their bodies and emotions not “as givens, but as reflexibly malleable parts of one’s identity” (ibid).

One’s identity – including one’s gender identity – thus becomes a continuing project to be accomplished. Rather than fading away in the sunset of secularisation, religious and quasi-religious groups may become more important, in this situation, as the source of images of ideals and alternatives, as the social setting for self-transformation, and as the mutual support for these identities. In the face of a

relatively pluralistic and open set of possibilities, gender identities must be *accomplished*, rather than given. Religious and quasi-religious beliefs and practices appear to be important paths (among others) for doing identity work in modern societies (1994:275)

In this chapter I have continued to construct a picture of how women “as healer” or “as healed” construct new seemingly empowered identities acting within fluid fields of force. I have also set some foundations for the next section of ethnographic material where I examine the specifics of healing practice in the Scottish context with particular focus on Reiki and the technique of dowsing. Here we shall find that new identities are constructed and that transformation “to healer” is a life altering experience. For “if the creation, maintenance, and transformation of individuals’ gender identities are, among the foremost identity work to be accomplished, then extensive empirical study of the many contemporary instances of gendered spirituality is very worthwhile” (McGuire, 1994:284). This thesis is hence another step in the “empirical direction”.

Chapter Five

Writing Reiki History

Within the next two chapters I shall introduce a healing practice that appears to be growing significantly in popularity in Scotland - Reiki. In the Scottish setting it is virtually impossible to go to any New Age event and not meet several people who are enthusiastic adherents to this form of healing. It is now also being taught in Higher Education institutes such as Perth and Elmwood College, where the lower fees enable a more open participation. And one may find advertising material for individual teaching Masters and practitioners in widespread locations across Scotland.

The popularity of this practice in Scotland is reflected in European and American contexts. For, as Gordon Melton states, by 1991 "Reiki offices and centres could be found in every major urban centre in North America...through Western Europe and [in] the countries of the former British Empire" (2002:77). Hence I would propose that Reiki is one of the more significant expressions of holistic healing to be found in the west at this present time. As such it provides us with a very useful example of how practitioners renegotiate their place in the world emphasising spiritual, rather than materialistic and rationalistic, frameworks for interactions with others while emphasising the oneness of all life and, hence, responsibility for the same.

Overall then, this chapter will provide some of the historical background of Reiki and will set the scene for Chapter Six in which I present a more descriptive ethnographic account of practice in the Scottish field. In the latter part of this chapter I shall also present some emic interpretations of the 'nature of Reiki energy'. Historical and

ontological accounts will primarily be drawn from emic sources. Hence I shall utilise the writing of internationally renowned Reiki Masters such as William Rand, Walter Lubeck, Frank Arjava Petter and Hiroshi Doi. I shall also draw in these next two chapters from Diane Stein's *Essential Reiki*, for within this book she discloses the 'secret' Reiki symbols - an act that has caused considerable ructions in Reiki circles.

Reiki roots

The writing of Reiki history is an ongoing process filled with multiple and sometimes competing voices. Several issues have compounded this situation. Firstly, a lot of 'found material' on Reiki is written in the form of Japanese ideograms, these being difficult to translate having multiple levels of meaning. Secondly, a large percentage of historical Reiki documentation is also written in 'old' Japanese. As the primary western writers of Reiki history and practice are not native speakers of this language, this has correspondingly led to interpretative difficulties in relation to the 'accurate' transmission of Reiki history and techniques.

It is also the case that many Reiki writers also reflect a typical New Age emphasis on locating this cosmology in ancient esoteric traditions. For it is common in healing circles to hear dialogues about Reiki's Tibetan or 'Eastern' heritage. Hence practitioners may, for example, engage with Diane Stein's provision of a Tibetan Buddhist definition of the five Reiki symbols (1995:154), which she also places within a Goddess cosmology. Or they may favour Walter Lubeck's representations of these same "characters" as having roots in the writing of Confucian philosopher Mencius in 300 BCE (2001:45). What we should note however, is that while Reiki books of the early 1980s reflected more of an emphasis on teaching the practicalities of "doing

Reiki", by the 1990s equal emphasis was placed on the establishment of 'authoritative' Reiki roots.

However the western search for the historical roots of Reiki has also been affected by the 'closed state' of traditional Reiki societies in Japan. For example one primary Japanese school, the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai (Usui Reiki Healing Society) does not encourage dialogue with western Reiki practitioners who, they feel, do not practice 'true' Reiki. For within the traditional Reiki schools of Japan practitioners adhere rigidly to a training programme dictated by their Reiki Master where one may spend a lifetime learning the basics, rather than just a few months or years as in the west. These students are also forbidden to disclose Reiki knowledge to 'outsiders'. Hence the starting point for many western researchers of Reiki history has been to translate the inscriptions on the memorial stone of the founder and 're-discoverer' of Reiki, Mikao Usui.

The Usui memorial

The Usui memorial is located in the Saihoji Temple in the Toyotama district of Tokyo, and it is to internationally renowned German Reiki Master Frank Arjava Petter that many western practitioners turn for an initial translation of its inscription. For, while this memorial is written in 'old' Japanese, Petter was assisted in its translation by his Japanese mother-in-law Masona Kobayashi and by his Japanese wife Chetna. Hence these women have enabled Petter to provide in his (1997) *Reiki Fire* an authoritatively perceived account of the life of Reiki's discoverer Mikao Usui.

Arjava states that at the top of Usui's ten-foot high memorial stone, which he found after a year of searching in 1994, there is the Kanji inscription "Memorial of Usui Sensei's Virtue". Petter states that the description that follows of Usui's life was written by Juzaburo Ushida and Masayuki Okada¹ in 1927 – these men being students of Usui. Mikao Usui is noted as being born in August 1864 "in the village of Yago in the Yamagatu district of the Gifu Prefecture". He is described as "a talented and hard working student", who as an adult "travelled to several Western countries and China to study, worked arduously, but did at some point run into some bad luck. However he didn't give up and trained himself arduously"². His first experiences of Reiki energy and his later healing practice are portrayed in the inscription as follows, which is worth quoting at length.

One day he went to Mount Kurama on a 21-day retreat to fast and meditate. At the end of this period he suddenly felt the great Reiki energy at the top of his head, which led to the Reiki healing system. He first used Reiki on himself, then tried it on his family. Since it worked well for various ailments, he decided to share this knowledge with the public at large. He opened a clinic in Harajuku, Aoyama – Tokyo - in April of the 10th year of the Taisho period (in 1921)³. He not only gave treatment to countless patients, some of whom had come from far and wide, but he also hosted workshops to spread his knowledge. In September of the twelfth year of the Taisho period (1923), the devastating Kanto earthquake shook Tokyo. Thousands were killed, injured and became sick in the aftermath. Dr. Usui grieved for his people, but he also took Reiki to the devastated city and used its healing powers on the surviving victims. His clinic soon became too small to handle the throng of patients, so in February of the 14th year

¹ Hiroshi Doi states that Rear Admiral Juzaburo Ushida wrote the inscription, this being edited by Masayuki Okada a Doctor of Literature (2000:46).

² Rand (2001:13) suggests that his "intuitive feeling" is that Usui's "...travels and studies were undertaken more in the style of a wandering monk who depended on personal initiative, flexibility, and divine providence than with the support of wealth [from his family]".

³ Year dates and comments have been inserted here by Frank Petter.

of the Taisho period (1925), he built a new one outside Tokyo in Nakano. His fame spread quickly all over Japan and invitations to distant towns and villages started coming in. Once he went to Kure, another time to Hiroshima prefecture, then to Saga prefecture and Fukuyama. It was during his stay in Fukuyama that he was hit by a fatal stroke on March 9th, of the fifteenth year of the Taisho period (1926). He was 62 years of age (Petter, 1997:29-30).

The inscription goes on to detail Usui's marriage and family members, his personal attributes and general demeanour before stating "...you should follow the five principles of the Meiji emperor⁴... and contemplate them in your heart". According to the inscription "Reiki not only heals diseases, but also amplifies innate healing abilities, balances the spirit, makes the body healthy, and thus helps to achieve happiness".

The ultimate goal is to understand the ancient secret method for gaining happiness (*Reiki*) and thereby discover an all-purpose cure for many ailments. If these principles are followed you will achieve the great tranquil mind of the ancient sages. To begin spreading the Reiki system, it is important to start from a place close to you (*yourself*), don't start from something distant such as philosophy or logic (Petter, 1997: 30, emphasis original).

The last part of the inscription deals with Reiki as a transformative force.

Philosophical paradigms are changing the world round. If Reiki can be spread throughout the world it will touch the morals of society. It will be helpful for many people, and will not only heal disease, but also the world as a whole. Over 2000 people learned Reiki from Dr. Usui. More learned it from his senior disciples, and they carried Reiki even further. Even after Dr. Usui's passing, Reiki will spread far and wide for a

⁴ These are detailed in the next chapter as part of Frank Arjava Petter's 'Reiki Techniques' workshop.

long time to come. It is a universal blessing to have received Reiki from Dr. Usui and to be able to pass it on to others. Many of Dr. Usui's students converged to build his memorial here at Saihoji Temple in the Toyotoma district. I was asked to write these words to help keep his great work alive. I deeply appreciate his work and I would like to say to all his disciples that I am honoured to have been chosen for this task. May many understand what a great service Dr.Usui did to the world (in Petter, 1997:30) ⁵.

We can see in the above inscription that Mikao Usui's life appears to have been represented as, to some considerable extent, a 'seeker's path'. For example, Japanese Reiki Master Hiroshi Doi suggests that Usui was engaged in a lifelong "search for the greatest purpose in life" (2000:47) this leading him to undertake three years of Zen practice. During this period he searched for "the way to reach the state of mind of accepting our fate and living in peace [sic]" (ibid). While for Rand, Usui's path from childhood encompassed periods "in the style of a wandering monk" (2001:13). What many western writers of Reiki do also appear to agree on is that as the actualities of Usui's life appear "to be clouded and filled with mysteries" (Petter, 1997:18). This has led to accounts of the same being either "blown out of proportion or not properly researched" (ibid). For example Shuffrey (1998:11) and Hall (1997:9) both claim that Usui was the principal of a small Christian University in Kyoto called the Doshisha University. Shuffrey further adding that following his time as Professor of Theology in Kyoto, Usui travelled to America where, after a seven-year period of study at the University of Chicago, he received a Doctorate in Scripture (1998:11).

It is probably as a result of this confusion that writers such as Petter and Rand have

⁵ Hiroshi Doi's translation of this memorial while being in essence not dissimilar to Petter's still has some slight variations. For example Doi's translation starts in the following way "What you can realise through cultivation and training is called "VIRTUE", and it is called "MERIT" to spread a method of leadership and practice it. It is people of many merits and a good deal of virtue that can be eventually be called a great founder.... We can say that Usui-sensei is also one of those people" (Doi, 2000:41).

felt the need to travel to Japan to research the 'true' story of Mikao Usui. For as Petter states, nearly all German and English Reiki books are filled with claims to Usui's Christian heritage. This has led Petter (1997:18) to argue, that "the seemingly Christian aspects of Reiki were added in America to make Reiki more acceptable to Christian countries". For while, as proposed by his friend and translator Lynn Wakisaka Evans, "it is possible that Dr Usui may have embraced Christianity for a brief period during his inner search" this "does not mean that Usui was a Christian in the classical sense" (Petter, 1997:19).

It is necessary to be aware then, that western Reiki Masters appear to be engaged in a progressive project of rewriting history textually. This as we shall see is a considerable change of methodology from the original transmission of Reiki to the west. For here emphasis was placed on maintaining the secrecy of this practice through the memorised oral transmission of its symbols and techniques from predominantly women to women⁶. Now though, we find that the majority of writers travelling to Japan are male internationally renowned Masters who can financially afford to engage in this project and who can deal with the difficulties of researching cross culturally. Women appear, to a considerable extent, to be excluded from this Japanese quest. However for the moment let us return to the memorial inscription.

For many western practitioners the event of primary importance that is detailed in this inscription is Usui's 'rediscovery' of Reiki energy on Mount Kurama. Rand states that this mountain is held to be sacred. For according to Buddhist literature in the Mount Kurama Temple (founded in 770 AD) it is to here that the Supreme Deity Sonten

⁶ Though written material was given to Reiki students in Japan by Mikao Usui.

descended over six million years ago in the form of Mao-son.

His mission was the salvation and evolution of mankind and all living things on earth. Mao-son is also said to have incarnated as the Spirit of the Earth, residing inside the ancient cedar trees at the top of the mountain. This spirit is thought to emanate from Mount Kurama to this day. Sonten manifests as Love, Light and Power (1991: A1-5).

It was to this mountain then that Mikao Usui travelled after a period of financial adversity. Rand proposes that at this time he may well have become a Buddhist monk. This is common practice among men in Japan at times of life crisis. In any case Usui was familiar with Mount Kurama having spent time there as a child studying Kiko, a Japanese form of Qi Gong in a Tendai Buddhist Temple on its slopes. Qi Gong is a disciplined practice where one learns to control the breath, to meditate and through the routine of slow moving exercises develop and use Ki or life energy. In turn one also learns how to build up Kiko as healing energy, which one may then 'transmit' through the hands. However,

when using the Kiko method, one is also prone to depletion, as it can draw on one's personal energy as well. The young Usui wondered if any way existed to heal without first having to store up healing energy and then leaving one depleted at the end. This was an important question and acted like a seed in his developing mind; a seed that would grow into fruition in a most profound way later in his life (Rand, 2001:13).

Once at Mount Kurama, Usui undertook a twenty-one day retreat. The emphasis during this time was on fasting, meditation and chanting. Rand states that as part of this meditative practice he may have stood under a small artificial waterfall and allowed the water to fall on the crown of his head (Rand, 2001:14). He proposes that this

practice is still common today and is said to open and purify the crown chakra.

However

Toward the end of his retreat in March 1922, a great and powerful spiritual light entered the top of his head and he had a satori or enlightening experience⁷. The light was the Reiki energy coming to him in the form of an attunement. His awareness was then greatly expanded and he realised that a great power had entered him. He knew it was the power he had wished when he had studied healing on Mount Kurama as a child. He was overjoyed. He knew he could heal others without his energy being depleted⁸ (Rand, 2001:14).

Frank and Chetna Petter have collated the following account of Usui's teaching following his enlightenment. This narrative is based on their personal encounters with students and family acquaintances in Japan and as such mirrors the typical way that Reiki knowledge is transmitted in western Reiki circles.

In 1993 Frank Petter and his wife started teaching all levels of Reiki in Japan. "At that time only the first two levels were open to the public. Many people who had learnt the first and second degree flocked to Sapporo from all over Japan" (Petter, 1997:13).

They initiated one Ms Shizuko Akimoto to Master level. She in turn gave Reiki healing sessions to a gentleman in his late sixties called Mr Tsutoma Oishi unaware that this same man had "learned Reiki from one of Dr Usui's chief disciples about 40 years ago!" (Petter, 1997:22). She was also unaware initially that his mother had regularly treated polio victims with Reiki throughout his childhood. Mr Oishi had not maintained

⁷ Rand, Petter, Shuffrey, Doi et al. all propose that this occurred after a period of meditation while standing underneath a small artificial waterfall; the fall of water on the head being purported to open and purify the 'crown chakra', a practice still carried out today (see Rand, 1991/2001).

⁸ I shall provide a picture of how 'Reiki energy' is variously described later in this chapter.

any contact with Reiki practitioners over the last thirty years but was happy to tell Ms Akimoto of “what he knew of Dr Usui and the Reiki movement in Shizuoka” (ibid).

“The following is an account of what I [Petter] thought fit for publication in a book” (1997:25). After the failure of Usui’s business venture he decided to “seek something other than material gain” (ibid) and this led him to undertake his twenty one-day fast on Mount Kurama where he had a satori (enlightenment). He founded the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai (Usui Reiki Healing Society). Some time later he heard about the good reputation of the head of a Reiki centre in Shizuoka, Mr Ogawa. He recognised this man’s healing talents and “elevated him to the highest rank in the organisation” (ibid).

Dr Usui and Mr Ogawa used to give energy charged crystal balls to their Reiki students. These crystal balls were placed directly on the patient’s diseased area, helping the body to find its equilibrium again. After initiation, all students also received a manual that explained what Reiki is, described symptoms and gave guidelines for the treatment of illnesses (ibid).

Mikao Usui carried out his estimation of his students’ healing talents by asking the person to kneel in the *gasho* position with hands clasped at the chest. He would then take that person’s hands with one of his “and estimate their healing power and energy” (Petter, 1997:26). According to Fumio Ogawa (the adopted son of Mr Ogawa), Usui had developed a six level (degree) healing system in his Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai (Usui Reiki Healing Society)⁹.

⁹ According to Petter this society is also known in Japan as the Usui Shiki Ryoho, with ‘Shiki’ meaning “style, form or system” (1997: 18).

William Rand's appraisal of Usui's teaching adds some useful depth to this narrated account above. Having founded the Usui Reiki Ryoko Gakkai, Usui opened "a healing clinic in Harajuka, Aoyama near the Meiji shrine in central Tokyo" (Rand, 2001:14¹⁰).

The first four levels of attunement were called *Shoden* or *beginning level* (corresponding to 1st Degree initiation in the west). The fifth level was entitled *Okuden* or *inner teaching* (corresponding to 2nd degree initiation in the west), while the sixth level was the master level, *Shinpiden* or *mystery teaching* (Rand, 2001:15).

Approximately one year after Mikao Usui had founded his Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai. Japan was hit by the Kanjo earthquake. Due to the enormous death rate (over 140,000 people were killed) and physical and emotional injury, the "demand for Reiki became enormous and Usui and his students worked night and day to help as many as they could" (Rand, 2001:15). Continued requests for Reiki, following on from this earthquake, led Usui to open a larger clinic in Nakano, Tokyo and to travel extensively. During this period he trained over two thousand students and initiated sixteen Reiki Masters (ibid).

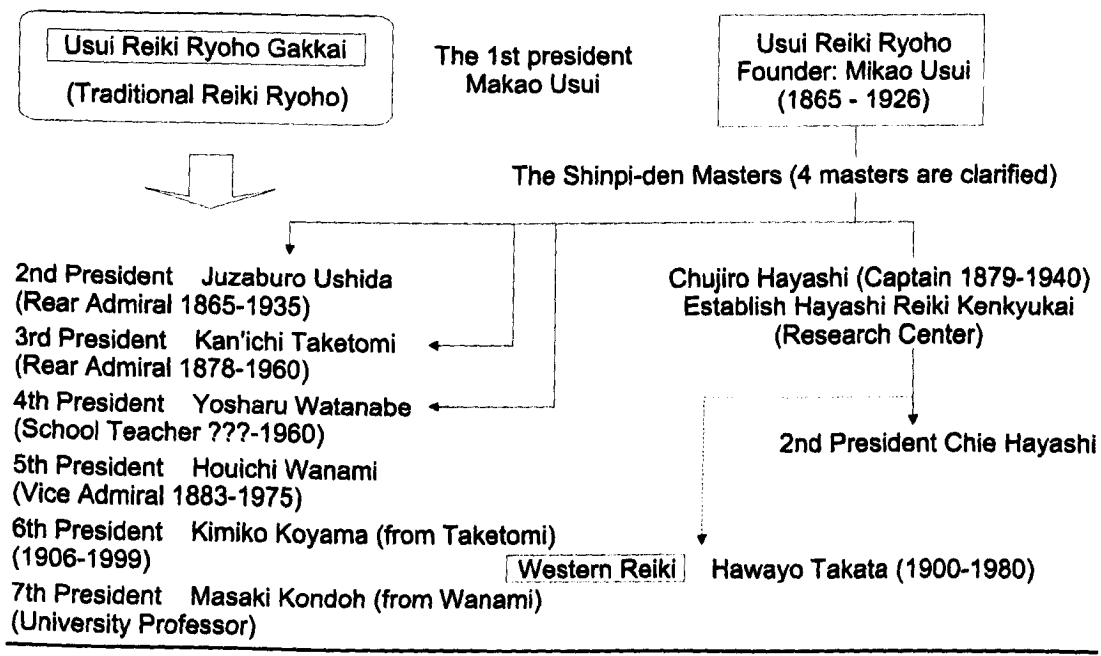
Rand proposes that at the time when Usui was carrying out Reiki practice in Japan "many other hands-on healing methods were being taught" (2001:16). These included the "Violet Light Healing Method" as taught within "The Association for The Study of Palm Treatments". This association was set up by a former student of Usui. Another centre founded by a Usui student, Toshihiro Eguchi, was the Tenohira Ryoji kenkyu-kai (hand healing research centre). This had, over time, five hundred thousand students (Doi, 2000:186). Rand also observes that the Japanese derived religions of Mahi Kari and Johrei also emphasise healing. "Interestingly, both use the same symbol that Usui

¹⁰ This according to the interview material of one of Dr Hayashi's last students Tatsumi-san, as found by Melissa Riggall in 1996 (cited in Rand, 20001:14).

sensei chose for the Master symbol. I do not know if any connection exists between these healing systems, but their nearly simultaneous beginnings indicate a sudden interest towards healing all over Japan at the time Usui sensei discovered Reiki" (2001:16). This would be a useful area for further research.

It appears also that Usui was very concerned that Reiki should remain a system of healing available to everyone. He emphasised that as Reiki travelled across the world it could enhance Reiki practitioners' lives. For once they had "experienced the divine" they would be "more willing to work together to create a better world" (Rand, 2001:16). After Usui's death in 1926, Mr. Ushida took over the leadership of the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai as shown in the table below. This is drawn from Hiroshi Doi's *Modern Reiki Method for Healing* (2000:183).

Successors of Traditional Reiki Ryoho



Reiki in the Western world

Of the sixteen masters initiated by Usui it was through Chujiro Hayashi's teaching that Reiki first spread to the west. After Usui's death, Hayashi set up his own Reiki organisation and developed a teaching manual. It was to Hayashi that a Mrs Hawayo Takata turned when diagnosed with severe illness in 1935¹¹. Takata was a Hawaiian emigre of Japanese origins. Rand states that after four months of treatment by Hayashi, Takata was completely healed - this being confirmed by hospital tests. "She wanted to learn Reiki in order to continue treating herself and also to take it back to Hawaii to share with others. Dr Hayashi allowed her to work at his clinic and also began to give her Reiki training" (1991:1-29). Rand states that Mrs Takata worked in Dr Hayashi's clinic for over a year carrying out Reiki treatments before returning to Hawaii in 1937. Shortly after her return Dr Hayashi travelled to Hawaii and "together they travelled around Hawaii giving lectures, teaching Reiki, and giving treatments. On February 21, 1938 Hawayo Takata was initiated into Shinpiden [Master level] by Dr Hayashi (2001:18).

Following the advent of World War Two, and particularly after the attack on Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, many Japanese were placed in internment camps and, as Rand suggests, it must have been a difficult time for Takata to promote a Japanese healing practice. He argues that this was why she stated that she was the only living Reiki master in the world – all of the Japanese Reiki Masters having died in the war. It was also Takata who first started the mythology that Usui had been at one time a Christian

¹¹ These have been listed by Vera Graham in *The (San Mateo) Times* (1975) as a tumour, gallstones, appendicitis and asthma, these being reported as being "completely cured" in Patsy Mahura's article in the *Honolulu Advertiser* entitled 'Mrs Takata and Reiki Power' (1974, in Rand, 1991: 1-28/29).

minister and that he had taught in Christian Universities in Japan and America (Rand, 2001:24).

By promoting herself as the only living Reiki Master and source of information about this healing practice Takata located herself in a position of significant authority. And though some were doubtful about her claims to be the sole inheritor of the Reiki tradition the majority of people accepted her claims “because it was the only information available” (Rand, 2001:26). She set up several large Reiki clinics in Hawaii and initiated many students up to the second-degree level. Gordon Melton states in his ‘Reiki: The International Spread of a New Age Healing Movement’, that these people were all Japanese Americans. It was only with her first visit to Puget Sound in mainland America in 1973 that she first initiated to First and Second Degree level those of any cultural heritage, rather than Japanese emigrants (2001:79). She also “often initiated members of her clients’ families so they could give Reiki as well” (Rand, 1991:1-29).

However it has only been in the last two decades that researchers such as Rand, Petter and Lubeck have begun to build up a picture of Reiki history from Usui to Takata. It is also only post Takata’s death in 1980 that Reiki has grown significantly in popularity in western circles. Three factors have been responsible for the initial curtailment of this healing practice. Firstly, Hawayo Takata “stated that the official fee for Reiki Mastership was \$10,000 and that if one did not charge this amount one was not practising the Usui system of Reiki”¹² (Rand, 2001:30). She initiated twenty-two Reiki Masters, fifteen of these being women. Each of these new Masters had been made “to take a sacred oath to teach Reiki exactly the same way as she had taught it.

¹² Rand states that Takata first initiated Reiki Masters in 1970 (1991:1-29).

This made it difficult for most of them to change, even though some of her rules seemed to go against the nature of Reiki and made it more difficult to learn" (ibid).

Secondly, Takata insisted that "one must study with just one Reiki teacher and stay with that teacher the rest of one's life" (Phaigh cited in Rand, 1991:1-29). Her final command was that all Reiki teachings and symbols must be memorised. Reiki was to be an oral tradition. However after her death some of these same Reiki Masters started issuing their pupils with training manuals and allowed the taking of notes in class (Rand, 2001:27).

In general these Masters felt that they should follow their own inner guidance and enable, rather than hinder, the spread of Reiki through restrictive practices such as prohibitive fee structures in the spirit of Usui. It also became common for Reiki initiates to move between various Reiki teachers. For Rand, this is because "Reiki students are guided to the teacher right for them. Because of this the fee the teacher is charging is exactly right for them" (2001:20). He states that there are "at least 200,000 Reiki Masters in the world today [1991] with well over 1,000,000 practitioners and the numbers continue to grow!" (Rand, 1991:1-31).

Reiki Lineages

In Japan there are now six Reiki lineages independent of Usui's Reiki Healing Society and of western influence (Melton, 2001:85). After Takata's death "the Western Reiki Movement also split into two directions, The 'Reiki Alliance' led by Phyllis Furomoto and the 'Radiance Technique' led by Mrs Barbara Ray and based in the USA. Several

other branches grew out of the 'Reiki Alliance' such as the independent Reiki Masters (Petter's line) and Osho Reiki" (Petter, 1997:21).

Academic writer Gordon Melton also provides a useful overview of how some Reiki practitioners have integrated Reiki with other spiritual traditions, these becoming internationally well known. For example he describes how one Kathleen Milner took a Reiki course in 1983 in the "hope that it would improve her art work" (2001:85). Following two car accidents, which left her in considerable pain, she turned to William Rand, founder of The International Centre For Reiki Training. She received her Master's training from him in 1989 "primarily for her own benefit. The experience greatly assisted her in finally overcoming her pain" (ibid). However she did eventually start to give classes in Reiki. At this time she was also practising meditation and forms of divination such as "the runes and the Egyptian Cartouche" (ibid).

Milner taught Reiki to Marcy Miller a disciple of Sai Baba. Miller travelled to India to meet this guru and "made contact with a non-corporeal entity described only as a 'Higher Being' who told her that Takata had left out one attunement symbol and much of the initiation procedure for each of the degrees" (ibid). Upon her return she relayed this information to Milner and stated that this entity "wanted to meet them both" (ibid).

The following day,

"the Higher Being revealed the missing symbol and initiation procedures" (ibid) which Milner taught to her former students. They in turn reported an increase in energy.

Milner "soon established her own direct contact with an array of Higher beings... They told her it was time to go public with what they had taught her and would be teaching her in the future. These additional teachings, now integrated into the Reiki training, became the basis of the new Tera-Mei Reiki Tradition" (ibid).

William Rand, Milner's original teacher, began to meditate on 'her' new symbols. This resulted in him "slightly altering the uses of certain symbols as well as the attunement process. It was his experience that the energy of the entire system had shifted. He claimed that Reiki energy as a whole had become very heart centred, and he named his new approach Karuna, from the Sanskrit word meaning 'compassionate action'" (Melton, 2001:87). Rand promoted Karuna Healing energy as being "much more definite and focused" (ibid). In turn Rand trained Ellen Kahne, whose initial voyage into Reiki had been a result of her wish to improve her own health and live a productive life in her old age. Her initial Reiki teacher had been Josephine Miranda, a Master of the Furimoto tradition. Kahne took her Masters level and Karuna initiation with Rand. She considered herself to be an intuitive person and developed what she called Point of Focus techniques which "use[d] intensified, focused, and grounded Reiki techniques" (Melton, 2001:88). Kahne has therefore promoted this form of Reiki as having the ability to enhance "all other healing skills and disciplines (including massage, physical and occupational therapies, nursing, psychological counselling and all allopathic and alternative medical modalities)" (in Melton, 2001:88).

The styles of Reiki I have briefly introduced above are but a few examples of the diversity of this practice. And though there may be tension between some of these lineages, they do show how Reiki is utilised by practitioners alongside other healing modalities and within other spiritual frameworks. This mixing and matching is just as common in the Scottish context. And though there is a progressive emphasis for authoritative writers such as Rand and Petter to find the Japanese roots of Reiki, for many western practitioners it is to the future - or at least the present - that they look for new and more personally efficient ways to incorporate Reiki into all aspects of their

daily lives. Reiki in the west is a prime example of the New Age philosophy of “do what feels right for you ...help yourself to help others”.

In the final section of this introduction to the historical background of Reiki I shall introduce some key writers' evaluations of the nature of Reiki energy. It will be useful to have an awareness of how this is variously described before we move into the ethnographic accounts in the next chapter.

Reiki Energy

As with all things Reiki, representations vary about “the nature of Reiki energy”. These representations are intimately related to the Reiki symbols or characters and their historical roots. Within Reiki circles this is a huge field of debate and as such one could write an entire thesis about such matters. For writers such as Walter Lubeck propose that a deeper understanding of the “tool box – the symbols and their mantras – of the Usui System of Natural healing contain some important statements about the method [of walking the Reiki Path] through working with these symbols” 2001:43). I shall merely provide here a review of some of these representations. For as we shall see in the next chapter the use of Reiki symbols to ‘draw down’ Reiki energy is an integral part of this healing practice.

William Rand

One of America’s most respected Reiki Masters is William Rand. Rand has written training guides for First and Second Degree Reiki practice, these being commonly used in Scottish healing circles and later more evaluative material on the form of Reiki

symbols and energy etc. His personal interest in spiritual matters and metaphysics began when he was at high school. He joined the Rosicrucian Order where he learnt that “the best way to learn about life and especially about metaphysics was from experience” (Rand, 2001:61). From this Rosicrucian perspective each individual should “form his or her own opinion about the metaphysical world by interacting with it and by having a direct conscious connection to metaphysical forces and energies” (ibid). So for the next twenty years Rand took part in training classes, which focused on inner development and metaphysical realities. He also spent a year studying with a Hawaiian “Kahuna”¹³. All of these experiences deepened his awareness that underpinning all life is the energetic life force or Ki and that any depletion of this would lead to illness or even death (Rand, 2001:62).

Ki is a living energy. It is also known as the vital force or the universal life force. This is the non-physical energy that animates all living things. As long as something is alive, it has life energy circulating through it; when it dies, the life energy departs. If your life energy is low, or if there is a restriction in its flow, you are more vulnerable to illness. When it is high and flowing freely, you are less likely to get sick. Life energy plays an important role in everything we do. It animates the body and has higher levels of expression. Ki is also the primary energy of our emotions, thought and spiritual life. (Rand, 1991:1-2).

For Rand, human beings become sick when negative thoughts and intentions about oneself “influence personal Ki in a negative way...[for] negatively directed Ki will form around the organs of the body and in the chakras and the aura, slow[ing] down healthy activities of the body” (2001:64). Therefore health is dependent on developing and

¹³ Rand states that the word “Kahuna” means “Keeper of the Secret”, and that he “was very fortunate to have been given some of the Kahuna’s teaching when [he] was with him” (2001:63).

maintaining a “positive self-image” through the “releasing” of “all negative thoughts and feelings from our mind” (ibid)¹⁴. However Rand also argues that what we have experienced in past lives affects the mind and subtle energy fields in our present life. “This effect, called karma, is carried into life in the aura when the soul first enters the physical body at birth” (2001:65). Hence throughout our life it is this auric past-life karma that “attracts experiences to us, which in turn strengthens the karmic charge in the aura...[which then] move[s] into the chakras, and eventually into the physical body” (ibid).

As it [the karmic charge] works deeper into the energy system, the effects become more pronounced and, depending on whether this karmic energy is either positive or negative, it can affect us in different ways, attracting good fortune or bad and also having a similar range of effects on our health. This is the basis of poor health and sickness (20001: 63).

Rand first experienced Reiki energy when he was initiated, *attuned*,¹⁵ by Bethal Phaigh in 1981. During this attunement he experienced “a new energy coming down from [his] crown chakra and then into [his] heart where it exploded out” (Rand, 2001:66).

Following this attunement “he noticed a new energy flowing within [himself]...[and] knew that Reiki was real and that the attunement had created an important improvement to [his] energy system” (ibid).

From this point he knew that though all healers utilise Ki energy in their healing practice not all use Reiki life energy, this being guided by the Higher Power. Rand’s

¹⁴ This positioning is of course very similar to that expressed by Paul Heelas in his (1996:19) *The New Age Movement* where he evaluates the primary themes of New Age self-spirituality, namely how we have been ‘brainwashed’ – by mainstream society and culture. The [competitively materialistic] mores of the established order ...[leading to] ‘self limiting images and images that make us feel we are not terribly worthwhile’ (cited by Wallis, 1984, p.32)”.

¹⁵ I shall relate an ethnographic account of the Reiki attunement process in the next chapter.

preferred esoteric interpretation of the Japanese kanji for “Rei”,

as it is used in Reiki, is more accurately interpreted to mean higher knowledge or spiritual consciousness. This is the wisdom that comes from God or the Higher Self and is the God Consciousness which is all knowing. It knows the cause of all problems and difficulties and knows how to heal them (1991:1-1).

Rand proposes that as Reiki is guided by God or the higher power “it knows exactly where negative Ki exists in the person’s subtle energy system “ (2001:68). Hence it will flow to that area raising the rate of energetic vibration so that negative Ki is released or is transformed to a positive state. It is “positive Ki which restores and maintains health” (ibid).

If then, our whole physical and emotional being may be affected by higher realities or power as Rand proposes - and this is a commonly held perception among Scottish Reiki practitioners - and if this higher power or dimension may be experienced in a Reiki attunement or treatment, then one might also expect there to be a similar emphasis on the transformational potential of this healing practice. Indeed this appears to be the case. For as Rand puts it,

The great beauty and value of Reiki is that it connects us to the part of the universe where all is guided by the wisdom, love, and peace. When we receive a Reiki treatment, we get a taste of the higher dimension; at the same time, Reiki points us towards a greater experience. If we listen to the consciousness of Reiki, we will realize that it is offering the possibility that this higher dimension could be our continuous and unending reality. Every aspect of our mind, our lives, our entire being, could be continually surrounded and guided by the love, beauty, wisdom, peace, and grace of the higher power. It is the creation of this state of

consciousness within each person that is the deeper intention of Reiki. As we discover this deeper intention for ourselves and open more and more to it, our lives will be transformed (2001:70).

For Rand then, and indeed for Lubeck and Petter, once we learn to allow our lives to be directed by our spiritual core then we will be less affected by selfish drives from our ego. A person will become healed and live life more joyously, harmoniously and in a loving manner. This perspective will become apparent as we journey through the fields of Scottish healing. But for the moment let us return to a second interpretation of Reiki energy, this time coming from German Reiki Master, Frank Arjava Petter.

Frank Arjava Petter

Petter proposes that if one wishes to gain a deeper understanding of Mikao Usui's Reiki techniques then one should have some knowledge of the Chinese system of "meridians", for as Mikao Usui was a Buddhist scholar who had learnt about Chinese medicine and Qi Gong, he "did not base his Reiki system on the Indian theory of the chakras" (Petter, 2001:77)¹⁶. Petter proposes that the energy pathways in the Chinese system of meridians enable the flow of vital energy to the physical and subtle bodies; this also relating to the flow of yin and yang¹⁷. "Yin and yang are not only opposites like black and white and day and night, they are also seen as complementary elements.

¹⁶ It should be noted that Reiki healing in Scotland however is very much based around clearing energy blockages in the chakras within an eclectic interpretative framework where mixing Indian and Chinese energetic frameworks appears to be the normative procedure. For example Rand proposes that the "chakras are like subtle energy transformers [that] take the Ki or life force that is all around us and transform it into the various frequencies we need...[hence] understanding them [chakras] can be helpful when giving Reiki treatments" (2001:83).

¹⁷ Petter states that the Chinese medical system also regards everything in the universe as corresponding to the five elements of the earth (earth, fire, water, wood and metal). Hence with regard to the human physical body 'earth' corresponds with the stomach, spleen and pancreas, 'fire' with the heart and small intestine, 'wood' with the liver and gallbladder, 'metal' with the lungs and large intestine and 'water' with the kidney and bladder (2001:81).

They are dance partners like man and woman, like high and low tide. Without the one the other does not and cannot exist” (2001:80). Hence Petter argues that the Reiki practitioner should, in similarity with other ‘eastern’ healing practitioners, aim to restore the balance of the opposite dependencies of yin and yang enabling a state of perfect equilibrium and harmony and a healthy body (2001:81).

Petter’s emphasis on the centrality of the meridians, rather than the chakras, in Reiki practice is a considerable shift in positioning. For in his 1997 *Reiki Fire* he provides an evaluation of the ‘Eastern’ chakras in relation to Reiki hand positions. “The 12 Reiki hand positions are located ‘above’ those centers and help the energy flow freely to and through the chakras for an individual’s optimum health and well being” (1997:100). This is yet another example of ontological frameworks being reconstructed as a result of finding ‘new’ historical information. It is also an excellent example of how as practitioners “walk the Reiki path” by doing Reiki ‘as spiritual practice’ new insights may be seen to be ‘provided from the higher source’, this causing a shift in perspective. For as Petter argues at the Reiki initiation (attunement) universal life energy is transferred to the student by the teacher, which helps the student to “absorb more cosmic energy for his personal wellbeing” (1997:108-9). “Profound understanding of the Reiki system is something that comes with time and practice to the sincere seeker” (ibid). This is why Petter regards Reiki to be a spiritual path. For as Usui founded the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai in the same year that he had a satori on Mount Kurama then this system of healing is born out of religious experience (2001:93). Such was the greatness and genius of Dr. Usui: the ability to channel the divine into a form that can be experienced and practised by his fellow human beings” (ibid).

Walter Lubeck

German Reiki master Walter Lubeck also regards Reiki as a form of spiritual path, which in its practical elements is intimately related to Chinese esoteric and medical systems. Lubeck's personal path of "living with Reiki" (1994:13) has enabled him to, "develop his personality and to attune his life to the rhythms of the universe" (ibid). On this path his experiences of studying the ancient Chinese oracle the I Ching, the chakra teachings and the more inward style of martial arts in Asia" (ibid) have assisted him in now walking the 'Reiki-do' – the path of healing love. For, he states, by travelling this path each person comes to realise that it is the divine universal life energy within oneself that gives life. "In a certain sense everyone is God, because his or her innermost core is divine" (Lubeck, 1994:16). He proposes that the continual practice of Reiki enables each individual to "grow into their own identity without external pressure" and experience fewer blows delivered by "fate" as "life force energy" is raised. His defining of "the essence of Reiki as love; an all embracing divine vibration, emanating joy and life" (Lubeck, 1994:14) enables him to suggest that once this energy is drawn into the body, then each person will experience a more vitalised life.

The Universal Life energy relaxes those parts of the body it is allowed to enter¹⁸.

Tension brings anxiety and hostility into your life; wherever there is love, hostility and tension cease. This is why acute inflammations [of the body] ease under the effect of Reiki, for they are the symptoms of a conflict bound to erupt when you resist life, and blockages occur. Reiki opens other, more harmonious pathways, and in flowing the blockages will be dissolved (Lubeck, 1994:17).

¹⁸ Lubeck proposes that if a human being decides that he or she does not want to receive Reiki energy due to "...feelings of guilt or the conviction of being too 'evil' or too 'sinful' [then that person]... will not let anything come near [him or herself] that could bring about [his or her] healing" (1994:28).

Lubeck proposes that Reiki can have very positive effects on our generally hectic modern lifestyles where emotional highs and stressful situations alternate at frequent intervals, placing “too great a strain on our nerves and organs” (1994:24). The practice of Reiki, he suggests, balances out these highs and lows leading to a lifestyle where we learn to look inward as well as outwards.

By becoming more in tune with your inner Self, stress and the feeling of being out of touch simply disappear. The quality of life improves as you more easily integrate the experiences you cross in your path. A sense of peace arises as you realise that the lessons you have learned enrich your personality. Physical and mental conditions improve and often disappear or are suddenly cured by medical means, which so far may have been effective without the boost Reiki provides. Reiki supplies a continuous flow of energy which causes the Third Eye, which is responsible for the recognition and realisation of the ideal path for each of us, and the energy center, the root chakra, to work together in harmony (1994:25).

Lubeck has also extensively researched the written character, Reiki. For he suggests, this character precisely describes within its form what Reiki is. In turn a deeper understanding of the meaning of this symbol “will also help you to advance along your path” (2001:43). He argues that even in ancient times the Japanese people absorbed influences from other countries such as China “which had the function of a cultural and religious role model for Japan through the centuries” (2001:44). Accordingly “in the Chinese language, the Japanese Reiki was called Ling Qi” (2001:45) and first appeared in a written treatise of around 300BCE authored by Confucian philosopher Mencius (Mong Dsi). In this treatise Mencius complained that “so many meditations were done in the monasteries with the goal of attaining worldly advantages. The truly

meaningful aspect, the work in the sense of a personal opening to the divine by using Ling Qi was neglected" (Lubeck, 2001:45)¹⁹.

Lubeck presents a comprehensive evaluation of the symbol Reiki from its shamanistic origins and ancient Taoist roots to its more modern usage in contemporary Japanese. In all of these Chi (Qi, Ki) is regarded in simple terms as the life force. Lubeck argues that in ancient Tantric-Buddhist and Taoist circles where emphasis was placed on meditation and energy work, the hoped for end result of this method was that "the spirit [would] become perfectly calm" (2001:50).

From this calm, the light (of the mind) crystallizes for enlightenment, the spiritual quality (*Ling*) of which generally penetrates the entire being of the meditator and his or her natural drives in the spiritual sense (ibid).

Therefore Rei or "Ling" as written in classical Chinese texts "continues to be seen as the constellating force that forms and moves the material structures according to the directions of the spiritual realm – in conjunction with Ki " (2001:51).

Hiroshi Doi

Japanese Reiki writer Hiroshi Doi is in accord with Lubeck in his location of Reiki healing as being intimately related to 'love'. For Doi, Reiki is universal energy. This energy is

The power which gave birth to the great universe, created the solar system and the all lives [sic] on the earth, as well as maintaining them in good order...this is the energy of

¹⁹ Of course we have to be careful about Lubeck's assumption that Ling Qi is the same as Reiki.

fine wave (the wave of love) which is being radiated into [sic] universe by the highest consciousness of the universe – existence in higher dimension for the purpose of carrying out its will (2000: 27).

In turn he regards love as being like the sun. For “though some may say ‘the sun’, which is substance, does not possess consciousness...[it still] constantly sends out the life energy in every direction for every creature... This is one of the ‘waves of love’ being emanated from the highest consciousness in ‘existence in higher dimensions’” (200:28).

Doi argues that human beings will remain healthy and receive good fortune when they are on the same vibrational wavelength as universal energy. “In this respect Reiki is not ‘what changes your nature’ - but what supports you to return to ‘what you should be’” (2000:29). For Doi, the flow of Reiki energy within the body as universal love will allow each person to “remove any bad condition within” (ibid) while also assisting in the completion of “the necessary study for [the] mind” (ibid). Hence Doi sees Reiki energy as being a revitalising force which boosts a person’s life energy while also enhancing their natural healing abilities (2000:30-31).

I shall return to Doi in the next chapter with his appraisal of Reiki symbols and the flow of Reiki energy. However I would like to close this chapter with one last Reiki theorist and practitioner, Diane Stein’s, perceptions of the nature of Reiki energy. Stein is a significant figure in Reiki circles. She has disclosed in print the form of the Reiki symbols - a highly controversial act, and has written about the techniques of ‘doing’ Reiki. For as Petter states,

The Reiki system, including the hand positions and all the symbols, does not work without initiation, since the channel for the universal energy has not yet been opened. That is why Reiki is so bathed in secrecy: It simply cannot be talked about openly with people other than initiates (1997:108).

Diane Stein

Stein, though acknowledging that one cannot become a Reiki practitioner without being initiated by an attuned and trained teacher of the same - and that her book is a Reiki practitioners' and teachers' guide – also feels that,

In this time of change and crisis for people and the planet, healing is too desperately needed for it to be kept secret any longer. Always have respect for the sacredness of the information that follows and for the Goddess's gift of Reiki (1994:1).

Stein states that she first experienced hands-on healing and several other healing techniques at the Michigan Women's festival in 1983. From this point she knew that she wanted to devote her life to healing and spent many years learning various healing practices. However she also felt as she progressed along this path “that there was a piece of information missing, something that would increase the effectiveness of hands-on healing plus make it easy and simple as I suspected it could and should be” (1995:2).

At a metaphysical gathering where she was demonstrating healing, two men approached her and asked from whom she had learnt Reiki. Despite her assertions that she knew nothing of this practice, the two men “having felt her hands” (1994:2) insisted that it was Reiki that she was doing. A little later they gave Stein a “full body

Reiki healing” (ibid) in her home and she knew that this was the simple healing system that she had been looking for. So Stein looked into the possibility of learning Reiki in 1987 and was appalled to learn of the high costs of being taught this practice - \$10,000 for Master-teacher training (ibid).

Soon after, however, she managed to persuade a Second Degree practitioner - despite considerable resistance, for he had not received his Master’s attunement - to initiate her into Reiki. She immediately felt a major shift in her healing ability. “I felt light and filled with energy I had never before experienced or dreamed existed. I was filled with light and with love for all Be-ings” (Stein, 1995:3).

By 1990 Stein was initiated to Second Degree Reiki and had started trying to pass attunements, having received a page torn from a Reiki Master manual (anonymously) upon which was written the Traditional Reiki III Master’s symbol. When she informed her Reiki teacher of this “Her anger was immediate and intense” (ibid). However she later phoned Stein back and stated that if she was going to attune people anyway she might as well have the right methods to do this. “She then gave me the method for passing Reiki attunements over the phone” (ibid).

In 1991 Stein asked a friend to channel for Reiki’s historical origins. This woman,

described Reiki as having originated with the planet that also brought the many -armed goddesses to Earth, the root culture of what became pre-patriarchal India. The Indian god we know today as Shiva, female at that time, brought the energy here and s/he wants to be remembered for this gift. When the human body for this planet was designed Reiki was incorporated into the genetic coding as a birthright of all people (1995:8).

Stein also states that Reiki was known in India at the time of Gautama Siddharta (1995:10) and that the technique of Reiki (but not known by that name) was familiar to Jesus as a reincarnated Bodhissatva, or Tulka; he having retained memories of previous lives and psychic and healing abilities (ibid). Jesus, she argues, survived his crucifixion later living "a very long and well respected life as a holy man in India" (1995:12). As he had taught his disciples the healing art of Reiki, this spread around the globe as they travelled. She also proposes that by the fifth century Jesus' healing method was largely lost to the west, only remaining active with Buddhist adepts "who used but did not publicize its existence" (ibid).

It was Mikao Usui then who found the texts describing the healing formula in their original Sanskrit in a Zen Buddhist monastery (Stein, 1995:12). He knew that, as this text was 2500 years old, and as its meaning was concealed, he would have to work hard to translate it. Following his period of meditation on Mount Kurama where he saw, after twenty-one days, "'millions and millions of rainbow bubbles' and finally the Reiki symbols as if on a screen. As he saw each of the symbols, he was given the information about each of them to activate the healing energy. It was the first Reiki attunement, the psychic rediscovery of an ancient method" (Stein, 1995:12).

It should be noted at this point that Stein also bases some of her interpretation on the writing of Hawayo Takata, she having been critiqued by Petter and Rand et. al. for incorporating Christian elements and historical 'facts' into Usui's life story. However Stein is still representative of the many western Reiki practitioners who emphasise the intimate ties healers have cross-culturally to Jesus, historically and in the present, for they all have/are utilising the same life force energy to heal.

Mikao Usui left Mt. Koriyama knowing how to heal as Buddha and Jesus had healed
(Stein, 1995:12).

We shall see also, later in this thesis, how Stein re-interprets one of the Reiki master symbols as being “of the Goddess”. This, I shall argue is an action which relates very much to a sense of re-empowerment for women and relates to the development of de-centralised narratives of power and a politic of reclamation.

For as we have seen in this chapter, Reiki literature is alive with debates surrounding the origins and usage of symbols, the historical background to Reiki and the specifics of energy pathways and practice. Hence in the next chapter I shall revisit some themes described here from a more personal standpoint as an initiated Reiki practitioner. And I shall return to Reiki in the final chapter of this thesis where I reflect further on my time in the field and relate healing practice to other forms of gendered spirituality and to theoretical standpoints.

Chapter Six

Doing Reiki

Within this chapter I shall provide a descriptive ethnography of Reiki. I have found some parts of this portrayal to be rather problematic. For in Reiki, one of the most significant initial events is the attunement or initiation that the student receives from the Reiki Master. Having experienced this for myself I find it extremely difficult to put it into words. So, though I have tended to rely more on textual accounts of the same, I now also have an awareness of how one's sense of reality may shift having experienced an event with entirely unexpected results. This is why I am in accord with Young and Goulet when they propose that,

Extraordinary experiences force one to deal with the possibility that reality is culturally constructed and that instead of one reality (or a finite set of culturally-defined realities), there are multiple realities – or at least multiple ways of experiencing the world, depending upon time, place, and circumstances (1994:8).

However Young and Goulet also argue that the problem for the anthropologist who has experienced an extraordinary event is that s/he may fear ostracism from scientific and rationalistic associates in the fields of academia. This fear "is not unfounded if one does not have the tools which allow the experience to be framed in a 'believable' way to the listener" (ibid). This is why when I have interpreted or represented participants' experiences in this chapter I have also kept firmly in mind that "anthropology has not [or at least might not have] been fully able to shake off its earlier involvement with cultural imperialism" (Young and Goulet, 1994:10). For I too have been forced to take

participant's accounts of the 'extraordinary' more seriously because I have now been there myself. I have been changed.

This descriptive ethnology of Reiki will be presented in the following manner. I shall initially provide an experiential account of my first steps into the field of Reiki where I learnt to be a 'beginner healer'. I shall then present a fuller picture of Reiki as healing practice before moving on to describe a Frank 'Arjava' Petter *Reiki Techniques* workshop held at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh. I shall also include in the latter part of this chapter some interview and questionnaire material, this being provided by Reiki healers in Edinburgh and Fife.

First steps

Learn Reiki

-change your Life!

A hands on healing art that anyone can learn

For self healing or healing others

-no previous knowledge required

In the summer of 2000 this advertisement was placed in the local Dunfermline Press²⁰. As I had already met numerous Reiki practitioners at various healing workshops in Scotland, all of whom had promoted Reiki to me as being personally self-empowering, this advertisement seemed like a useful entry point into developing an experiential awareness of this popular form of New Age healing. After an initial phone conversation

²⁰ Dunfermline is a small town in Fife approximately twenty miles north of Edinburgh.

with Fiona²¹, the Reiki Master teaching these courses and having secured “the last free space” for the following weekend, I duly found myself at a hotel in Dunfermline with five other women²². As all of us were rather unsure of what to expect of this weekend, there was, I felt, an air of somewhat nervous anticipation.

We were shown to a room “regularly booked for Reiki” carrying our pillows, blankets and large bottles of water as requested. It felt odd to be starting out on such a potentially “transforming” path within the confines of a hotel function room rather than at a centre such as The Salisbury in Edinburgh. However Fiona had arranged around this large sunlit room several therapy tables for later practice. A candle was lit in one corner while the air was filled with the aroma of burning incense. Reiki mood music was being played. All of these features contributed to the fostering of a sense of ‘different space’.

Fiona was an attractive young woman in her thirties simply dressed in trousers and a jersey. She asked us to draw some chairs into a circle and to introduce ourselves in turn. Ann, Marianne and Isobel (these women being aged between thirty five and sixty) told Fiona that they were interested in learning Reiki to see if it could help them with chronic health problems that had not been relieved by bio-medical approaches to health. Susie, an expectant mother in her early twenties, wished to be able to use Reiki on herself during pregnancy and in labour for she had heard from friends that this practice was very relaxing. Lynn wished to learn Reiki “to add another string to [her]

²¹ All names of practitioners and participants have been changed for confidentiality reasons. This also applies to the referencing of Fiona’s training manuals, Reiki 1st Degree and Reiki 2nd Degree.

²² Of the five women present one was in her twenties and in the mid stages of a first pregnancy, while the other four were aged between thirty-five and approximately sixty.

bow” and “to see whether Reiki strengthened [her] Bio-Energetic training”.²³ I disclosed that I had been interested in complementary therapies for many years and that I was also researching healing at the University of Stirling. As part of this period of initial introduction, Fiona told us about her journey into Reiki. She informed us that she had a two year old daughter and that she was trained in clinical aromatherapy and massage, having a client base in Dunfermline. She had learnt Reiki initially having felt “personally drawn to this healing art” over eight years ago. Since that point she had taken her First, Second and Master level degrees with Richard. This Reiki Master was, I later discovered in conversation with Fiona, also a follower of Osho Fiona regarded Reiki as a lifelong spiritual way of life and hence her view is very similar to the writers I have presented in the previous chapter.

Following this period of introduction, Fiona led us through a guided meditation. We were all asked to lie comfortably on the floor and to breathe slowly and deeply with our eyes shut. Fiona suggested that we should initially visualise our feet as being roots located deep in the earth while at the same time seeing “streams of golden light flowing upwards from [our] heads”. We were to visualise ourselves as standing in a lush green valley beside a hot air balloon. Once we had climbed aboard this it would rise through the clear blue sky until it reached a rainbow overhead. As we passed through the rainbow we were asked to incorporate each of its colours into our corresponding chakras; red for root chakra, orange for sacral, yellow for solar plexus, green for heart, blue for throat, indigo for brow, finally drawing white light from our toes up to our crown. A feeling of relaxation and peace was expressed by all after this meditation. There also appeared to be a general feeling of the development of a sense

²³ Bio Energetic therapy is based on a six month training course in Ireland. Within this system practitioners are taught to heal energy field blockages, which allows the client to return to state of balanced health. This system of healing works from the premise that all humans are energetic beings surrounded by an aura. It is this aura that displays states of dis-ease as blockages.

of harmony within the group, while the concerns of the outside world seemed to be less pressing. It felt like 'time out' had been called.

Following this initial meditation everyone returned to sit in a circle facing inwards while Fiona explained to us "what Reiki is". Here I quote from her Reiki 1 workbook – this being given to each participant - as it covers well her representation of this practice.

Reiki is a Japanese hands-on healing art which involves the channelling of energy through the hands of the healer into a client's body, or into the body of the healer themselves. Reiki means Spiritually Guided Universal Life Force Energy. The life force is the same energy that is present in all living things. In a Reiki treatment large amounts of this energy from the universe flow through the hands of the healer and it is guided by the spirit of the person receiving the treatment. The Reiki is a very loving energy which flows to wherever in the body it is most needed at the time of the treatment. The treatment is holistic i.e. it benefits the client mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. This means that the cause of a person's condition is addressed, not just their symptoms. Reiki treatment is safe for almost anyone to receive. It is an excellent complement to other forms of treatment, whether orthodox or complementary (FRW1, 2000:1).

Fiona explained that in order to practice Reiki you had "to be attuned" by a Reiki Master and that "the attunements will raise and balance your energetic bodies so that you can become open channels for Reiki energy". Describing what actually happens during the attunement is difficult for the simple reason that when you have to feel and sense rather than see another person's physical interaction with your embodied self, words feel rather limiting. However the following is a description of what I felt during the attunements.

The Attunements

For the attunements²⁴ we were asked to remain seated in a circle but to turn our chairs to face outwards and sit with our bare feet “flat on the floor for grounding”. Eyes were to be lightly shut. Our breathing was to be as in “Gassho meditation”. In order to do this Fiona told us to put our hands together in the prayer position and with “your awareness focused at the meeting point of the two middle fingers...breathe in with the tongue touching the roof of the mouth and breathe out with the tongue relaxed. This we were told “really opens up the heart chakra and puts you into a good state of being for doing Reiki”.

I next sensed Fiona standing behind me for a few moments while I breathed as directed. I felt her hands move above my head and lightly brush my crown. She walked to my front and pulled my hands directly forward and opened my palms as if I were holding a book before clearing the hair from my forehead. After a few moments she raised my clasped hands over my head and then lowered them, finally crossing them over my chest. Within a minute or so of her having carried out my attunement I began to experience a feeling of great heat flowing through my body and uncontrollable whole body shaking. This was completely unexpected and also experienced, I later discovered, by three other women in the group. This shaking lasted several minutes before gradually easing off. I felt unsettled by what had happened for the whole experience was outwith my analytical frameworks and control. Four attunements were carried out over this weekend with progressively decreasing body shaking but similar levels of waves of heat. After each attunement we were shown the correct hand

²⁴ Four attunements were carried out for this First Degree workshop within what appeared to be an identical ritual format (apart from the use of Master symbols).

positions and techniques for physical healing which we practised for the rest of the weekend.

After each attunement we returned to sit on chairs in an inward facing circle. Fiona asked us to extend our hands to the partner on each side so that we were all "linked up". Our right palm was to be facing upwards and our left facing down over/under the hands of the person on each side. In this way we were "to feel the energy flow around the circle" which indeed appeared to be the case. For once again a feeling of great heat swept through my body with most women in the circle stating that they had felt a similar sensation; Isobel for example, saying that "it had felt very odd to feel waves of energy flowing between us".

At this point I feel it would be useful to evaluate what appeared to be occurring during the attunements. The actualities of this event are shrouded in secrecy, the Reiki Master in general regarding this as a sacred rite of initiation. Hence here I draw from textual material. I have chosen to utilise initially Reiki author William Rand's description of this 'process' in *Reiki, The Healing Touch, First and Second Degree Training Manual* (1991). For Fiona advised us that this was "one of the best books to learn about Reiki from" and that it was this text that she had utilised throughout her own training.

According to Rand, Reiki is believed to be a special kind of healing energy that can only be channelled by a person that has been attuned to it. People who already do healing work may, apparently, experience "at least a fifty percent increase in the strength of their healing energies after taking Reiki classes" (1991,1-3). He describes the attunement process in the following manner.

Reiki is not taught in the way other healing techniques are taught. The ability is transferred to the student by the Reiki master during an attunement process. During the attunement the *Rei* or God-Consciousness makes adjustments to the student's chakras and energy pathways to accommodate the ability to channel Reiki and then links the student to the source of Reiki. These changes are unique to each person. The attunement energies are channelled into the student through the Reiki Master. The Reiki Master does not direct the process and is simply the channel for the attunement energy flowing from the Higher power (1991:1-4).

Rand also proposes that for most people the attunement is a powerful, often spiritual event, where many have reported mystical experiences, "an opening of the third eye", flashes of past lives, healings and visions. The attuned person may also experience "increased intuitive awareness" (1991:1-5). Further attunements may lead to "healing of personal problems, clarity of mind, increased psychic sensitivity and a raised level of consciousness" (ibid). Rand suggests that "The attunement is also attended by Reiki guides and other spiritual beings who help implement the process" (ibid) and that the attuned person will "have Reiki" (ibid) for the rest of his or her life. In turn

The Reiki attunement can start a cleansing process that affects the physical body as well as the mind and the emotions. Toxins that have been stored in the body may be released along with feelings and thought patterns that are no longer useful. This does not always take place after a Reiki attunement, but when it does, it is important to understand what is happening so you can support its completion. Whatever change takes place, even if it is good, a period of adjustment is necessary so that the body and various parts of your life can get used to the healthy new conditions. You may need more rest, and it can be helpful to spend more time quietly contemplating your life and any changes you might need to make to support a healthier lifestyle. Many

have found that a process of purification prior to and after the attunement improves the benefit one receives (Rand, 1991:1-5).

Rand's evaluation of the effects of being attuned were, I found later, to be in accord with those of many of Fiona's students. Many of these attunees reported noticeable "energy fluctuations", "heightened perception" and "hot hands" as Reiki energy flowed.²⁵ One should note here that students had been advised by Fiona prior to attunement that they might experience tiredness, lack of appetite and mood swings as blockages were released from the energetic field and that this might be amplified after the Second Degree attunements. It was for this reason that Fiona told potential second degree attunees that they must accept this initiation with a conscious awareness of Reiki's purpose, that of "healing with love"²⁶. On a more positive note, the ability of attuned Reiki practitioners to self-heal was promoted as a blessing in itself. For as the practitioner must self-heal on a regular basis so that s/he can channel Reiki energy freely, s/he then should enjoy the personal benefit of a more 'balanced' life as "giving a treatment always increases one's energy and leaves one surrounded by loving feelings of well being" (Rand, 1991:1-7).

On a bigger picture level, Rand also suggests that a Reiki attunement is often viewed as "an initiation into a sacred metaphysical order that has been present on Earth for

²⁵ Shuffrey provides a concise evaluation of the Reiki energy pathway after attunement. For Shuffrey, once the student has agreed to receive Reiki into his or her life and given a gift of exchange, a gateway is created. "The body has seven major centres of concentrated energy that are called *chakras* These are located on the crown of the head, the brow, the throat, the heart, the solar plexus, the navel and the reproductive organs. These natural healing centres are neither open nor closed but realigned in such a way that the energy access is made available and does not revert to its original form. The initiations are the essential part of the Form, the difference between Reiki and all other forms of healing. They allow the path of Reiki to be drawn down through the top of the head, through the heart, into the solar plexus and out through the hands" (1999:28).

²⁶ In describing Reiki as "loving energy" Fiona locates herself alongside writers such as Doi, for he states that "Reiki-ho" is a technique to heal everything you see, come across or touch by being a passage of Reiki-Universal energy as well as the wave of love". Being a passage means to receive the wave of love by uniting yourself with the consciousness and the rhythm of the universe and to purify and transmit it as it is" (Doi, 2000:26).

thousands of years²⁷. By receiving an attunement you will become part of a group of people who are using Reiki to heal themselves and each other and who are working together to heal the Earth. By becoming part of this group you will also be receiving help from the Reiki guides and other spiritual beings who are working towards these goals" (Rand, 1991, C - 6).

One example of how Reiki practitioners network can be seen in the aftermath of the September 11th 2001 air attacks in New York and Washington. For following these tragic events Scottish Reiki practitioners linked up with their counterparts across the world to send Reiki healing to all those affected. In part this was orchestrated by William Lee Rand at The International Center for Reiki Training based in America. The following e-mail was sent out to over 25,000 Reiki people worldwide from Rand's *Reiki.Org* website headed 'Helping You Accomplish Your Divine Purpose'. I draw selectively from this here due to its length.

Please unite with us to send Reiki to the dead and injured and all those affected by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Also send Reiki for all related future events and to heal the planet.

Let us unite at this time of great need to create a continuous wave of Reiki and prayer around the world. Please Reiki every hour on the hour wherever you are, as many times as you can or simply send it continuously...

As you send Reiki, you could meditate on all the others worldwide who are sending Reiki and allow yourself to merge with this great Reiki stream...

²⁷ Shuffrey also regards the Reiki attunements as a sacred ritual where the student "remembers" his or her connection with The Reiki. For the attunement is a "ritual of invocation" and "direction of the Light, a holy act of purification" (1999:30).

Need for Continued Reiki

In the same way the US government is vowing to maintain a sustained effort to eradicate terrorism, we need the same kind of effort with Reiki. It is important that all of us vow to unite with Reiki people all over the planet to send Reiki for world peace – everyday for the next several years or more until the terrorist situation is healed. The value of uniting together for a common purpose cannot be over emphasised. This is a tremendous opportunity for us to make a significant difference in the quality of spiritual energy on the planet.

When you send Reiki, imagine all the other people from different countries all over the world sending Reiki together. As you do so, allow yourself to join the global flow and be lifted up into higher consciousness. In so doing not only will we heal the planet, but each of us will be deeply healed as well. Thanks for all your help. (RICRT: 2001).

Before I move on to take a further look at Reiki practice in Scotland I am going to present Diane Stein's evaluation of passing attunements, for in her *Essential Reiki* she describes these as "the major 'miracle' of the Reiki healing system" (1995:104). Stein is the only Reiki author to date to have released details of the process of attunement and the usage of symbols as part of this. Hence I have had to think very carefully whether I too am prepared to face potential censure from Reiki authorities by reproducing already printed material. For Reiki symbols are only disclosed to the student after the Second Degree attunements which cannot be taken less than six weeks after the completion of the First Degree. I have, after careful thought, decided to risk doing this for similar reasons to Stein (and also because it does not involve the passing on of information given to me in confidence). Namely, if everyone has the ability to heal and if Reiki powerfully enhances this ability, then it should be available to everyone and not just those who can afford to pay the fees for training courses. I also tend to feel that if, as is promoted, Reiki can do no harm and is divinely guided – then

knowledge of the same must be of value to all interested parties allowing for “what you send out returns to you multiplied manifold” (Stein, 1995:1). Hence I will look firstly at Stein’s evaluation of the process of attunement which I shall abridge. More specific information on the symbols will be presented later in this chapter.

Disclosed attunements

Stein first states that the Reiki Master carrying out the attunements should do so while holding the “Hui Yin position” (1995:113). This is where the tongue is positioned at the roof of the palate, the breath is held and for women Reiki masters the vagina and cervix is fully contracted “closing an additional energy gate. Ki immediately begins to move upward in the body along the Hara Line, and energy can no longer move downward in the body through the feet and internal organs. Connection is made to Earth energy, which is drawn upwards...[So eventually] Ki moves from the crown downward, as well as from the earth upward” 1995:91)²⁸. At this point the Master should be centred and in contact with his or her Reiki spirit guides and standing behind the seated student. “Some very complex things happen in the Reiki initiation, but the Master doesn’t even need to know what they are. She just does the attunement. The Reiki guides and Reiki energy will take care of all that follows” (Stein, 1995:112). Stein proposes that the Master stands firstly behind the seated student and opens the Crown chakra primarily by visualisation and hand movement. The Master symbol is drawn over the crown. The Master then reaches over the student’s shoulders and takes hold of the hands. The Crown is blown into before the breath is re held. The three other Reiki symbols are next traced over the Crown, the student’s hands once again being

²⁸ Stein provides a much fuller evaluation of the Hui Yin than could be accommodated here. But in general this relates to the flow of energy or Ki around and through the body travelling along the meridians, the chakras and the Hara line - all of these being esoteric pathways.

held and the Crown blown into (1995:114).

The Master then moves in front of the student and opens his or her hands like a book. The power symbol, the Cho-Ku-Rei is drawn over both palms and the hands tapped three times. This is repeated with the emotional/mental and distance healing symbols. The hands are then refolded and held in one hand while the Master blows from root to heart chakra and then takes a deep breath, this being held (ibid). Upon returning to stand behind the student the Master closes the aura with the Reiki symbols now drawn inside it while leaving the Crown chakra open. The Hui Yin is released as is the breath (1995:113).

Stein proposes that the Reiki initiations may be “made into a beautiful ritual, or done, as I do it, swiftly and in a matter of fact manner” (1995:115). However the Master should wear comfortable and loose clothing for you “will heat up tremendously during the attunements and for a while after” (1995:119). The Master should also be careful not to attune too many people at one sitting as this can have very draining consequences on that person’s energetic levels.

I feel that this description of the Reiki attunement, which Stein proposes is a “nontraditional” (1995:116) version, fits well with what I felt and experienced in the Scottish context. For Fiona did ritualise the procedure by carrying out a guided meditation before seating us for attunement and music played throughout. Stein suggests that this meditation and music should induce a “deeply altered state” (1995:116). So let us move on and now look further at the actualities of learning to practice Reiki in the Scottish context.

The Scottish healer

After the first attunement as described above, Fiona demonstrated to the rest of the students the various hand positions on my body²⁹. As she did this I felt a deep sense of relaxation while she in turn expressed that “I can feel lots of heat coming from Jude and I sense that she has well developed psychic and intuitive abilities³⁰”. Fiona also told us that she uses the following prayer prior to healing as “it sets the right mood”.

I give thanks to the source of Reiki for this healing. I call upon my guardian Angel and (client's name) Guardian Angel to be present. I also call upon Archangel Michael, Archangel Raphael, Archangel Uriel and Archangel Gabriel to be present. I ask them to please cleanse, bless and sanctify this room. I ask the angels to protect and guide us during this healing and to assist in any way they can. I thank the angels for their help. Amen (FWM1: 2000:4).

I must admit that, having ‘psychic abilities’ or not, it was with some trepidation that I paired up with Isobel to try for the first time to ‘do’ Reiki. As I placed my hands over Isobel's main chakras I kept my eyes closed as advised by Fiona having “grounded myself” (through the visualisation of my feet as rooted in the earth) so that I didn't become “light headed”, “spacey” or “unbalanced by the higher vibration energies that you are channelling”. Throughout this first healing I was surprised to be able to feel different amounts of heat and cold coming from the various chakras. When I mentioned this to my partner Isobel it appeared that when I felt a chakra ‘as hot’ she

²⁹ There is some debate surrounding the ‘correct’ hand positions. But in general the First Degree Reiki practitioner will place her hands on or over the seven main chakras in the body to carry out a healing of the physical body. Second Degree practitioners use additional hand positions around the head for emotional and spiritual healing. These students are also advised to learn to trust their intuition, in that this will show them where areas of the energetic body are manifesting blockage or imbalance.

³⁰ From a cynical perspective one could think that this is just “telling the student what s/he wants to hear”. However this sort of comment, where the emphasis is laid on “utilising our intuitive and psychic abilities” is common within not just Reiki but all fields of healing.

correspondingly felt 'cold' coming from my hands. When I placed my hands on her knees she stated that she felt "a lot of heat" at this place and that she had problems with painful knees. I too - in similarity to most of the other students - felt extremely hot while 'working with the energetic body'. Fiona explained that this was because the Reiki energy was clearing out toxins from the body and also opening the Reiki channels. And indeed this feeling of intense heat was further amplified after the second attunement where these energetic pathways were "further cleared". This second attunement also resulted in what appeared to be more 'sensing' hands. For when I 'worked' with Fiona on Susie, the expectant mother, I could feel 'waves of energy' running up and down Susie's body between Fiona and myself. On looking back at my field notes I have written that this experience felt very strange and "very sweaty".

The rest of the weekend involved learning, as Fiona put it, "to feel the energy flowing through the chakras" and to see whether we felt "heightened sensitivity" after attunements. For "receiving each attunement helps to speed up the rate of vibration of the physical body, which tends to increase spiritual awareness as well as promoting healing". The second-degree attunements "further increase the students' healing power, and often sharpens intuitive and psychic abilities" (FRW2: 2000:3).

Fiona advised us that a Reiki healing treatment should usually take about one hour and that it is carried out with the client lying fully clothed on a treatment couch. "The treatment usually feels deeply peaceful and relaxing for the client and the healer, who also receives some of the Reiki energy and is never drained by the treatment".

Reiki works on the physical body as well as the energy field within and around the body called the aura. Eastern methods of healing such as Acupuncture and Shiatsu work on invisible channels of energy which run through the body called meridians. Reiki energy

flows through these meridians as well as through energy centres called Chakras. It is believed that to be truly healthy on all levels of our being the energy must flow freely along the meridians and through the chakras. When the energy becomes blocked or impeded within the body this is associated with poorer quality health at some level, the more severe the blockages the more likely a person is to experience disease. Reiki treatment helps to clear energy blockages and is a wonderful way to prevent as well as treat illness.

Reiki is not associated with any religion, but it is a spiritual practice and can facilitate personal and spiritual growth (FRW1: 2000:1).

I participated in the Reiki Second Degree workshop some six weeks after completing the First Degree weekend, having practised Reiki on friends and family in the intervening period. Fiona advised Isobel, Ann, Marianne, Susie and I³¹ that “the two further attunements you will receive today will enable you to do emotional and spiritual as well as physical healing”³². Rather than describing the totality of this workshop I will focus on one actual healing ‘session’. And, as an integral part of Reiki healing from Second degree upwards is the usage of three symbols, these being used to enhance physical, mental/emotional and absent healing, I shall look more extensively at these drawing from Fiona’s notes for Second Degree Reiki. Fiona categorically stated that “these secret symbols are not to be revealed to those not attuned to Reiki”³³. However

³¹ Lynn did not return to the Second Degree workshop as she had not felt any increase in ‘her’ Bio-energetic healing ability.

³² Though the splitting of emotional/spiritual and physical healing sounds more dualistic than holistic this may not actually be the case. For First degree practitioners are encouraged to use ‘body’ Reiki primarily for themselves, for as this Reiki energy flows more freely through their ‘energetic body’ both mind and body will be progressively healed. This, Fiona advised us enables “students to take the Second degree attunements (which nearly all practitioners do) while being more balanced and open. This means that you can channel Reiki more effectively and heal better”.

³³ Fiona informed us that there is considerable debate as to whether the Reiki symbols should ever be written down. For example Rand proposes that “Since the power of the symbols comes from the attunement, showing them to those who have not received the attunement will not help them and could cause confusion” (1991: 11-5). I shall evaluate these issues in more depth in the section entitled ‘Japanese Reiki meets the West’ where, rather than revealing the ‘actual’ taught Reiki symbols, I will elaborate on how these appear to have developed from Sanskrit and Kanji written form and how Stein represents the same.

by describing their usage in healing practice we can begin to get a better feel of what it is to 'do Reiki'. In order to facilitate this appraisal I shall also draw from various Reiki authors' representations of the same.

The symbols in healing

At the Second degree weekend Fiona carried out two attunements on each of us in turn, again in the same large room. The journey to this workshop had felt somewhat ethereal as a thick blanket of fog encompassed the countryside, limiting vision and muffling sound. As I sank into the opening visualisation and listened to the sound of gentle breathing all around me, it was easy to once again shut out the outside world and allow my senses to be soothed by the smell of burning incense and the sound of 'Eastern' mood music. Following the attunements, these being carried out in the same way as those in the first workshop, but utilising different attunement symbols, we were again asked to pair up and take turns at healing each other. I did not experience any body shaking at these attunements but still felt the same sensations of increased heat in my body.

I worked initially with Marianne as she lay on her back on a treatment couch. At the start of the healing I sat to the side of Marianne's head and spent a few moments in 'Gassho meditation'. I then placed my hands in the position to do a mental healing that encompasses emotional and spiritual aspects. For this I located my left hand underneath Marianne's head at the top of the neck with my right hand on the crown, with fingers facing down over the crown chakra in the middle of the forehead. I then drew with right hand the first "power symbol" over Marianne's crown, silently recited the name of this three times and waited until I could "feel the energy flow through my

hands". I have heard this feeling being described by some women healers as a similar tingling, full sensation to that of letting down milk when breast feeding. Once I could feel the energy "beginning to flow" I drew the second symbol for mental and emotional healing over the crown. Once more I silently recited this symbol's name three times, placed my hand back on Marianne's crown and stated her name three times.

Fiona advised us that all that is needed to activate Reiki energy is "right intent" and that she usually says to the person being treated that "You are a beautiful being of light. This Reiki is being sent to your highest essence. Take what you need for perfect body, mind and spirit knowing that it is sent with the greatest of love". Fiona also informed us that this treatment "gives access to the client's subconscious mind so positive affirmations are particularly powerful when used by the healer during this part of the treatment, e.g. 'I know that I am healed and whole', or 'I have chosen to heal' can be very effective" (FRW1 2000:2).

Following the mental/emotional healing I stood to the side of Marianne and placed my hands on Marianne's main chakras on both her front and back starting from the crown and working to the feet. As I had been practising Reiki over several weeks I did not feel great heat while 'giving' this healing however Marianne expressed that "the energy coming through your hands feels a lot more powerful" - this being a common feeling among the women present when being healed by their partner. I am also in agreement with Reiki practitioners when they say that "you feel revitalised after doing a Reiki session" or that "before I did this Reiki [for Susie] I was feeling a bit stressed but now I feel much calmer and more balanced".

Fiona also advised us that it was also necessary to do “an auric cleansing on yourself if you intend to do a Reiki healing” and that this is called “Ken-Yo-Ku” or “dry bathing”.

This technique can be used “before and after treatment to disconnect from the client, to clear ourselves of negative emotions, to clear ourselves from negative thought” and “in order not to bring work home” or “after shopping in town” (FRW1, 2000:6).

After lunch and another period of visualisation Fiona introduced us to “the symbol used for absent healing and directing the energy” stating that “this is a particularly effective way of sending healing to a person, place or situation both in the past, present and future ...the Reiki being directed by intention if sent to a situation”. We were advised that “absent healing should be sent only with the receiver’s consent and it is best to arrange a time when the person is resting as the treatment can make them sleepy”.

The method for directing the energy and absent healing is as follows, and here I draw again from Fiona’s manual.

1. Draw the power symbol and repeat the name [of the power symbol] silently 3 times³⁴.
2. Draw the distance healing symbol and repeat the name [of this symbol] 3 times.
3. Say the person’s name 3 times and their location once.
4. When you feel the energy beginning to flow, seal it by drawing the power symbol over the face or body of the person [a teddy bear can be used to symbolise that person].
5. Finish off the treatment with a [power symbol] and three sweeps to smooth the aura (FRW1, 2000:6).

³⁴ The ‘lines’ of these symbols should be drawn in the ‘correct’ order as we shall see later in this chapter.

I must admit that I had my 'sceptical hat' on with regards to the possibility of any effectiveness of absent healing. However all of the practitioners that I have spoken to in actuality propose that absent healing can be much more effective than hands-on as "it knocks out the ego of the healer relating to the client". A small illustration might be of use here hence I shall firstly (a) relate how Catherine experienced one 'absent healing', (b) describe my father's responses to an 'absent healing' as sent by myself and (c) present a healer from Tayside's description of a 'sent' absent healing as received by her elderly mother.

Catherine

Catherine is a Reiki practitioner from Fife and she related the experience of receiving an absent healing to me during an interview.

Well, I laid on my bed and I'd got the house nice and quiet and put some...you know... sort of nice music on. Well I was just lying there and all of a sudden it was like I could feel someone's hands on my head and I felt all warm and sort of cosy. I've been having problems with my back so I had said to Jessie [the sending practitioner] to send me Reiki there [her back] and I think it helped. No I really feel it did because I got up afterwards and it was nowhere near as sore you know ...like down at the bottom...and during the healing I could feel like hot hands and my back felt all warm and...hmm...sort of tingly.

Jude

My father has suffered from arthritis in his hips and knees for several years and, having found that I was learning Reiki, suggested jokingly that I should "send him some for his legs to see if they would work any better". My father is from Yorkshire

and, to use one of his euphemisms, 'calls a spade a spade', while prior to retirement also being a financial administrator for a large health board. He regards himself as being eminently practical and subscribes to conventional medicine because "I've paid for it all my life so I'm not going to use anything else". So as requested I 'sent him Reiki' at his designated time and place and waited to hear from him. The following day he rang to say that he had lain on his bed at the time Reiki was to be sent and "much to my surprise felt lots of heat and tingling in my hips and knees". He also informed me that he "felt much less stiff" and could "now tie [his] shoelaces more easily". I repeated the healing for him over the next two days and he suggested that while the feeling had not been so intense on later occasions he had still experienced continued improvement in his ability to get about.

The down side of this healing was that he felt so much more comfortable in his legs that he went outside without his stick, slipped on the step at the door and twisted his ankle. He hasn't asked for Reiki since!!

Maggie

"I carried out an absent healing for my mother and she said to me afterwards 'Maggie...it was just like you were in the room with me...I felt that if I had opened my eyes I'd have seen you there...it was just incredible'". Maggie explained to me that "my mother had broken some bones in her foot and when I was doing the healing I could feel throbbing in my hands when I got to her feet. When doing absent healing my mother said to me that when she got up to go to the toilet later her feet felt great...and I said to her she'd go to the toilet a lot as Reiki would flush out the toxins in her body".

Maggie then explained that she had carried out another absent healing for her mother two days later and "...had felt a lot of heat when I worked on her shoulders [on the teddy bear]. And afterwards...you know, she said to me 'what a heat I felt on the back

of my shoulders and how did you know they were sore?'... and I'd said to her 'it's Reiki going where it's needed'. Maggie also added that her mother had been on sleeping tablets for the last twenty years and had been able to sleep without them since receiving Reiki.

These three brief narratives of the experience of receiving absent healing illustrate well the sense of surprise that the healee often feels when they experience sensations in areas of the body where there is a physical problem. For the promoted benefit of Reiki is that, as it is God directed, healing will always go to the area that it is needed - even if the healer has no awareness of this location. And as the uninitiated receiver may well also have no awareness of energetic healing, then the experience may appear bizarre or unreal. For while most people receiving absent healing do this because it is coming from a friend or family member and hence might be more receptive to the possibility of its occurrence, this is not always the case. Belief is not necessary for healing to occur. It just appears 'to work'.

Now while Fiona has proposed, in accord with Reiki authors such as Rand (1991), Lubeck (1996) Petter (1997), that the distant healing symbol can be used to send absent healing to past, present and future situations, it can also, according to Rand

...be used for exorcism and spirit release work. This is a simple process that is very powerful. It is not based on a contest between you and the spirit therefore it does not drain your energy or place you in harms way. Just use the distant healing symbols to send Reiki to the spirit, then call on the Ascended Masters and ask them to take the spirit up into the light. Continue for a few more minutes until you feel the process is complete. The Ascended Masters will do all the work and deal with the spirit in exactly the right way to create a healing both for the person and the spirit (Rand, 1991:11-12)

Once again we see in the above an emphasis on locating healing within larger New Age frameworks of belief. For the Ascended Masters are commonly perceived to be significant sources of knowledge and revelation in these circles. They are in the Scottish context, frequently channelled by healers and tend to be described as “the Christ” or “the Buddha” or “the entity Michael ” and they, along with personal spirit guides, may assist with ‘difficult’ healings. Indeed, I have also heard one Edinburgh healer claim that he himself was an Ascended Master who had returned to earth “to help others to come home”. It is rare however, to hear descriptions of these ‘beings’ manifesting in female form. This is why writers such as Monica Sjoo (1994) and Mary Daly (1991) would regard these sort of representations to be eminently patriarchal, leaving little space for women to reconnect with the Goddess and the spirits of nature. However as I shall argue in Chapter Eight, spirit guides of a female or androgynous nature may also be ‘utilised’ as ‘vehicles’ for women’s personal growth, with channelled information also providing new sources of gendered empowerment.

But let us for the moment return to the interpretation and usage of the Reiki symbols. Here we find that there is considerable diversity of thought. Hence in the next part of this chapter I will introduce one ‘Japanese’ and one western evaluation of symbol usage, as these will be compared to material acquired at a Frank Arjava Petter ‘Reiki Techniques’ workshop in Edinburgh.

Hiroshi Doi

Hiroshi Doi has had a long-term interest in the “spiritual world” and “universal energy”, having learnt over thirty healing techniques (he lists Nishino Breathing Technique, Genkyoku Qui-Gon, Astral healing and Natural Vibration technique among these)

having “went [sic] through Bashar, Shirley Maclain and Sai Baba” (Doi, 2000:52). Hiroshi first met a New York based Japanese journalist named Ms. Mitsui in the 1980s in Japan following her translation of a book called *The Reiki Factor* by Dr Barbara Ray³⁵ for the Japanese market – her translation being titled *Reiki Ryoho*. Doi received his Reiki attunements from Ms Mitsui while he was searching for his own combinational healing technique (Doi, 2000:52)³⁶. In turn he also learnt ‘Reiki-ho’ from Ms. Koyama of the traditional Japanese Usui Reiki Ryoho Society in Japan and ‘Neo-Reiki’ from Manaso - Neo-Reiki “is a unity of eastern and western Reiki” (Doi, 2000:54). Manaso was taught by “Bagwan–sensei in India” (ibid) and he teaches ‘combined Reiki’ where meditation may be located alongside “tours for Reiki learning through swimming with dolphins” (ibid).

I studied again what I had learned from my three teachers, aiming at the unity of traditional Reiki and western style Reiki. To be specific, I re-examined the eastern and western Reiki-ho as “a technique to heal mind and body” as well as “a technique to raise your spirituality”. I constructed what I call “Gendai (modern) Reiki-ho” avoiding being mysterious, leaving unknown things as they are, and with a motto to pass on the effectiveness with the actual proofs” (Doi, 2000:54/5).

Though the translation of Doi’s writing into English by Canadian Reiki practitioners clearly shows the difficulties of interpretation - for example one wonders what he means by his comment “leaving unknown things as they are” - what we can see in the above is that Doi’s learning of Reiki reflects the typical seeker’s emphasis on picking

³⁵ Barbara Ray established The American International Reiki Association, this later being renamed the Radiance Technique.

³⁶ Doi also states that there was no teacher in Japan able to teach higher than level 2 Reiki until the arrival in 1993 of a German Reiki teacher Frank Petter who, with his Japanese wife, taught Western style Reiki up to teacher’s level. However he later “found out that Ms. Kimiko Koyama ran Usui Reiki Ryoho Society which was for members, and inherited this tradition since the [sic] establishment as the sixth president”. Doi joined this society, learned from Ms Koyama and “was amazed how different it could be from the western Reiki of Ms. Mitsui yet coming from the same root” (2000:54).

and mixing “what feels right”. And Doi also emphasises the empirically testable nature of Reiki practice with a development of technique based on intuitive touch. This is common within Scottish Reiki circles. For example he states that,

The western style Reiki is sophisticated and practical as it has come back after growing from the origin of Usui Reiki Ryoho...When the truth gets widely known, the idea will spread that ‘attunement is just the beginning and the real ability is to be developed on your own’ not as understood now as ‘the ability is developed by attunement’ (Doi, 2000:56).

Doi also provides an interesting evaluation of the symbols utilised in the Second Degree attunements. “Symbols are called Ho in traditional Reiki...[and should be] considered as ‘the antenna to tune into the universal’” (2000:79). He regards these as being “cosmic” (ibid) and that they may be utilised for “healing beyond time and space” (ibid). These cosmic symbols hence act as “the antenna to tune into the universal energy” (ibid). Doi also stresses the importance of learning Kotodama (sacred voices or mantras). For these include the “voice of Om” (ibid) the sounds of clapping and the trumpet shell and resonate vibrationally with universal energy (ibid). This latter emphasis is not readily found in Scottish Reiki circles. However Doi’s statement that “symbols can be drawn with the eyes or the tongue instead of the hands, or visualised” (2000:80) is indeed common practice in the Scottish context. For example if a practitioner feels that it would be more appropriate to not be seen drawing the symbols as they are healing at a health fair or other public place for example, then they will draw them on the roof of the mouth and blow them out with the breath over the body or into the aura.

The Three Symbols

Cho Ku Ray (Focus, Power symbol)

Doi calls the *first symbol* “the raising the power symbol...[and that this] sends strong energy aiming mostly on shapes (physical/solids)” (2000:80). For Doi this symbol is also related to the earth, for the human body is constantly influenced by the rhythms and consciousness of the earth. Hence if the human being gets sick this is because his or her internal system is out of balance. Receiving Reiki will help restore this balance (ibid).

He proposes that the power symbol may be used on its own or in combination with other symbols to magnify their power and can be used in situations such as “for purifying the energy of places or environment...for traffic safety...when putting money in the wallet...to change the weather...for missing things and things left behind...to recall matters and for business transactions” (2000:82).³⁷ Doi also states that the power symbol may be used to purify a room by sending the symbols into each corner. This is a regular feature of healing sessions in Scotland. For example, Fiona uses sage smudge sticks to draw these symbols in the corners of the room where healing is to occur prior to commencement.

Say Hey Ki (Harmony)

The second symbol's distinctive feature is for Doi that “it sends the energy of balance and harmony aiming on [sic] the object without shapes such as feelings” (2000:83).

³⁷ For a very useful interpretation of the 'practical nature' of Japanese religiosity see Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe Jr. *Practically Religious* (1998).

While the first power symbol relates to the earth, this symbol “is related to the moon” (ibid). The human body is, for Doi, greatly affected by the moon as it is made up in a large part of body fluids. Hence it is influenced in the same way as the tides. However he proposes that moods and feelings are also affected by the moon and get “raised up and down accordingly” (ibid) as does women’s menstruation. Hence the human body reacts in repetitive cycles to the moon’s influence and the rhythms of nature.

For Doi this symbol exhibits certain special features. It can “balance the energy of emotions and mentality...help self growth...help accomplish the dreams [and it is] fragile” (2000:84). He suggests that this symbol’s role is to enable the restoration and balancing of emotions so that a state of harmony results. For if one follows the rhythms of the moon it becomes possible to release stress and free blocked feelings. For as this symbol is made “from the Sanskrit (Hrih) with the meaning for all sorrow and salvation” (ibid) then “this symbol works on the conscious energy of the moon and regains the psychological and emotional balance as well as healing at a deep level and raising sensitivity” (ibid).

Hence the Reiki practitioner should ‘use’ this symbol on self and others to enable an easing of stress, the harmonising of personal relations, so that one can learn to forgive self and others and to change bad habits, behaviour and thinking (Doi, 2000:85).

Hon Sha Zay Sho Nen (absent healing)

The third symbol’s distinctive feature is for Doi that “it sends the energy aiming at the center of the matters beyond time and space like a time machine” and that while the ‘first symbol’ relates to the earth and the second to the moon, the third symbol relates

to “the sun...fire...yang...astral form...light...spirit [and is] transcendent” (2000:85-6). For Doi, this symbol has a stronger effect on the emotions and mental state than the last symbol and can be used for all situations in life, any time, any place. It is a powerful healing symbol. According to Doi this symbol's usage enables distance healing by “connect[ing] the consciousness beyond time and space and adjust[ing] distortion” to enable the “purification of karma and ‘trauma’ for it can “contact every substance and situation” (2000:87). He even states that the utilisation of this symbol can enable healing energy to affect and improve genetic make up.

I feel that one could, in relation to Doi's presentation of the symbols above, usefully employ a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion. For example, he proposes that the distance healing symbol “can be sent to your children studying upstairs” and to “your husband sleeping in the living room” or for “your house” (2000:88). This appears to be a rather stereotypical and patriarchal assumption that women are ‘of the home’ and that their primary roles are as wives and mothers based on traditional Japanese values. Is then Doi, in his interpretation of Reiki symbols - where he emphasises balancing the emotions in order to live a harmonious life - suggesting that it is better to ‘look within’ for change rather than to actively engage in the drive for gender equality in the home and the workplace? Or is he trying to provide a model for healing that might empower both men and women as healers where both utilise their “yin and yang sides” harmoniously as a whole? Hence it is important that we keep an eye on hidden discourses of power when authors engage in the presentation of, in this case, Reiki symbols and their historical roots.

Dai Ko Myo (Master Symbol)

I am not going to go into depth with Doi's evaluation of the fourth Master's symbol which "is known to connect with the consciousness in the higher dimension and bring the light"(2000:95). For the Master using the Fourth symbol can "expect remarkable improvement in spirituality, intuition, imagination and so on, led by consciousness. You come to know 'why you exist at this time and place' and your role will be made clear. The fourth symbol is the key for truly becoming yourself" (ibid). However I have listed the fourth symbol's primary features in the table below alongside symbols one to three. I have tried when constructing this table to present a balanced representation of Doi 's 'Use of Symbols' as found in his *Modern Reiki Method for Healing* (2000).

Some features and meanings of Reiki Symbols as described by Hiroshi Doi.

Symbol 1	Symbol 2	Symbol 3	Symbol 4
Earth	Moon	Sun	Connect with Higher self
Body	Fluids	Fire	Connect with pioneers, Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi etc.
Power	Emotions	Transcendence	Resonate with the universe
Focus	Menstruation	Light	Change yourself into what you should be
Control the fate	Fragility	Spirit	Purify negativity in unconscious
Connect with universal energy	Yin	Yang	Create a life that does not accumulate [negativity/karma] again
Root chakra 1	Heart Chakra 3	Throat Chakra 5	Be cleansed by light growing through meditation
Tanden chakra 2	Solar plexus Chakra 4	Brow Chakra 6	Crown Chakra 7

There is a multiplicity of interpretations of the Reiki symbols' historical background. Many of these locate the rediscovered symbols as being of Sanskrit or Chinese origin, as we saw with Lubeck's interpretation in the last chapter. For Diane Stein, the Reiki symbols are part of the "Mahayana Sutras and the Vajrayana [Tibetan Tantric Buddhist] mystical interpretations" (1995:133). Hence I will close this introduction to the Reiki symbols with a brief review of Stein's interpretation and usage of the same.

Diane Stein

The five Reiki symbols are the five levels of mind that lead to Enlightenment. They are familiar to Buddhists as the Path to Enlightenment itself (1995:131)

Together the five Reiki symbols are the non-duality of mind and object and the emptiness from ego that achieves Buddhist Nirvana. Once attained, the formula and the process of Reiki releases the soul from the wheel of incarnation. The symbol system's original use was not for healing but spiritual – Enlightenment for the purpose of helping others, the Bodhissatva Path (1995:132).

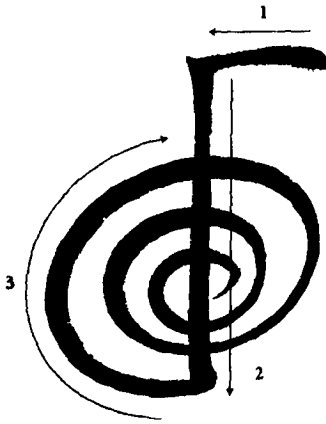
In the five symbols are the five stages of this path. The Cho-Ku-Rei is the beginning stage and represents the physical/etheric double level. The Sei-he-Ki is the transformation of emotion and ego (the emotional body), the Hon-Sha-Ze-Sho-Nen is the creation of the true reality by the understanding of the pure mind on the mental level. The Dai-Ko-Myo is the attainment of the Bodhissatva Path and represents the spiritual body. The Raku is enlightenment itself, transcendence and Nirvana, the beyond-the-body Transpersonal level (1995:133).

Stein's interpretation of the symbols in this way is based on discussions with a Mahayana Buddhist nun, she being familiar with these symbols in her daily practice. Since then Stein has researched Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism extensively and feels that this philosophy and Tantric Buddhism underpins "virtually all religions" (1995:129).

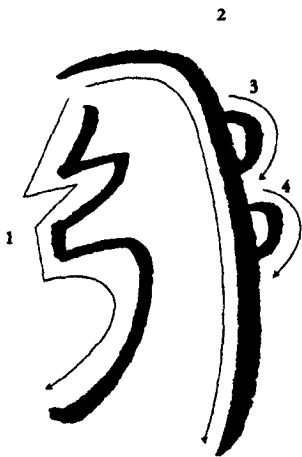
Stein also states "that the Reiki symbols are Sanskrit-derived Japanese forms, at least 2500 years old" (1995:133) and that these representations as such, according to the Buddhist nun, are cultural variations. However for Stein, irrespective of which way these symbols are presented to the student, his or her primary problem is their memorisation for usage in healing work as they become easily distorted. She is right in this assertion. For while the first and second symbols are fairly straightforward to memorise, the third is rather more complicated and for many Scottish practitioners this results in them using a drawing of the same when absent healing (at least initially) – this being usually carried out from the healer's own home. The symbols used by Second Degree practitioners are as follows with instructions showing how they should be drawn.

Drawing the Symbols

The lighter arrows show how to draw the symbols. They must be drawn exactly and memorized.



Cho-Ku-Rei
Increase power—"The Light Switch"
(clockwise)



Sei-He-Ki
Emotional healing, purification, protection, and clearing



Hon-She-Ze-Sho-Nen
Distance healing, the Akashic Records, past-present-future

(Stein, 1995: 58)

Stein states that the first symbol, the Cho-Ku-Rei /cho ku ray, is most probably used in all healing sessions, as by visualising this "your ability to access Reiki energy is

increased many times" (1995:57). She notes that she was taught to draw this symbol clockwise while the traditional Cho-Ku-Rei is drawn counter clockwise. (I was taught to draw this symbol in the latter fashion). Having experimented with the strength of flow of power along with her students, Stein now feels that one should draw this symbol clockwise as this is the correct way for the Northern Hemisphere. "In any metaphysical work, including Wicca, clockwise motion in the Northern Hemisphere is the direction of invoking and increase, and counterclockwise is the direction of decrease and dispersion. In the Southern Hemisphere it is the opposite" (1995:57). However she also adds, again in accord with all practitioners, that the key to doing Reiki is "intent", therefore the healer should try both ways and see which works best for them when they intend to increase power in healing.

However, Stein presents a major interpretative shift in relation to this symbol typical of the Reiki practitioner's 'pick what feels right for me' approach. For she argues that when one uses this symbol one is focusing Reiki in a particular spot by,

calling all the energy of the Goddess Universe into the healing. The spiral and pathway shape of this symbol is the design of the Labyrinth, an initiation space at the ancient temple of the Palace of Knossos on Crete. In the archaeology of the planet, spirals always represent Goddess energy (1995:57).

Stein effectively appears to reclaim this central Reiki symbol back to its 'female' roots for women and at the same time downplay the 'male' overlay so prevalent in Reiki writing and practice. As for Stein, the "Buddha nature or Goddess Within" (1995:134) are one and the same. This sort of reappropriation has proved itself to be highly popular with women Reiki practitioners who are also involved in aspects of feminist spirituality.

Now when Stein was taught the second emotional healing symbol that works on the subconscious, the Sei-He-Ki, this was defined for her as “God and man coming together... [for this symbol] brings divinity into human energy patterns and aligns the upper chakras” (1995:59). Stein was rather offended by this portrayal, for why should this not be “Goddess and women coming together” or “Divinity and people” (ibid). Hence I would agree with her implicit assertion that as this symbol is primarily utilised for emotional healing - in that it may be used to heal long held “painful emotion or trauma” (1995: 59) this having caused dis-ease - then having a ‘female’ symbol of power may be empowering as the “symbol brings Divinity into human energy patterns and aligns the upper chakras” (ibid).

Stein also argues that this symbol may be utilised to “seal the space or person’s aura from encroachment from any form of negativity” (1995:74) and in combination with the Cho-Ku-Rei may be used for manifesting abundance or “boosting positive qualities” (1995:72).

The Universe is comprised of abundance, with every goodness available for those who ask and are ready to receive. Receiving is not easy for most people, especially women – we have been taught that we do not deserve to have or to ask for good things. Of course we do. While many situations are karmic – and patriarchal – manifesting is a skill that can be learned (ibid).

Overall, Stein proposes that healers who work frequently at the Second Degree level will begin to become “aware of realities beyond the physical plane. She will come to know her spirit guides and be able to “access other worlds for information and help in

healing” (1995:66). She will find after attunement that a process of mental and emotional clearing will take place where long held damaging thought patterns are challenged and removed.

The process of emotional/mental clearing is never easy. One woman may decide that her primary relationship is no longer right for her and leave her partner. Another may finally deal with the abuse or incest memories that she has pushed aside for years. Someone else may choose to stop working for other people and go into business on her own. Dreams that seemed only fantasies now become daily life, and what were once unacceptable risks become things to reach for routinely. Everyone is stretched by Reiki II, everyone grows. At the end of a year or so, the healer looks at who she once was and who she is now. She is amazed to realize that she is stronger and more whole, though the path getting there seemed chaotic. She is pleased with who she has become (1995: 66-67).

Though the above appraisal might be somewhat optimistic, it is also however, the case that many women do change their way of life having become Reiki practitioners and do also deal better with the trauma or life change which occurred - this leading them to Reiki in the first place. I have heard stories from so many women in Scotland of how they got involved with healing and New Age thought because their lives had ‘hit rock bottom’. Nearly all of these women have since reported considerable improvement in their levels of self-empowerment and holistic health. I shall pick up on some of these themes once more in Chapter Eight so let us for the moment, having had a more in-depth look at the Reiki symbols, now return to ethnographic material. The following account is based on time spent at one significant Reiki workshop in Edinburgh run by Frank Petter and his wife Chetna.

Frank Arjava Petter 'Reiki Techniques Workshop'

This Reiki Techniques workshop was held over three days in May 2001 in The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh. It was organised by Swami Anand Jagran of the 'White Space' Osho Neo Reiki Center in Sheffield and was fully subscribed to³⁸. Forty Reiki practitioners – thirty-two women, eight men - the majority of whom were Reiki Masters, were present. A gathering of this size is unusual at the Salisbury Centre for workshops here are more usually composed of around ten participants. This shows the perceived significance of Petter with regard to Reiki teaching. I will describe this workshop as it progressed, drawing in textual material from Petter's *Reiki Fire*³⁹ (1997) and Lubeck, Petter and Rand's *Spirit of Reiki* (2001) for these books fill out much of what was taught. I shall close this chapter with a brief review of a questionnaire as completed by thirty-five of these workshop participants, some of whom I contacted later for more extensive phone interviews.

The workshop was held in a spacious wood-floored room. Picture windows provided views over the large, tree filled garden, while burning incense, soft music and freshly cut flowers all contributed to a mixed sense of harmony and expectation. For the Friday evening session participants were seated facing Arjava⁴⁰ and his Japanese wife

³⁸ A further workshop has been organised with Petter, Lubeck and Rand at the Salisbury Centre for May 2002 and this too is already (as of October 2001) generating enormous interest among British Reiki practitioners.

³⁹ Petter states that he entitled his book this way "...because Reiki energy consumes all duality in its purity" (1997:4). I shall return to this point later as it may prove to be of some significance.

⁴⁰ 'Arjava' is Frank Petter's chosen 'spiritual name'. 'Chetna' is his wife's chosen spiritual name. I am unsure whether these names were self or Osho derived.

Chetna, while Jagran sat to one side⁴¹.

Arjava described initially his initiation into Reiki in Berlin in 1982. He informed us that he was initiated by his brother who “serendipitously thought that it might enhance our development”, and that he undertook First, Second and Masters Degree levels in a period of three months - the speed of these initiations leaving him feeling

“unbalanced”. Arjava suggested that “this might have had something to do with a problem with my brother’s lineage as his connection could have been stronger”⁴².

Following these initiations, Arjava returned to Japan where he and his wife were running a language school. He initiated his wife into Reiki and began to teach all levels of Reiki in 1983⁴³. For “At that time only the first two degrees were available to the

public. Many people who had already learned the First and Second degree flocked to Sapporo from all over Japan. We’ve been busy teaching ever since” (Petter, 1997:13).

Arjava then proceeded to relate some Reiki history and background in a question and answer session starting with a question relating to Hawayo Takata’s leadership. I shall present just a few of these here as some of this material has been presented in the last chapter. However it is still useful to hear “Petter’s own words”.

⁴¹ Some background history might be useful here. Petter was born in Dusseldorf in 1960 and has grandparents of “ancient German aristocratic descent. Through my paternal grandmother Charlotte von Bismarck, I am related to the German statesman and chancellor Otto von Bismarck. On the maternal side I am the great-grandson of the famous scientist and writer Ferdinand von Rasefeld. For as long as I can remember, I have been exposed to nobility, its grace and magnanimity” (1997:11). Petter learnt meditation and Raja Yoga in his teens, and at the age of eighteen “went to Poona, India to rescue [his] brother who had fallen prey to an obscure Indian guru” (1997:12). However upon arrival at the Rajneesh ashram, (this now being known as the Osho Commune International), he “realised that under the guidance of a master the work we do on ourselves increases a thousandfold, and [he] promptly became a disciple of Osho” (1997:12).

⁴² Arjava suggested that a lot of people “are bothered” by lineage breaks. There seems to be considerable emphasis among Reiki masters that their lineage is strong and ‘genuine’ through historical connection to a valued Master s/he ideally being from Mikao Usui’s lineage.

⁴³ Hiroshi Doi notes the arrival of Petter’s Reiki teaching in Sapporo. He states that this was the birth of Western style Reiki in Japan and that “Since then... the number of who [sic] learned Reiki is approximately 30 thousand” (2000:53).

Talking Reiki

Q. What do you feel about Takata being given the leadership of Reiki in the west?

Arjava

"Ms Takata was given the leadership of the Reiki movement in the 1930's. I thought this odd, as women's roles in Japan are very much 'less' than those for men"⁴⁴.

"Ms. Takata also stated that there were no Reiki students surviving in Japan after World War Two, I find this most unlikely also"⁴⁵.

Q. I've heard that there's some difficulty with the name Reiki ?

Arjava

"The term Reiki does cause some problems as there is no 'R' sound in Japanese so Reiki should properly be called Leiki. And 'Rei' in Japanese is generally related to 'ghosts' or 'the occult' which Japanese people regard as rather scary, So there's a difference here as we in the west see Reiki as transforming spiritual energy ".

Q. How difficult has it been to research Reiki history?

Arjava

It took me a long time to get to speak to any Reiki practitioners in Japan, as you can't

⁴⁴ Ms. Takata was made a Reiki Master in Hawaii by Dr Hayashi in 1938. "Just before his death on May 10th, 1941 he [Dr Hayashi] declared Ms. Takata Reiki Grand Master and head of the Reiki movement " (Petter, 1997: 20).

⁴⁵ "Hawayo Takata said in flyers she used to advertise her classes that she was the only Reiki Master in the world. She also stated that all Reiki Masters in Japan had died in the war...[however] it is clear that Hawayo Takata had contact with other Reiki Masters after the war" (Rand, 2001:26).

approach a stranger without introduction. I kept pestering Chetna to phone around for me to find an opening but no luck. Eventually, through Chetna I managed to speak to a Reiki practitioner who had been practising for many years. She told me "I am not interested in your Reiki as it comes from abroad "...but she did tell me the location of Usui's grave...

So I got two Reiki Master friends to take me to the temple and I took along flowers and incense. The memorial was written in old Japanese ...the sort that was used prior to World War Two. I got the inscription translated from old Japanese to modern Japanese by Chetna's mother and then to German and English. One thing the memorial stated was that Usui had led over two thousand students all over Japan. Eventually I found an eighty year old man called Mr Osaka. Mr Osaka practised Reiki as head of a Reiki branch in Osaka ...and it turned out that the President of this branch was the first lady that I had originally spoken to who had said that she wasn't interested in Reiki from abroad. Anyway, Mr Osaka told me that this woman was a direct line successor of Dr Usui's 'Usui Reiki Ryoho Society' founded in 1922⁴⁶ I couldn't find any record of Mrs Takata however as the Japanese Reiki Association is very 'closed' and operates like a lodge with a strict vertical hierarchy of leadership. And the Japanese Association has no desire for expansion, as they are not interested in anything other than Japanese Reiki.

Q. Could you tell me what you think about Usui's healing work in the 'beggar camp'?

Arjava

The Kanjo earthquake in 1923 killed thousands of people, and I don't think that Usui worked in a 'beggars' camp' but rather in a 'shanty town' set up after the city was

⁴⁶ The woman being discussed is as far as I could ascertain Kimiko Koyama who was, according to Hiroshi Doi, president of the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai from 1906-1999 (2000:182).

devastated. He [Usui] was treating five people at the same time using all his limbs and his eyes [to heal].

Q. Could you tell me about any differences between Japanese and Western Reiki?

Arjava

Well there are differences in the teaching style regarding initiation. In the Japanese system you are graded by a teacher who decides when you've learnt enough to progress to Level Two. Attunements are given every time you go to the Association meetings and there is also an emphasis on continual practice...you need to be able to feel well, negatively charged areas of the body before you can progress. This is called Byosen scanning⁴⁷.

Dr Usui used to feel what energy level a practitioner was working at and he graded his Reiki Levels from 1 to 6 [1 being the highest level]. So it can take many years to progress up the practitioner's levels in Japan...one old lady took fifteen years. In fact Dr Usui graded himself as Level 2. And there's an emphasis on Reiki being used for friends and yourself in Japan...it's used in fact like a home remedy rather than for professionally giving treatments.

Q Is Japanese Reiki more spiritual?

Arjava

Not necessarily

⁴⁷ "The Japanese word byosen means sick (diseased) line" (Petter, Reiki techniques Notes, 1999:3).

I feel that this question relates to the emphasis in Western Reiki on “doing practical healing work”. However, there is increasing emphasis in Reiki publication on the transformatory power of Reiki “as a spiritual path”.

Q Could you tell us how you teach Reiki, Arjava?

Arjava

Well I use the standard German way of teaching using the ‘Alliance Technique’, which originates from Mrs Takata who chose to cut out the Japanese spiritual emphasis⁴⁸.

This question was followed by a few general comments and queries regarding ‘correct lineage’ and ‘true Reiki’.

Q Can you tell if someone carrying out an attunement has not learnt properly...as in correct lineage?

Arjava

You can tell whether an attunement has been effective by the amount of feeling you get from the hands of the teacher. But I don’t have any knowledge of how Japanese Reiki attunements work [as within the traditional Reiki Ryoho Society] I would like to emphasise that Reiki will travel all over the world but not from the original Japanese Reiki Ryoho group as they are scared of white people. And in Japan there’s a problem regarding group consciousness rather than the individual case.

⁴⁸ “After Ms. Takata’s death, The Western Reiki movement split in two directions: The Reiki Alliance led by Phyllis Furumoto [Takata’s granddaughter] and the “The Radiance Technique” led by Mrs Barbara Ray and based in the USA. Several other Reiki branches grew out of the “Reiki Alliance,” such as the independent Reiki Masters (our line) and Osho Reiki” (Petter, 1997:20).

Following the evening's questions, Arjava took us through a guided 'slide show tour' of the Reiki sites in Japan, which he combined with some historical background.

The Saturday seminar commenced in the morning with a "warm up dance to free energy" followed by twenty five minutes of Gassho meditation for "Usui asked his students to do this once or twice a day". During this meditation we were asked to "hold our hands in prayer at the heart, focus on our touching middle fingers" and to "let thoughts go if they drifted into consciousness". Arjava suggested that "you may feel heat in the spine during meditation" and that "at the end of meditating if you open your eyes slowly you might see violet light at the end of the fingers...this is Reiki energy". He added that it was good to dance before meditation as the movement in dance enables "better meditative connectedness through contrasting 'stillness' with 'movement'" and that "trying too hard to meditate prevents it happening" – he having learnt this while at the Osho ashram in Poona.

Following the Gassho meditation Arjava explained that contemporary Japanese Reiki principles and practice differ from those as practised in the Meiji period (1868-1912), for this was a time of considerable change and unrest. The Meiji restoration of this time aimed at turning Shintoism into the state religion and as a consequence of this many Buddhists and Christians were violently persecuted (Petter, 2001:143). "The violence against religious groups must have been one of the reasons Dr Usui incorporated the Meiji Emperor's principles into his Reiki work. He must have wanted to avoid the fate shared by many other energy healing groups in his time. *Taireidou* (the hand healing group), for example, was banned and separated into many smaller groups in order to survive" (Petter, 2001:144).

The 'Five Reiki Principles' are as follows and are central features of Reiki practice, as they should be spoken daily, once in the morning and evening and incorporated into daily life.

1. Don't get angry today.
2. Don't worry today.
3. Be grateful today.
4. Work hard today (meditative practice).
5. Be kind to others today.

Walter Lubeck explains the meaning of these principles more fully in *The Spirit of Reiki* (2001). He proposes that, in relation to the first principle, when "we feel angry with ourselves, we should get to the bottom of this feeling as quickly as possible and clarify the purpose for which our Higher Self has sent this powerful energy to the body and mind at this moment. Then we should think how this power can be meaningfully translated into actions and get to work" (2001:250). The second principle relating to worry is concerned with us learning precisely what it is we fear. Hence a person should look at their worries closely and move through them by giving themselves Reiki. "Reiki tells us: 'recognize your strengths! Get up and walk your path in your own way! Set a good example for those that are weaker, and help them find their personal path and take it seriously!'" (Lubeck, 2001:252).

For Lubeck, the third principle "be grateful today" relates to "recognition of the special grace, the divine blessing received in everything that is given to us, no matter how small or large it is" (2001:252). The fourth, that we should work hard at Reiki as a spiritual path, for to do so is to work on ourselves. "This life principle reminds us to truly

get involved in life, not waste our time, and use our opportunities" (Lubeck, 2001:255).

The fifth principle is about treating each other lovingly and is "perhaps the hardest challenge of all. Why? True spiritual love wants the best for everyone involved – not the well-meant but ultimately superficial adaption of behaviour" (Lubeck, 2001:256).

What we find throughout these life principles is an emphasis on wholeness. For if "you truly get to the bottom of them, you will learn to experience the unity between the surface of separation. Make the effort, and you will find less separation and more unity within yourself" (Lubeck, 2001:257). Working at these principles is then reflected in giving Reiki treatments in that, for example, if either client or healer feels anger or fear, these may be resolved by using Reiki "constructively [to] deal with these feelings" (Lubeck, 2001:259). Let us now return to the specifics of the workshop. I shall next present Arjava's representation of Reiki techniques as most of these are regularly carried out by practitioners in the field.

The Reiji Technique

According to Arjava, Dr Usui's Reiki healing system is composed of three main building blocks (a) gassho meditation (b) prayer and (c) *chiryō* - this being hands-on treatment. Arjava proposed that "Reiji is a Japanese word that literally means indication of the spirit/energy. It describes a short but potent prayer that is repeated within the heart of the practitioner before giving treatments. It makes us aware of the fact that we are mere channels for the universal life energy and teaches us to listen to our intuition" (PWM, 2001:2). The actual process for carrying out the Reiji technique involves praying for the Reiki energy to flow through you, stated Arjava. You do this in the gassho position with your hands held at your heart. Pray for the "healing and well being

of the client at all levels” and then move “your folded hands in front of your third eye”. This movement will enable you to “ask the Reiki energy to direct your hands to where they are needed... Follow your hands and be aware of any changes in the body you touch. Be aware of your own thoughts and emotions and your intuition as you do this”.

Arjava emphasised the need to “trust your intuitions... for you may get a visual impulse and see a part of the body that attracts you for healing. You may hear a right knee saying ‘healing here’ or you may feel your client’s problem area in your own body. The main point is that the energy will let you know where to place your hands, though of course you will also use analytical diagnostic skills by watching the client’s breathing and posture”.

Arjava's wife Chetna then gave us a demonstration of *Reiji-ho* where gentle finger pressure was applied to the meridians - decreasing pressure on the in breath, increasing pressure on the out breath - before “laying on the hands to let the energy go in”. Arjava also stated that “this treatment can become flaky if totally intuitively led so this is why Reiki hand positions are taught”. And while “the system of twelve, fourteen or more hand positions was created in the West” [mainly by Hawayo Takata] this hand system was not necessary for Reiki students in Japan “because of the many, many years invested in learning and practising” (Lubeck, 2001:143).

According to Arjava, utilising the *Reiji-ho* technique enables Reiki energy to direct you to the best possible outcomes for everyone in a healing session and that therefore it can be used in all dimensions of life. If used in an emergency situation you “do not need to do the *gassho* and prayer but just follow your hands to where they are needed”.

Following this demonstration we were all asked to pair up and “do an intuitive treatment” with our partners. I worked with Joan, a Reiki Master from Dundee. For this Joan remained seated while I stood behind her and, following a few moments of gassho meditation, I placed my hands lightly on her throat and heart chakras and ‘allowed the energy to flow’. This ‘felt like the right place to be’ as I had the feeling that Joan had bottled up emotions that were constricting the heart chakra’s energetic flow and that as she often did not feel able to safely express her emotions, these were also affecting her throat chakra. I must admit however, that when you are an academic researcher in the field, it is rather difficult to switch off the mind and work with the intuitions. This resulted in me wondering whether I had gained these impressions from observing her general demeanour prior to this point. Either way, she agreed with me that she did have issues that she found difficulty expressing and she felt that “I was working in the right place”.

Reiki Mawashi (Reiki Current Group exercise)

I have chosen to include this exercise here as it is carried out at the end of every Reiki gathering by the Fife group of practitioners that I have spent time. It is, as I briefly noted earlier in this chapter, also carried out at attunement workshops. According to Arjava “The Japanese word *mawashi* means ‘current’. In the exercise a current of Reiki energy is passed through a group of practitioners similarly to how many of you practice Reiki in your meetings” (Petter, 2001:164). For this process each person (sitting in a circle) holds their left hand palm facing upwards a few inches under the right hand of his or her neighbour whose right palm is facing downwards. “The teacher begins the flow of energy, sending the energy to his or her left. The recipient receives the energy

from his or her right hand, lets it flow through his or her body, and passes it on to the next individual through his or her left hand” (Petter, 2001:164).

Arjava also suggested that energy can be sent either clockwise or anti clockwise around the circle “I think both ways will work anywhere on the planet and maybe beyond! In any event once we have learned to direct energy, it should not matter whether we direct it to the left, right, above or below. The energy of a group often exceeds the sum of the energy of the participants and spontaneous healing on all levels may occur” (Petter, 2001:164).

The Reiki – Undo exercise

Arjava informed us that this exercise is used in India, China and Malaysia. “In China, it is employed as part of Qi Gong training. In Indonesia it is part of the *Subud* practice and is called *Latithan* in India. Chetna came across something very similar almost twenty years ago called *Katsugen Undo*. At that time as today it is taught by the *Noguchi Setai* group” (Petter, 2001:175).

Create a train of several people, one sitting on the knees behind the other. Each one is lightly touching the shoulders of the person in front. Start by saying to yourselves Reiki Undo start and now follow the energy. Don't do anything, let it happen.

For this exercise you need some space and you must make sure that tables and things that could physically hurt the participants are moved away. It should be done in a place that allows for a relatively high noise level! This exercise creates a lot of energy and instantaneous healing might occur (PWM, 2001:3).

According to Arjava in this above technique “energy is allowed to use our own body to heal itself” and that “all you have to do is to breathe deeply and invite the energy to do what it wants”. This he suggested may result in people “forgetting themselves and shaking, twitching, wobbling, laughing or crying”.

This explanation raised for me some questions regarding the potential similarities between ‘spirit healing’ or ‘possession’ and ‘giving oneself over to Reiki energy’. For in all of these it appears to be the person’s receptivity to a ‘higher force’ that enables healing to occur. Now for Mary Keller, she having researched women, power and spirit possession primarily in non-western settings, if one takes a philosophically informed approach to the study of possession then firstly, one has to acknowledge that all knowledge in the world is processed. Secondly, while knowledge of religious experience can be expressed, it cannot be weighed or verified empirically. And, in the case of possessions these are doubly unknowable because the person possessed cannot know them either. It is epistemologically impossible to ‘know’ a possession (Keller, 1999)⁴⁹.

While I am not specifically stating that in our practice of Reiki-do, this following Arjava’s discussion of the same, individual ‘consciousness was necessarily blotted’, I do not in actuality ‘know’ this to be the case. For changes of consciousness if they occur, may differ according to personal levels of experience and states of being. Hence, I would argue, it is necessary to listen to Reiki practitioners’ voices when they state how they prioritise particular actions that relate to, to use Keller’s words, “a power thought

⁴⁹ This material is drawn from lecture notes from the course ‘Possessed Women: Interpreting Religious Bodies’, first taught by Dr Mary Keller in 1999 at the University of Stirling, Department of Religious Studies.

to transcend human actors” (1999). For the socially constructed and gendered nature of these practitioners must affect how they represent such extraordinary experiences, and how they incorporate the same into personal models of subjectivity.

Jacki – kiri Joka – Ho: Transforming negative energy

This technique is often used by Reiki practitioners to clear negative energy from their therapy tables before working with a client. Jagran demonstrated this procedure for us while Arjava explained that “as all objects may take on outside energy so a therapy couch may hold the energy of a former client”. This procedure, he added, may also be used to purify the energy of a room, while bigger things such as houses would require the use of the absent healing technique. However “as this technique cuts strongly through the aura thus cutting the energy supply, it should never be used on people or food but solely on inanimate objects”.

In order to do a *Jacki Kiri Joka Ho*, [translation ‘negative energy’, ‘to cut’] “the breath is taken into the *tanden*⁵⁰ and held there while your dominant hand makes three horizontal cuts through the air above the object to be purified. After the third cut – and you need to remain centred while doing this – put Reiki energy into it”. The final ‘technique’ that Arjava presented was that of affirmations.

⁵⁰ “Chinese; *tantien* or *dantien*, located two or three fingers below the navel”. Arjava recommends that when doing Reiki you “consciously draw in energy from the cosmos and collect it in the *tanden*” through drawing in Reiki energy with the breath. “Visualise how the breath is expanding and filling your entire body. Then exhale through your mouth and imagine the energy flowing out through your fingertips, your hand chakras, the tips of your toes, and your foot chakras” (Petter, 2001:158).

Affirmations

Arjava proposed that “people who have suffered have the potential for enormous strength” as only those who have suffered know what it is to “be free from suffering”. For once you have experienced this “you know inside what is your true self. It is this knowledge that drives us forward”. For Arjava, affirmations are a useful and empowering way of remembering to live consciously in the present rather than continually looking backwards into the past where suffering has occurred. Hence a positive affirmation made by a person helps them to focus on what is important in the here and now. For Arjava,

affirmations are a useful way of dealing with desires that come from negative positioning. For example if a person comes to me with a stated affirmation ‘I want to be enlightened’ then I would say to that person that they needed to look at their dark side, accept their negative habits and learn how to love themselves more freely.

Another example might be of someone coming to me with an affirmation ‘I want to be more successful’. Here I would advise them that underneath this affirmation they have a greater fear of failure...would anybody like to come up and make an affirmation?”

After a few moments Elaine rose from her seat and made her way to the front of the room. In a very quiet voice she said to Arjava that she was frequently concerned about “not having enough, so what would a positive affirmation be?” She related this to childhood experiences of her parents’ marital break-up which left her, and her mother, in a position of financial insecurity – which her mother never talked about. This she felt had taught her the “need to squirrel for hard times”. Arjava allowed her to work through some affirmation possibilities until she arrived at the positive affirmation of “I

am here. That is enough". Arjava then suggested that "perhaps a more useful affirmation for you might be 'I am still here', simplicity being the key to empowerment". Elaine agreed with Arjava that this affirmation enabled her to have "feelings of abundance" which lessened her "fear of starvation based on lack of money".

Following lunch the discussion moved on to focus on the origins of Reiki and an in-depth evaluation of Reiki symbols. Included here was a discussion on the Master symbols during which non-Masters were asked to leave the room. This fostered a feeling among those that left that "it would be good to do the Master's attunements" when "the time was right".

Reiki Questionnaires

Before the end of this last day of the workshop I asked Arjava whether I could hand out a brief questionnaire in which I asked several simple questions - the idea here being to contact participants for more in-depth interviews at a later date. Arjava thought that "it was wonderful that anyone should be researching Reiki and healing at university" and advised the group to this effect. This I am sure fostered an atmosphere among participants that "it was all right to talk to me" – this position of openness being a common one with most Reiki practitioners that I have met 'in the field'. In the initial questionnaire I asked, apart from basic information such as age, gender, home location and length of involvement in Reiki practice two 'primary' questions (a) "what first drew you to Reiki as a healing practice?" and (b) "what do you perceive to be its primary benefits?". The first question elicited various responses such as "the universe drew me to Reiki"... "I've always been interested in healing arts and suddenly the time was right and the correct Reiki Master was there as if by magic", "Reiki finds you and

works in mysterious ways” to, “I knew there was something missing from my life”, “after a family crisis”, “curiosity” and “inner guidance”⁵¹.

Many practitioners stated that they had “got into Reiki” while practising for themselves another complementary therapy – reflexology being a commonly cited example here. A second reason given was that “I have experienced chronic ill health myself” such as “asthma”, “physical disability” or “repetitive strain injury”. This in turn led these persons to visit a complementary therapist who “put me on to Reiki” as a useful “self healing technique”.

My second question “what do you perceive to be Reiki’s primary benefits,” drew out answers such as Robert’s “It is a path for spiritual development. You can share the energy with others...and it’s a totally new and fresh way to live”. For Peter, practising Reiki was a way of “helping others to heal/help themselves, leading ultimately to a better world”, while for Rhona, Reiki is good for “clearing blockages which lead to physical illness and neurosis, psychological and emotional problems. It is also good for working to balance energies in people, situations and buildings etc.” When asked for additional comments Rhona stated that, “Reiki has become an integral part of my life and has led me into other spiritual experiences such as daily meditations. It has totally transformed my attitude to life and I no longer worry about anything or let anything wind me up”. While for Peter, “The gentle art of Reiki can be learnt so quickly and easily that it is an easy method to enhance other healing abilities such as nursing and other therapies, and it reopens the latent ability for everyone”. I would like to complete this chapter with the narration of one Reiki practitioner’s story as compiled from an interview.

⁵¹ The questionnaire may be found in Appendix B.

Susan is a paediatric nurse in Edinburgh and is in her early forties. She was brought up in the Western Isles of Scotland where "religion not politics rules" through the ministrations of the 'Wee Free' [Free Church of Scotland]. 'My parents were quite liberal Church of Scotland, but we still went to Church every Sunday and I also went to Sunday School. However we were allowed to play outside on Sunday while many of my friends were not. I left the Islands when I was seventeen and came to Edinburgh to do my nurse training. I have been doing this for twenty-four years now. In the last three or four years I have become interested in the spiritual part of my life. I didn't hear about Reiki from anybody but just started feeling it in my hands. Then I had my Tarot cards read and was told that I had healing hands and had I heard of Reiki?

I started Reiki training and it brought structure into my life. I was trained by Poona and she is a follower of Osho. She is a very spiritual person, though it is strange that you do meet some Reiki people that are not spiritual at all...they just teach the craft. For me, Reiki encompasses everything. It is the Universal Life Force that exists around all of us...but we can lose this through stress or bereavement. Reiki reconnects a person to this energy which can be a very emotional time as Reiki unblocks energy blocks.

I use Reiki on myself in my working environment. I do Reiki to clear a room before treating someone [as a paediatric nurse] and am aware of using Reiki when with babies. It just flows where it's needed during my work. I also do Reiki on staff at lunchtime...sometimes. This makes a lot of people less stressed. Reiki is a really powerful energy and really amazing.

My Reiki Master had worked with Frank and Arjava Petter so the new techniques that we learnt at this workshop weren't all that new to me. They were incorporated into my training. So my First and Second Degrees are Osho-Neo-Reiki in that the teachings of Osho are incorporated into daily practice...meditation is really important for instance. I'm not a follower of Osho though.

I didn't intend to become a Reiki Master but a lot of people said that I was going to be a healer. I think life just manifests this sort of thing to you. And Poona said that I should do my Master's.... and I feel so much richer now...it's the best present that I have ever got!

The account above is fairly representative of the views held within the field of Reiki practice in Scotland. For Reiki healers acknowledge that one of the primary benefits of Reiki as healing practice is that it is beneficial for oneself initially, in that you need to 'heal yourself' before you can 'heal others'. However it is also acknowledged that practising Reiki regularly may enable a transformation of the self through reawakening of one's latent healing abilities (which everyone has) and that this in turn enables healing to spread throughout the community. The view is also held that eventually, when enough people become awakened to the benefit and universal 'truth' of Reiki, there will be a planetary shift in consciousness towards a more spiritual planet. This could be seen in the large response to Rand's petition following the September 11th, 2001 disasters and would be in accord with Ferguson's positioning in *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. Hence, though many people's experience of Reiki is initially because of personal health issues, there appears also to be a steady progression from this perspective towards a feeling that Reiki is a pragmatic and empowering resource for day to day life. I shall return to Reiki in the final chapter of this thesis where I look at Reiki in relation to de-centralised narratives of power.

In the next chapter I shall introduce dowsing as a tool that further confirms healers' abilities to work "energetically" outwith scientific paradigms. For dowsing is now being promoted across healing circles in Scotland as an "intuitive tool" that can help to clarify where dis-ease is located in the body. Hence it is also becoming more popular in Reiki

practice. My experiences of dowsing began in a workshop at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh as discussed in Chapter Three. Therefore I shall build on this with the presentation of ethnographic material relating to time spent at the Westbank Natural Therapy Centre in Fife. Here dowsing is a central part of healing practice, both for humans and animals. Overall, material will be presented so that I may continue to develop a decentralised narrative of power where women “work as active healing agents”.

Chapter Seven

Dowsing For Health

Dowsing is a simple but powerful skill which can be used by almost anyone to harness natural forces for health, harmony and well being.

Dowsing requires an open-minded calm approach to the question and the ability to accept the answers given by our intuition; the 'still small voice of the spirit'.

To become a dowser is an exciting, practical journey of self discovery, balancing and integrating the mind and spirit, and achieving wholeness in our daily lives.

(Patrick MacManaway, 2001)

My first experiences of dowsing were, as I noted in Chapter Three, at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh. Having found that this 'intuitive tool' was becoming increasingly popular in Reiki practice, I decided to participate in two further weekend workshops on the same where I hoped to learn more about this way of evaluating the embodied state. Therefore in this chapter I am going to present ethnographic material relating to these two events which I shall tie in to emic textual material. These last fieldwork based accounts will complete the experiential part of this thesis.

Healing at the Westbank Centre

The Westbank Centre is in Strathmiglo, a small village in rural Fife. It was set up and opened by retired army major and spiritual healer Bruce MacManaway and his wife Patricia in 1959. "It claims to be 'Scotland's longest running healing centre' and has as

its motto 'helping people to better health' (Sutcliffe, 2003:187). The MacManaways' sons, John and Patrick, have both followed in their parents' footsteps. Patrick specialises in geomancy and lives primarily in America - though returning regularly to Britain to lead workshops - while John does healing work at the centre on a daily basis. "Westbank was a significant node in the 1960s 'New Age' network: Peter Caddy [one of the founders of the Findhorn Community] considered Bruce MacManaway 'one of the finest healers in Britain'" (Sutcliffe, 2003:188). The MacManaways also have a house on the Isle of Iona and Patricia still leads meditation retreats there. The family as a whole are highly regarded in Scottish healing circles.

Client work and weekend events at The Westbank are held in what used to be an old piggery, this being a large bright room with views through the glass fronted end over beautiful natural looking gardens to the hills beyond. As a whole, The Westbank Centre feels friendly and relaxed, yet in a slightly different manner to The Salisbury in Edinburgh. For, while in the Westbank's waiting room one may read of the various classes being held - yoga and Shiatsu being popular examples - the multiple publications espousing natural health remedies also give one the initial feeling that emphasis is more placed on bodily health than 'solely spiritual' practice. It is a very busy venue with a large number of clients coming to John for healing work or to visit the two other part time practitioners, a reflexologist and a homeopath.

John MacManaway is a tall, athletic looking man with an easy smile and manner that immediately puts one at ease. He tends to dress simply in well cut jeans and shirt, drives a medium aged estate car and carries with him an air of considerable charisma and *joie de vivre*. The general impression given to me by those he has 'treated' is that they implicitly trust his healing ability while also expressing confidence in his sound

knowledge of anatomy and physiology, this being based on years of training and practice starting with a course in osteopathy. Further, as a large part of his call out work is also to equestrian establishments where he treats competition horses with some form of performance restricting health problems, this perception also extends into the farming and racing community.

John MacManaway's perceptions of the way the human body and healing works have undoubtedly been influenced by his father's positioning regarding the same, hence a brief overview of Bruce MacManaway's early experiences of healing would, I feel, be useful at this point. These I have drawn from his highly popular *Healing*, this being co-authored with Joanna Turcan in 1983

Healing by discovery

Bruce MacManaway first discovered healing "as a spontaneous activity during the French campaign of May 1940 and was entirely brought about by the lack of medical facilities in my unit [at this time in WW2]" (1983:45). Bruce found that when he placed his hands on wounded men he was able to arrest haemorrhaging, reduce pain and minimise the effects of shock and exhaustion (ibid). Progressively he discovered that a range of sensations were felt both by himself and the person he was 'laying hands' on. This varied from tingling, to heat, pressure or even pain. He also found that he could use his hands as "detectors" (MacManaway, 1983:46) finding pain and damage in the body even where there was no visible sign of such. After extensive practice, Bruce discovered that "the back" (ibid) appeared to be of considerable significance and that if he placed his hands here, symptoms would dissipate elsewhere in the body. This applied not only to physically wounded men, but also to those suffering from "nervous

exhaustion and various forms of tension which were generally summed up as battle fatigue” (ibid).

The link for MacManaway between the spine and the psychosomatic (the body and the psyche) was confirmed when, after many years of practice, he found that “the majority of patients suffering from nervous disorders, including major psychoses such as schizophrenia and obsession, have a lesion, whether painful or not...at the level of the fourth and fifth thoracic vertebrae” (1983:46-47). According to MacManaway,

It is my belief that it is [the] central nervous system housed in the spine, which is the main area of interaction between our physical and non-physical attributes.

In emphasising the significance for me personally of the spinal cord and its associated neural network, I am in no way turning a blind eye to that important part of the central nervous system, which is supra-territorial - the brain. This is the happy hunting ground of psychologists and hypnotherapists who, in their turn, give only indirect attention to the rest of the nervous system. Each to his own natural bent! My main purpose is to stress the importance of the central nervous system and hence the spine to both our physical and *non physical* health (1983: 47, italics original).

MacManaway goes on to argue that many conditions are affected by the state of the nerves in the spinal area. He proposes, for example, that “if the body’s natural immunizing and repairing functions fail” (1983:50) one of the underlying reasons may well be “provided by impediments to the nerves controlling that part of the body” (ibid). This leads him to assert that, in similarity to osteopathic and chiropractic thought, the release of “impeded nerve pathways or trapped nerves as I put it” (1983:51) is of central significance to the health and well being of the person concerned.

“For many years, I merely laid my hands on the appropriate point. This seemed to do the trick on many occasions which indicates that physiological change can be brought about merely by the healing energy, but at least for me it was a slow process (ibid)”. Because of this “slowness” and “if the process of laying on of hands seemed incomplete” (ibid) MacManaway also sent his clients on “to someone who can untrap the nerves” (ibid) while progressively learning how to do this himself through gentle manipulation.

For MacManaway, the energetic aspects of healing can be tied into the flow of energy down the spine. Hence...

If we are really more than just our physical bodies and have various psychological, emotional and spiritual factors in our make up which have to manifest in the body and can effect our bodily health, there must be a physical cross over point... Sheer empiricism has taught me that this is the spine (1983:52).

However he also proposes that the bridge between physical and non-physical healing may be found in the chakra system, this also running down the spine. Correspondingly, the energetic system in this location may have blockages in the energy flow caused by emotional or spiritual ‘issues’ or a lesion in the spine at the area of blockage (MacManaway, 1983:55). What we appear to have in the above then is, I would argue, an energetic philosophy that has striking similarities to contemporary healing in Scotland as we have seen in the last few chapters of this thesis. For here we find emphasis being placed on the holistic nature of the energetic body. So let us move on from Bruce MacManaway’s positioning on healing and return to the specifics of his son John’s holistic massage and dowsing course as participated in, in the summer of 2001.

Holistic massage and healing

I attended this weekend workshop at The Westbank Centre having earlier in the year sat in with John while he carried out individual consultations and healing work in one of his morning 'surgeries'. On the first day of this particular workshop, seven participants were present. Numbers rose on the Sunday with the arrival of a further three women. The female participants were composed of two members of the Scottish Endurance Horse Riding team, a research chemist, the centre's receptionist, two housewives and myself. The three male participants were, respectively, a retired senior manager of a regional Scottish National Health Service, a deep-sea trawler owner and an "I can turn my hand to most things" young man in his early thirties.

This mix of participants gave the workshop a different feel from some of the others that I had attended over the year, for participants had come to learn some of the basics of John's techniques so that they could in turn use these on friends and, in the case of the endurance riders, on their horses. Hence there was much more of an emphasis on wanting to know about practical bodywork and how dowsing could be used as a diagnostic intuitive tool than on the spiritual side of things. However, of the participants above, three were also Reiki practitioners - one at Master level - myself not included. All of these were female. This meant that these people at least were familiar with concepts such as the energetic body, meridians, chakras and breathing and meditation techniques with varying levels of expertise. All of the workshop participants had been to see John with personal or animal health problems, and all deemed him to be highly effective in his healing work.

The workshop opened with general introductions and a brief review of the history of healing in the Westbank Centre following along similar lines as that written in his father's *Healing: The Energy that Can Restore Health* as mentioned above. This text is well regarded in Scottish healing circles for its clearly written, personal evaluation of the development and practice of healing as a way of life, and is the text that I drew from briefly above. It is dedicated "to all those who through the millennia have endeavoured to enable humanity to discern, develop and apply their latent talents" (1983)⁵². In relation to current healing practice at the centre John stated that,

One hundred percent of those who come here have not been helped by orthodox medicine. Those that have been helped don't come here. For as healing is non-determinable you can't dictate how the body will use it. All people perceive themselves to be healed differently.

John initially began his training to work with the human body by taking a course in osteopathy. "I soon realised, however, that osteopathy was seventy percent violence as both the osteopath and patient had been taught that 'hearing the joints crack' was the sign of an effective treatment". This led John to feel that this "joint cracking" was unnecessary "for it is the thirty percent of healing work that surrounds this violence that is the part that works". This positioning has led John to carry out a combination of healing and modified Rolfing⁵³ where pain in the treatment is minimal. The minimisation of pain was, he proposed, particularly important when healing horses "which have a healthy kick and bite response to pain". He presented a picture of the

⁵² John also informed us in the opening introduction to this workshop that his father had been prevented from dying following a motorcycle accident after being helped by a "very powerful healer of the last century...Harry Edwards".

⁵³ Rolfing is a form of treatment where emotional tensions and thoughts are described as being held in the body in the form of strictures in the connective tissue's muscular sheaths. The practice of Rolfing aims to release these tensions with a mix of massage and patient re-education so that daily stress etc. is not held on to but is rather released as damaging to the self.

health of the human body in the following fashion.

When I remove energetic blockages through healing work I also allow conventional medicine to work. Each of our bodies is affected by our finite immune system, genetic influences and earth energy. How we respond to stress in our lives also depends on these factors. All a healer does is to enable the patient to heal themselves by a mix and match of conventional and complementary therapy. Therefore as healing and medicine go hand in hand there need not be a conflict between the two. The combined techniques equal healing.

The actual specifics of healing were, from John's perspective, a combination of gently adjusting the joints without manipulation in combination with massage to re-educate the muscle structures. Overlaying both of these procedures "I do the healing part which stimulates the immune system by giving a boost of non healer controlled energy which enables self healing". This John usually carried out for a few minutes at the end of a treatment. John's definition of a healer, *is someone who has the ability to tap in to healing energy, act as a conduit for the same and become charged rather than drained in the process.*

This last comment triggered one of the Reiki practitioners to suggest that "this sounds very much like what we do in Reiki" where as we have seen, there is also an emphasis on the non-draining nature of healing to the healer. However, John's response to this statement was that he regarded Reiki as being rather dangerous. "I see a lot of Reiki practitioners who come to me with energy depletion problems".

We appear to have in the above discussion a tension between John and Reiki practitioners' healing ontologies - this woman being supported by the other Reiki

participants present. This sort of debate is not uncommon in healing circles where there is often diversity of thought regarding the effectiveness of various healing practices and their effect on the healer. This is intimately related to the 'force' or agency that is regarded to be directing this energy. For while Reiki practitioners would posit that healing energy is God (by whatever name) directed, for John "healing should be used in its own sense rather than from a Christian or specific spiritual perspective. Faith is a gift in its own right, as is healing or clairvoyance. Not everyone has faith and it is not necessary for healing".

However, though John and the Reiki practitioners all agree that belief or faith are not necessary for healing to occur, each would also posit an optimum state in which the healer 'should be' while doing healing work. For the Reiki practitioner and John both, healing work must be carried out from the positioning of "right intent". For John, this desire to help must be combined with "unconditional love...irrespective of how you feel about that person". This latter emphasis is similar to that noted by Lubeck in Chapter Six. For he argued that Reiki healers should work from a non-judgemental positioning, while Doi regarded healing energy as "waves of love". Similarly, Reiki practitioners are taught that "right intention" is a central part of practice.

John elaborated on the process of healing by describing the 'state of mind' that the healer should be in. "The subconscious is responsible for intuitive healing, while doubts and questions in the conscious mind can affect this intuitive work. This means that you need to clear such doubts and focus the conscious mind on the person you are treating so that it doesn't interfere". However he also added that contrary to many healers' thoughts on the actualities of healing "concentration does not *enhance* healing. For in *trying* to heal you give up your own energy as a donation rather than

allowing the true flow of higher healing energy". All a healer does, we were told, "is lay on hands and intend to heal without ego interference".

Following a short coffee break, John explained in more depth how muscles work in the body in relation to electrical impulses and blood flow. I am not going to go into this in any great depth, but the basic framework presented was that if muscles are held in tension, then these would have a decreased blood flow and as a result suffer from a progressive build up of waste products, these eventually becoming crystalline. The end result would be conditions such as rheumatism or fibrositis. However, for John these medical terms are used to "label and categorise patients as conditions" and as such are not beneficial. This comment drew a very favourable response from workshop participants while also, I would suggest, fitting well into critiques of the human body 'as a set of symptoms'.

John went on to explain how he used intuitive massage to free up these crystalline masses working below the pain threshold. This form of massage he found to be more beneficial than "textbook led types", where the emphasis is not placed on intuitive knowledge. "Society as a whole is losing this sense of intuitive touch" he told us "You need to become re-tuned to feel what your hands are telling you. Then you will be able to use your hands as mediums for the evaluation of body conditions. You will be able to feel what is going on underneath [the skin]".

For John, one of the primary problems with conventional bio-medical approaches was its tendency to "tie the patient to the doctor who treats the symptoms of pain without promoting self-responsibility". For, we were told, "the body tries to heal and balance itself from birth to death" by, for example, "laying down calcium for developing muscles

and removing extra calcium at the joints if these are not being exercised. Therefore all bodies have the potential to heal to some extent". This could also be seen he suggested, in relation to the power of positive thought and healing; this connection being scientifically proven three years previously. "Through positive thought you can get better and make your immune system more powerful".

John qualified this point by describing his own experiences of positive visualisation. In his case he had been medically diagnosed as having severe nasal polyps which were restricting his sense of smell. He had begun a course of reflexology and proceeded to "visualise these polyps as seedheads which [he] saw as progressively shrinking. They vanished without the surgery [he] was told [he] would need". So here we have a typical healer's emphasis on trying a practice to see if it works and if it does, then promoting the same to others as empirically tested.

Practical work

For our first attempt at 'feeling with the hands', we were asked to pair up and place our hands on, and then slightly away from, the back of our partner's neck and to describe to each other what we felt. Each participant stated that they had felt "energy" and changes in the sensations around the neck and in their hands. These descriptions corresponded to John's later representation of "what healing feels like", where he proposed that healing energy would be felt in differing ways such as "heat, tingling, vibration or a sense of pressure", though "the heat felt on the skin in the healing process is not measurable".

I was, however, rather interested in John's comment that when he was carrying out healing work, he did not experience any heat or tingling in his hands, whereas the healee did feel sensations coming from his hands. His statement that "this is particularly the case with doubters who have the most powerful reactions and feel heat and cold" also intrigued me. This I feel raises rather interesting questions regarding issues of belief in the efficiency, or not, of healing. If, as John has stated, earlier belief is not necessary for healing to work in relation to the healer, why would it make a difference to the experience of the healee? And if "right intention" is of such significance to the practice of healing, then how might this relate to levels of consciousness and expectations of "what healing is" by the 'client'? In general, further questions could be asked with regard to the differences and similarities between the promotion of particular 'states of mind' for the healer and the client. Does the 'client' subconsciously become a 'healee' when s/he reports a successful outcome after 'treatment'? Is "being healed" a state of mind? Why would a doubter feel more sensation in the healing process? This would be interesting research 'for another day' but is however outwith the remit of this particular ethnographic project.

Towards the close of this first day's workshop, John raised a cautionary note for the new healer. "It is most important not to become too involved with the patient because if you do this you can adopt that person's symptoms such as a headache when you are taking away that person's pain". In commonality with other healers encountered in fieldwork, John proposed that the best way to prevent this happening was to rinse the hands in cold water immediately after doing healing work, this "closing down the palm chakras". Once again questions could be asked here regarding the relationship between the 'energetic body', the mind and the physical in relation to the "adoption of symptoms"? It was to these issues that John turned the following morning.

Dowsing the body

For John, in similarity to his father Bruce, the 'tie in' between the esoteric and the physical is to be found running along the spine in the form of the seven centre chakra system which overlays "many bundles of nerve endings that stimulate the immune system". Disease, for John, was "a lack of harmony which affects the immune system and one which starts from within", while in order to become well "one must return to a state of balance". The role of dowsing in this process, we were advised, was to "obtain intuitive information that is not consciously known" so that this knowledge could be applied to healing practice. However, John also suggested that the common use of a pendulum or rod in the divination process was not necessary, for all that this did was to "satisfy an intellectual need to see something happening" in the healing process. This was, we were advised, particularly the case for the patient because "it gives them something visible to believe in". This statement once again pulls 'belief', to the fore in relation to the significance of the same to practice, with 'truth' being represented as 'what can be seen'.

Two categories of explanation were given for the effectiveness of dowsing. John proposed firstly that we are all born with the natural ability to intuitively divine. This was why, he said, children make such good dowsers as "they haven't been socialised to look upon this with scepticism and a rational mind". Secondly, John drew in what he called a Jungian position in relation to the collective unconscious and humanity's telepathic abilities⁶⁴. Therefore for John, dowsing "is simply a way of linking back to our

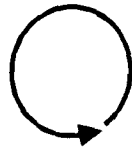
⁶⁴ The example he provided here was that of a murderer's heart being transplanted to another patient, the latter "telepathically knowing who the murderer was".

childhood abilities utilising a rod or pendulum to satisfy our adult need for visible proof of the same. And, we were advised, “it does not matter what sort of dowsing stone or crystal is used as long as this swings freely and is aesthetically pleasing”. The key to effective dowsing was, John stated, “the ability to ask a clear and unambiguous question and then not question the response the crystal gives” for “this sort of questioning blocks the response, as does trying too hard”. For “you should trust your dowsing responses and allow them to happen”.

John also suggested that different people have differing dowsing potentialities. Hence, while he could dowse in relation to health issues and treatment of the same, and find ley lines, he could not dowse for water. He presented the dowsing responses in a manner similar to that of his brother Patrick in his *Dowsing For Health*. The following diagram is drawn from this text and shows what Patrick calls “classic dowsing responses”.

PENDULUM RESPONSES

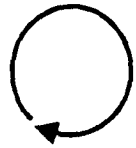
The diagrams on the right show classic pendulum responses. You will see the introductory neutral which is a “towards and away from you” swing, and the “clockwise” for ‘Yes’ and “anticlockwise” for ‘No’ responses”. While by no means universal, many dowsers find that these or a



anti-clockwise for “No”



towards and away for “Neutral”



clockwise for “Yes”



diagonal to the left for “No”



towards and away for “Neutral”



diagonal to the right for “Yes”

version of these, are the responses that their pendulum gives them while dowsing. Dowsing responses are a very individual and personal thing however, and you need not worry whether yours are the same as or are different from anybody else’s. It only matters that they feel right and natural for you, and that you know which is which.

(Patrick MacManaway, 2001:15)

The basic position promoted by John with regard to dowsing was that “who you are as an individual will affect your dowsing responses. For as there is a link between all living entities and inanimate objects which vibrate at differing energetic rates, then how you as an individual read your responses will vary according to the energy in and around you”.

Interestingly though, John also advised workshop participants that, in relation to the intuitive nature of dowsing work “intuition is often regarded in a derogatory manner as

women's stuff which needs to be crushed by male logical and rational explanations". And though in healing circles in Scotland there appears to be just as much of an emphasis on men getting in touch with their intuitive feminine sides, this still raises questions for me regarding issues of empowerment and agency. For while women are often represented as 'natural healers' because of the perceived ability to access, acknowledge and express intuitive information through the 'nurturing' female body, is the feminine being 'domesticated' within healing circles? For emphasis is not placed on the strength and virility of women by many male writers on healing. Therefore questions might be asked in relation to how the representation of women as 'authentically intuitive healers' locates them in relation to micro and macro political contexts. But let us for the moment move on to look at some textual evaluations of dowsing practice.

Dowsing the earth

Patrick MacManaway's representation of dowsing in *Dowsing For Health* (2001) is of a somewhat more spiritualised nature than that presented by his brother John. I feel that this may have had something to do with the nature of John's particular workshop on holistic massage where the emphasis was placed, as we have seen, on practical bodywork. However, as John recommended his brother's book as being a good introduction to dowsing and as many workshop participants bought and have since utilised this text, I shall draw from it here to provide further background to John's weekend workshop.

For Patrick, dowsing is an inner process and journey where the "spirit self" or "voice of intuition is reflected symbolically in the pendulum" (2001:12). Hence the "physical body

may be seen as a threshold” for the practice of dowsing where it acts as “a doorway between mind and spirit” (ibid). In similarity to other dowzers I have met in Scotland, John and Patrick both emphasise the interconnectedness of all of nature. This enables them to propose that the health of the human body as spirit and matter is intimately related to its location on earth.

However, according to the MacManaways, it is not only human beings who are composed of this physical/subtle material mix, but also all animals and, to a lesser degree, the mineral and chemical components of the earth itself. So while “Humans have intensely developed mental and emotional energy [and] have the capacity for self reflection and the ability to exercise free will...our energy body is still tiny in comparison to that of our surroundings” (P. MacManaway, 2001:57)⁵⁵. For Patrick, as the energy body of the earth “has enormous psychic mass and presence” (ibid) then this is bound to influence how we experience our lives on earth.

We are all familiar with the way in which our mood is gradually influenced by the tone of music playing in the background. Similarly our moods and thoughts and many of the circumstances that we take for granted and react to in our daily lives, are defined and patterned by the background, ambient energy field of the place in which we find ourself (MacManaway, 2001:57).

John picked up the theme of the ‘power of the place’ in the second day of this workshop where he shifted focus to look at earth energy. He commenced with the observation that “Christian pulpits in churches have very often been specifically placed

⁵⁵ Patrick MacManaway’s evaluation of the ‘energetic body’ is very similar to that as described in Chapter Four of this thesis. He emphasises the importance of the aura and etheric bodies as vibratory energy fields that “give pattern and form to physical matter” (MacManaway, 2001:56) and to our mental, emotional and spiritual states of being.

over power points". These power points occurred where underlying ley lines crossed.⁵⁶

John described the ley lines themselves as being "created by the electro-magnetic potential differences between the mineral contents in the earth", with energy flowing along the ley lines from high to low.

John also proposed that human beings have been aware of earth energies for thousands of years, with nomadic people following the flow of this energy as a matter of annual practice. When people began to favour a more sedentary farming lifestyle they tried to find ways to harness this energy and hold it in one place. "This is why standing stones are of such importance. These stones are very often not local to a particular area but have been transported to their new setting because of their predominantly quartz form which has precise electrical qualities. These stones act as balancers for earth energy".

Patrick MacManaway describes these energetic pathways or ley lines within a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) framework stating that, in the same way as chi or subtle etheric energy flows around the meridians of the body, so too does it flow along the chi paths of the earth. "According to the Chinese the chi paths are known as dragons" (2001:58). Patrick suggests that with the settlement of nomadic people across the world, various structures were built, like the standing stones of Europe or the pyramids of Egypt, with the express intention of tethering and cultivating the dragons or stabilising and harmonising earth energy (2001:59). For "Dragons inhabit every landscape. Typically described as having the body of a serpent, the scales of a fish, the wings of a bat and the claws of a bird, they symbolize the energy that is

⁵⁶ According to Patrick's student Peter (the facilitator of the Salisbury Centre dowsing workshop), ley lines were discovered in the 1920s by Alfred Watkins who noted that these ran through significant features such as churches, hilltop woodland, road signs and ponds. Watkins states that these lines differ somewhat from 'energy leys', these running between churches and standing stones.

present in all animals and throughout nature. They bring the etheric energy of the land, making it available to serpent, fish and bird" (2001:58).

These dragons or ley lines also have particular dualistic properties. They may be either *yin* in nature and hence relatively "quiet, receptive... [and have] the qualities of the womb which takes in and nurtures the male seed, transforming it and creating new life in the quiet darkness" (2001:59) or they may be *yang*, with active and expressive penetrating qualities "much like that of the male seed" (2001:59). However both Patrick and his student Peter (whose course on dowsing I attended at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh) emphasised that these pathways are not mutually exclusive, for *yin* energy may flow as a current within *yang* ley lines and *yang* may flow within *yin*. And all of our three dowsers above are in agreement that the power points formed at the crossing of *yin* and *yang* ley lines are places of considerable significance being commonly utilised as religious sites for "intensified spiritual observation and practice" (P. MacManaway 2001:59).

However, the picture becomes yet more complicated when it comes to health issues. Historically, water has been seen as an amplifier of ley line energy we were told. This positioning has led to the building of stone circles or standing stones so that water flowing over or away from power points on crossing ley lines - or rather the amplifying force of the same - may be capped and held in one place. Now water in itself may have both positive and negative effects when it comes to health depending on whether it flows over or underground; over ground water being beneficial and underground water being detrimental. Hence for Patrick et al, human health may be affected both by water and by the energy of ley lines - *yin* lines being presented as draining while *yang* lines are felt to be energising.

John and Patrick both proposed that many personal health issues will be affected by where a person lives. This is why “dowsing plays such a useful role in the location and evaluation of energetic problem areas” so that these can be rectified or at least avoided. The term used to signify this service is Geomancy.

Geomancy explores the realm where human consciousness meets and dialogues with the Spirit of the Earth. It empowers the harmonious interaction between person and place.

Through the art of appropriate placement of both secular and spiritual structures, places where we pray, work and play, geomancers locate and shape spaces in harmony with both the physical and the spiritual environment of the place.

Geomancers are spiritual ecologists
(GO, 2002)

The title the MacManaways use for health problems, (animal, vegetable and human) that relate to earth energies is that of Geopathic Stress. Patrick proposes that men have known of the effect earth energy has had on human health for thousands of years and notes the writing of Roman historian Plutarch (C45-125CE) and Nostradamus (1503 –1566) on this. For Patrick, geopathic stress occurs when a living organism is out of harmony with the surrounding energetic environment.

John described a particular example of this effect in his workshop. He told us that he was called out to a farm to ascertain why there was such a high abortion rate among the ewes in one particular field. This was apparently fifteen percent above the

expected rate for the same. John dowsed the field and found a very strong ley line running through it. The sheep were moved. The abortion rate returned to normal. We were also told that cats and dogs like to be in places of particular earth energy, cats liking relaxing *yin* energy, and dogs energising *yang*, while for Patrick plants, of themselves, were good indicators of underlying earth energies (2001:60).

So what relevance do animals have to New Age healing? I would argue that if health may be affected by earth energies and if within a New Age framework all is seen to be connected in a holistic network of mind, body and spirit, then presenting non-human examples of ill health is rather interesting. For, if dowsing and healing works on animals in that negative physical conditions are located and lessened or removed, this would support the proposition that belief is not necessary for healing to occur. And while the success of a dowsed divination and healing 'treatment' must have a lot to do with the animal owner's evaluation of the same, the practical effects can also be seen in the animal's physical state of being. I have spoken to several horse owners visited by John, and all of these people have praised the efficiency of his particular mix of dowsing, manipulation, massage and healing. This is an area of research in itself and would provide some fascinating material. However let me return once more to ethnographic material and discuss some practical experiences of dowsing for beginners.

Practical Dowsing

While the actual practice of "dowsing the earth" played a small part in John MacManaway's workshop, emphasis rather being placed on pendulum dowsing of the spine, this was not the case in the next workshop that I attended at The Salisbury

Centre in Edinburgh. Peter, a student of Patrick MacManaway, facilitated this. Peter's emphasis was placed on dowsing ley lines and earth energies. For, as we were told, the human body is an energetic entity that is interconnected with earth energy, then "we as humans are not just responsible for our own well being but also for that of the environment as a whole. It is not only possible to heal the self but also to heal the earth".

At this particular workshop were ten people - seven women and three men - all of them new to this practice. Peter proposed that rather than fancy dowsing rods, one could use wire coathangers most effectively, these to be held loosely along the long edge with the hook facing away. It has to be said that when one is in a room where people are walking around with a pair of coathangers, any possibility of a formalised atmosphere is rather quickly dispersed in favour of a sense of playfulness.

Dowsing practice was carried out in the centre's organic gardens where Peter stated there were ley lines, underground water and a power point. Peter had placed a line of canes along the ground in a wavy curve and we were asked to walk slowly up to this line and see if our coathangers turned hook inwards as we crossed. For the majority of people this actually occurred, fostering comments such as "look at that...isn't that amazing. I didn't think that would happen". We were then asked to "consciously state to our hangers" that we wished them to "turn outwards" when we recrossed the line. Now I had thought that one should disengage one's mind when dowsing as this had been promoted at The Westbank Centre. However we found that when we asked for a particular dowsing response then this was indeed the case. The coathangers turned outwards as requested, leading to questions being asked as to whether we had intentionally affected this result. However, Peter proposed that an easy way to allay

this fear was to use L shaped rods where the hand grip rotated freely on the rod - a biro pen case being rather useful for this purpose. This he found to be effective proof for both dowsers and suspicious watchers of the same. By the end of the morning everyone was picking up some dowsing response, trying this both one or two handed, and with the eyes shut.

The afternoon session of this workshop provided us with the opportunity to "dowse the human aura" and see how this changed in relation to our position in the garden and corresponding energy levels. This was an exercise much enjoyed by participants for the majority had heard of the human aura but had never seen a visible 'show' of the same. We were asked to pair up and, holding our coathangers in front of us, ask these to cross inwards when the edge of our partner's aura was encountered. Our partner was then asked to stand respectively over an energy point and underground water. When over the energy point, the aura was picked up at about twice the distance away from the body. Over the underground water, the aura was registered very close to the physical body. And when our partner visualised themselves in a ball of golden light or as being in "a strong safe place of choice", this too appeared to increase the size of the aura considerably.

To support these perceptions, Peter showed us how to carry out a simple piece of muscle strength testing based on a kinesiological positioning, stating that "this will vary depending on the size of the aura and underlying energy condition". For this, each 'to be tested' participant again stood over an energising or de-energising spot and raised their right arm to shoulder height pointing to the side. The tester was then asked to push the arm downwards and feel the strength of resistance. This too appeared to be stronger over an energy point and weaker over underground water.

The general perception among participants was that this was the first time that they had seen visible proof of how the energetic body is affected by earth energy. As such, they found this highly useful and stated that they would be going home to dowse their houses to find out what lay underneath and see how this was affecting their health. For most, it appeared that the ability to dowse was somewhat of a surprise, for general comments the day before had suggested a positioning of "it won't work for me". Yet of interest here is that the participants were, in general, older than the usual Salisbury Centre visitors, with most being over the age of fifty. While the general discussions over the weekend suggested that for most, the wish to learn a practical method of divination that enabled the enhancement of health was the primary drawing feature and not necessarily any particular spiritual emphasis on the same. And participants appeared comfortable with the existence of the aura because "we know it's there because we've just dowsed it for ourselves". Hence once again the emphasis was placed on empirical testing. This sort of perspective I have found to be commonly held within healing circles in Scotland, as has been seen.

However, while the practical experiences of dowsing at this workshop were based on "experiencing for yourself" and empirical testing, there was also a corresponding emphasis on the spiritual nature of the earth and having a harmonious relationship with the same. Hence while the emphasis on developing 'the self' was apparent in relation to "re-becoming who we are by nature" this was seen to be intimately related to being "on and of the earth" and hence responsible for the same. As Patrick MacManaway puts it,

It is possible to enter a creative dialogue with the spirit of the place. If timely and appropriate and supported by the place, our strongly held and clearly focused thoughts

can repattern the etheric field. This allows both for healing and repatterning of the basic nature of the earth's subtle body to occur in a gentle and respectful way (2001:66).

Therefore while it could be said that "the repatterning of the earth's subtle body" might be primarily for human benefit as Patrick has suggested above, the dowser should also only engage in this process "if it is the right and timely thing to do". Patrick describes the process of finding this out in the following manner. Here the dowser wishes to ascertain what the energetic state of their living space is and how this relates to the health of its inhabitants.

Before dowsing, clear and centre yourself, and visualise yourself in a column of golden light connecting you with the source of love and healing and check your "Yes" signal: "I want to find out about the energy in this room. Is this timely and appropriate?" If "Yes", then ask: "Are there any energies in the room that are detrimental to health?" If so, find out if they are detrimental because of their nature, or because of a trauma of some kind" (2001:66).

Having divined to find that this is applicable and timely, the dowser is then advised that if they find chi traumatised energy this can be healed by the visualised channelling of "healing energy from the source of love and healing" (2001:66). As part of this process the dowser then asks "the etheric field [to] receive whatever healing energy that it needs to regain a state of health and balance, peace and vitality" (ibid). Patrick also suggests that having completed this process, the dowser/healer should be "sure to ask that you also receive healing through the process, and at the end of each session, visualise yourself filled with golden light, clean and clear, whole and healthy. Give thanks for the healing that has occurred and end the connection" (ibid). This sort of

cleansing process through visualisation of 'loving golden light' is commonplace among Scottish New Age healers.

I feel that this common emphasis on drawing down healing power, with the body being seen as an intuitively guided channel, is, as Michael Brown has stated in his ethnographic study of channelling in America, an example of a "shared experiential core" (1997:70) in healing practice. This is combined as Brown has suggested, with "both consumers and producers of channelled information, prid[ing] themselves on independence of mind" (ibid) while correspondingly holding personalised and eclectic manners of gathering information (ibid). Hence questions may be asked with regard to the way in which this power is represented, for this reflects the socially constructed nature of the person involved and their current micro and macro politicised context. For as Brown has proposed,

...channels bypass religious specialists to establish direct, personal contact with the spirit world. The messages that they find there reveal local concerns that have not yet breached the walls of institutionalised religion... Unburdened by rigid procedures, channelling operates close to the everyday experience of those who embrace it - their hopes, their troubles, and the language in which they frame their personal search for meaning. By attending to these experiences, we can learn much about their inner lives and the social forces that shape them (1997:10-11).

I would argue that within a spiritual dowsing framework 'healing energy' is not regarded as being 'transcendent' as in 'something that surpasses human experience'. Rather, the dowser is a part of this power for it resonates through and within all aspects of animate and inanimate life. The dowser enables healing on physical and etheric levels

and in return receives healing energy him or herself. Healing is regarded as being mutually beneficial.

Spiritual Dowsing

In order to clarify some of the points made in this dowsing workshop I obtained Sig Lonegren's 'Spiritual Dowsing' in the autumn of 2002. This book had been personally recommended to me by Patrick MacManaway and was to be found at the 'Mid Atlantic Geomacy' website. From here this 1996 book could be downloaded in totality with the author's consent. I hoped, with its usage, to gain a clearer picture of the definition of 'ley' or energy lines, for this appeared to be an area of some confusion for workshop participants. *Ley lines* are defined by Lonegren as "an alignment of sacred sites (in Britain, five within ten miles), each of which has primary water under it" (1996:1, glossary).

Energy leys are "a six to eight foot beam of yang energy with a direction of flow.

Energy leys (E-leys) expand and contract according to the time of the day, time of Moonth [sic], and other factors. They always run in straight lines, and often, but not always, run concurrently with leys, alignments of holy sites" (1996:1, glossary)

Lonegren states that power centres are "places over her [Gaia's] surface where the yin and yang, the female and the male, the domes and veins of primary water and the straight energy leys have come together" (1996:21). The energy levels at these sites, he adds, vary throughout the year based on the sun, moon, planetary and stellar alignments. Hence these sites became acknowledged as sacred spaces where, at certain times of the year, the alignment of "heavenly bodies... causes a massive increase in the energy available at that particular point" (1996:21). This energy is

utilised for a variety of purposes such as healing, fortune telling, increasing fertility and “for general growth in spiritual consciousness” (Lonegren, 1996:21). Lonegren clearly locates throughout this book “the earth” as the territory of the Mother or Gaia. For when we acknowledged the spiritual power of the earth “Gaia led us to the right place at the right time [power centres] and our spiritual lives prospered accordingly” (1996:22).

For Lonegren, and indeed the MacManaways, problems began to arise when Western man began to utilise power points and energy alignments for his own particular purposes, rather than following Gaia's path⁵⁷. According to Lonegren, the Romans in Britain and Europe debased the old sacred ways or ley lines by using them as straight tracks to move their armies upon hence “us[ing] spiritual paths for military purposes” (1996:25). And while, for example in the sixth century CE, the Benedictine Monks built a series of monasteries across Europe on “important mountains and other geomantically strategic sites... [these were also] built on power centres [hence] their monasteries and abbeys were automatically plugged-in to the ley system” (Lonegren, 1996:26).

This appropriation of power sites continued throughout the centuries, Lonegren proposes, with the corresponding removal of access to power sites to practice Goddess and earth energy centred religious practices. This “systematic war of elimination against the intuitives and the Goddess” (1996:27) heretic, witchcraft and healing women persecutions all resulted in dowsing “this thought to be a craft practised by witches...to be stamped out” (1996:27). For dowsing was a “spiritual tool” that

⁵⁷ I am intrigued as to whether Lonegren's usage of the term 'man' is indicative of androcentric slippage, or whether he is inferring that women did not engage in this misuse of ley lines.

enabled people to “get answers” without going through the church (Lonegren, 1996:27).

What we have in the above is a progressive drawing of dowsing history that fits with the writer's own 'ways of being'. For Lonegren “has spent the last twenty five years studying ancient tools that enhance intuition” (GO, 2002) on a seeker's path where he emphasises the female nature of the earth as Gaia. He also states that he has seen the characteristics of dowsers change over his years of practice. For when he first joined the American Society of Dowzers in 1976, the average participant was a white male in his mid-sixties whose interest lay in water dowsing. He states that, by the 1980s, women had outnumbered men in this association with the emphasis shifting to earth energies and healing. Further, by the 1996 convention “many of the workshop leaders assumed (correctly) that the attendees were already aware of the concept of energies detrimental to a person's health and many other aspects of the Earth energies and healing” (1996:4).

This development of these sorts of perspectives is, as we have seen, similar to that found in healing circles in Scotland. For even though dowsing of the earth may be only now growing in popularity in Scotland within healing circles, the earth as energetic and its interrelationship to health, spirituality and healing are not new beliefs.

Lonegren also relates the ability to do remote⁵⁸ and intuitive dowsing to the possibility that, “Perhaps each of us, being part of the cosmic hologram, have the whole picture within us. We don't have to go outside ourselves to get the answer. It already exists within us” (1996:16). For throughout this text, Lonegren repeatedly asks the reader to

⁵⁸ Where dowsing is carried out remote from the area being evaluated, as in the dowsing of a map before visiting the site itself.

dowse for themselves “to verify the accuracy” (1996:28) of what is being said. Hence once again emphasis is placed on ‘experiencing for oneself what is true’ by the process of empirical testing, with ‘the intuitive’ being brought to the fore as the source of knowledge right for ‘the self’. This sort of thought is typical in Scottish healing circles with, as I have shown previously, corresponding emphasis on the interconnectedness of all of nature ‘as spiritual’.

I would argue therefore that one of the primary themes underlying all of the discourses of dowsing and healing we have visited in the last few chapters is that of power/energy - the power that heals, the power to heal and be healed - and intention. For, if as Patrick MacManaway suggests, the practice of dowsing acts as “the doorway between mind and spirit” (2001:12), then from this perspective once one learns to dowse, then it becomes possible to find out for oneself what elements in life are causing imbalance and disharmony with the universal energetic whole. However, as we have also seen in the last few chapters, it is also promoted that when one starts to ‘get back in touch’ with ‘what we are by nature’ then one can ask for help from one’s own personal spirit guides and angels. We are hence to regard ourselves as being never alone but living in a world of multiple realities.

To receive help, tutoring and guidance from the world of spirit, all that we need to do is to ask for it. Tutelary [the spirit of the place] and other free spirits may not interfere with human free will, but perhaps a good use of free will is to ask respectfully for help and support in meeting life’s many and perplexing challenges...Whoever we are, wherever we may be, we are in a sacred relationship with the tutelary spirits of time and place that we have, however unconsciously, been attracted to in order to support us through our journey of life.

(P. MacManaway, 2001:73)

And if, as Lonegren has stated above, women now predominate in dowsing practice - as they do in healing circles - then questions might be asked regarding why this gender shift has occurred. For I feel that women are now beginning to re-engage with 'earth energies' and 'spirit tutelage' because of the 'association' with the Goddess. Hence one engages in a politics of reclamation by 'working' with spirit guides and earth energy that is 'female' in nature. And I would argue that part of the appeal of dowsing is the potential to play and grow with like-minded others in a sense of community, where all aspects of life are honoured as being sacred and hence to be cared for.

In the next and final chapter, I shall draw these threads together with the usage of several theoretical positionings. As an underlying framework I shall utilise feminist historian Joan Scott's writing. For Scott argues that women's social actions are imbued with particular meanings, these being acquired as part of the interrelationships between self and others. She also states that "we need to replace the notion that social power is unified, coherent, and centralized with something like Foucault's concept of power as dispersed constellations of unequal relationships discursively constituted in social 'fields of force' (Foucault, 1980)" (Scott, 1988:1067). And I shall return to Meredith McGuire's research on healing in suburban America and to feminist, Goddess and womens' spirituality theorisations of power and the body. For I shall argue that women are learning to heal themselves as part of a project of personal re-definition, self-transformation and empowerment.

Chapter Eight

Powerful Bodies

Within this thesis I have provided the first empirical academic study of energetic healing, Reiki and dowsing in central Scotland. I have placed emphasis on exploring how participants learn to heal in specific workshop settings, the teachings and issues that underpin healing practice and students' responses to the same. Hence throughout this work, ethnographic material has been supported by textual examination of New Age healing literature and workshop manuals etc.

This is also the first exploratory study of how gendered spiritualities may be actively constructed in the above settings in relation to, for example, the internalisation of healing concepts. It is hence, I would argue, another step towards addressing the historical imbalance of writing about New Age beliefs, practices and location from a predominantly androcentric positioning. For as Dominic Corrywright states, "the web of New Age spiritualities is crucially sustained by the individual and collective weavings of women and this is particularly evident in healing and therapies" (2003:131).

In the Scottish New Age setting as we have seen, women's predominance in healing circles has a lot to do with personal projects of redefinition and self-transformation. This sort of 'work on the self' does not occur under, as radical feminists Daly (1991) and Sjoo (1994) would state, overarching patriarchal paradigms. Rather, 'healing of the self' is located within "fluid fields of force" (Foucault, 1980). Hence in order to build up a more decentralised narrative of power I have related this particular research to other empirical studies of healing, Meredith McGuire's *Healing in Suburban America* being a

key example here, and to feminist writers in general. I have also drawn from research in the parallel fields of Goddess and women's spirituality. For here we do find useful examinations of how women re-inscribe their bodies as sacred and practice outwith the confines of institutionalised religion and bio-medical approaches to health.

Therefore within this chapter I shall consolidate my work by returning to key themes introduced in earlier chapters. These will include evaluations of my politicised location as a bothsider (an academic writer and Reiki practitioner), the multivalent discourses of power within healing circles themselves and examinations of how gendered identities are substantively constructed within specific healing contexts. For questions need to be asked about why women predominate in healing circles and networks and these must be related to empirical contexts as well as to textual material. To this end let us first return to feminist historian Joan Scott's positioning on gendered identities as this can be usefully situated alongside the work of Meredith McGuire et al.

Scott (1986) states that feminist historians of religion have tended to feel more comfortable writing descriptively rather than theoretically. However, she argues that progressively this standpoint has shifted as these writers have become aware of the need for, in relation to case studies of women's history, "some synthesising perspective that can explain continuities and discontinuities and account for persisting inequalities as well as radically different social experiences" (1986:1055). For Scott, we must apply gender as an analytical category so that we can analyse "the relationships between male and female experience in the past [and] also the connection between past history and current historical practice" (ibid). She defines gender as an analytical category in the following manner:

Gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Changes in the organisation of social relationships always correspond to changes in the representation of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way. As a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes, gender involves four interrelated elements: first culturally available symbols...second, normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols [and] that attempt to limit or constrain their metamorphic possibilities (1986:1067).

Scott's final two subsets relate to the gendered relations to be found in kinship circles, these encompassing political and economic 'issues' and the development of subjective identities (1986:1067).

Scott argues that by applying gender as an analytical category in the above manner we can move away from earlier feminist effort, which attempts to "explain the origins of patriarchy" (1986:1057). For these theories of patriarchy are problematic in that they "assert the primacy of that system in all social organisation" (1986:1058) and hence provide "endless variations on the unchanging theme of fixed gender inequality" (1986:1059). This is most certainly the standpoint of radical feminist Mary Daly.

For Daly, a writer who, in her own words, found that her creative process of forming *Gyn/Ecology* involved the flinging open of doorway after doorway in her imagination as she "raced through the labyrinthine passages of [her] mind, Facing and Naming the myths and actual atrocities of Goddess-murder all over the planet..." (1991:xx). patriarchy is without doubt primary in all social organisations.

Patriarchy appears to be 'everywhere'. Even outer space and the future have been colonized. Nor does this colonization exist simply 'outside' women's minds, securely fastened into institutions we can physically leave behind. Rather it is also internalised, festering inside women's heads, even feminist heads (Daly, 1991:1).

Daly holds the basic premise that no matter where one travels in this world of polluted "phallo-technic societ[ies]" (1991:9) one will find "mind/spirit/body pollution inflicted through patriarchal myth and language at all levels" (ibid). Of particular relevance to this research is her proposition that "soul doctors (priests and gurus), mind doctors (psychiatrists, ad-men, and academics), and body doctors (physicians and fashion designers) are, by professional code, causes of disease in women and hostile to female well being" (1991:10). Men want to possess "female energy" (1991:12) in all its creative aspects. Daly argues that, for women, the way out of this patriarchal morass is to remember who they are and reclaim their own power. Women must become aware of how women have been erased (as witches and in patriarchal scholarship), reversed in mythology (as in Adam giving birth to Eve), falsely polarised where "male-defined 'feminism' is set up against male-defined 'sexism' in the patriarchal media" (1991: 8), and divided and conquered. In this latter "token women are trained to kill off feminists in patriarchal professions" (ibid). Once women have remembered "the games of the fathers" (ibid) she posits, they will live beyond patriarchy as "Survivors" (ibid) having cut through the multiple layers of deception (ibid).

What Scott and Daly would both agree on is that women and men's sense of identity is intimately related to complex webs of social relationships. These interrelationships are therefore indivisible from discourses of power. For an individual is affected by 'authoritative' discourses from the fields of science, medicine, religion and politics etc., in relation to "how one should be as a human being". Correspondingly the 'experts' in

these fields promote standards of 'acceptable' behaviour for the individual in relation to *gendered* bodies, minds, and souls. So let us now look more closely at theoretical investigations into New Age spiritualities themselves.

Dominic Corrywright has provided us with a useful evaluation of such investigations to date. He argues that the New Age emerges *both* out of the historical conditions and processes that have constructed unified theories *and* is a product of postmodernity with its fractured, deconstructed models of knowledge" (2003:24, *italics original*). It is a dynamic and evolving field built on complex relationships with historical roots. Hence if the academic tries to locate the same within a typology - this also being based on multiple layers of epistemological and ontological assumptions - then one will be faced with major challenges. For a "typology is...perforce, static" (2003:23) and if the scholar constructs the same then "she or he begins to create a framework of shadows, of closure" (*ibid*). This is why I have noted initially that McGuire's categorisation of 'healing types' might be better located as constitutive elements of healing practice.

Corrywright also states that New Age spiritualities as theories of knowledge are not "monolithic attempts to define how we really know the world" (*ibid*) but rather that they search for "the cracks and fissures of the reified systems of modern scientific epistemology" (Corrywright, 2003:23). In this assertion he is correct. For New Age theories of knowledge are often built up in messy, unstructured ways with individuals picking and mixing according to need and personal applicability. Correspondingly, a person may draw from science or any of the world religions and spiritualities and appropriate the parts "that work for them". Hence though New Agers may be critical of science as reductionist and rationalistic, they will equally

happily adopt scientific theorists who appear to support their own theories – Fritjof Capra (1977), David Bohm (1980) and Rupert Sheldrake springing to mind here⁵⁹.

At the same time, when the New Ager begins to question “absolute truths” she or he engages in a project of disrupting the normative concepts that attempt to fix such “truths”. “These concepts are expressed in religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political doctrines and typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine” (Scott, 1986:1067). Hence we need to examine the founding presumptions and methodological criteria that underpin such theories of knowledge. This is of particular importance to those feminists who wish to challenge “the traditional patriarchal forms that knowledge has taken thus far” (Grosz, 1993:187). For once we become aware that “knowledges are but perspectives – points of view of the world – [then we can] acknowledge that other, quite different positions and perspectives are possible” (Grosz, 1993:194). New Age women are but one example of a ‘group’ who have become aware of the multiple possibilities for redefining and re-empowering the self. I shall return to specific redefinitions of the gendered embodied self later in this chapter.

However, another of the key difficulties in ‘accurately’ representing New Age theories of knowledge is the historical prioritisation of text in academic circles. I would argue that when engaging with this field of enquiry we would do better to work from a more flexible positioning - where text is not seen as the sole provider of ‘truth’. For text is not the sole medium for New Age theories of knowledge.

⁵⁹ Capra wrote the *Tao of Physics*, Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* and Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life: The Hypothesis of Formative Causation*. All of these develop new theories of the world (and its inhabitants) as holographic, energetic and interconnected.

Experiential touch, and particularly *the energetic touch*, is also of central significance. This is why my position as a bothsider has been useful. I have learnt to feel energetically and have an appreciation, politicised though it is, of “what it is to do healing work” and the sense of transformation that this fosters. Hence I am in accord with Corrywright when he further argues that,

...the most successful and accurate hermeneutic in the study of New Age spiritualities is one which is practically orientated to participation and qualitative approaches, rather than observing and quantitative approaches. More radically, it adopts some of the very challenging ideas of New Age spiritualities themselves in order to capture the dynamic and manifold nature of the phenomena adequately (2003:45-6).

Another problem arises with the prioritisation of text as ‘source of academic knowledge’. This is of particular relevance for the first time ethnographer who very often is researching to gain a PhD. This new fieldworker will be working in an ‘original field’ and will be relatively new to the difficulties of descriptive writing and of representing events (such as initiation into Reiki) in a textual format that satisfies academic criteria for objective analysis. Such an event is also a subjective, embodied and very personal experience. Correspondingly, I have found myself enmeshed in a task of not appearing to write defensively for an academic audience about a different form of knowledge. I have had to ask myself questions with regard to levels of personal disclosure. Would I, for example, admit (defensive stance) that as part of this research I have learnt to see the basic levels of the aura and have hence found myself in “a whole new world of possibilities” (positive healer’s standpoint). As Horsfall succinctly observes “Our knowings, our understandings are often multifaceted, multidimensional and sometimes chaotic. And yet we are required to explain ourselves in one dimension [the written word]; there is no room for the multitude of voices,

thoughts and feelings that occur in the meaning-making of bodies" (2001:88).

Prioritising text also means that demonstrations of practices such as Reiki are excluded from knowledge transmission in academic circles. Hence a significant form of 'religious' bodily expression is 'silenced' and excluded.

On the other "side of the coin", I have also discovered that my own bodily state - and historical experiences of dis-ease - has been a significant medium for mutual understanding. For by having turned to holistic therapies myself, I was seen to acknowledge healers' own ways of 'knowing the world'. McGuire had similar experiences during her research in Ireland in the late 1970s. Here the local women came to her aid and McGuire reciprocated by providing transportation to markets, handing down baby clothes and by helping a sick neighbour. In this process "My women neighbours and I discovered our commonalities, which then became a foundation for a better understanding of their social worlds" (McGuire, 1992:202). She also observed that her own experiences of mothering, and the Irish women's experiences of McGuire's mothering "allowed for a closer mutual identification" (1992:203). This, too, I experienced in the Scottish context for I was regularly asked whether I had children and indeed whether they had been initiated into Reiki. The point McGuire makes overall is the significance of mutual understandings based on physicality and that memories are not just experienced in the mind "but also as a bodily experience" (1992:205), her "later studies of illness and healing [convincing her] of the possibility and validity of this way of knowing" (ibid).

Ours was not exactly the same experience [of nursing an infant]. We could not, for instance, experience the other's memories. But the shared physical experience was a critical bridge that enabled me to understand the neighbour more deeply, drawing from my own body/mind experience. It strikes me that this may be an unexplored avenue by

which ethnography goes beyond the purely personal knowledge of the ethnography (McGuire, 1992:205).

I agree with McGuire most wholeheartedly. For until I was initiated into Reiki, I could not *feel* doing healing work. Being initiated enabled me to have a better understanding of healers narratives of experiencing the same – even if experiential appraisals differed somewhat in content.

So how does my positioning as a feminist relate to my experiential knowledge as a healer? Spickard and Landres have succinctly observed that analysis of women's experiences in the world - my own might be included here - require an ethnographic approach so that we may chart a "new religious landscape" (2002:4). They also argue that ethnography in general has been impacted upon by feminism and that "it is not an accident that many - not all - of the most prominent contemporary ethnographers of religion are also feminist women" (ibid). For feminism, as a critical method of study is engaged, in part, in the unmasking of areas where women are silenced. Academic writing on the New Age is just one such area where I have argued that this occurs. Similarly, Wendy Griffin tells of the difficulties of obtaining funding into Goddess spirituality (see Chapter One of this thesis). Hence questions must be asked here with regard to the perceived significance of some fields of study by those with academic power and the downplaying of others as academically of 'less significance'. Or are these 'to be unfunded' areas seen as potentially dangerous and threats to long held patriarchal bastions, as Mary Daly proposes? And in the same way that feminist writers continue to evaluate the patriarchal underpinnings of much 'recognised knowledge' (science and religion being two key examples here), so too do many feminist women in New Age and Goddess spiritualities negatively evaluate the same. Both feminisms critique "the rules' and 'boundaries' of acceptable knowledge and behaviour... [as]

historically conditioned by social constructions" (Corrywright, 2003:63) while also providing new and positive visions for the future (ibid). In turn these 'positive visions' themselves are situated within fluid fields of force. They are embodied visions tied to, in New Age circles, healing practices. These are carried out in the social world. The Reiki practitioner hears of conflict or suffering and does Reiki, often with others, to "raise the energy levels at that place, time or situation" to effect actual change. And even if working on the self, the vision remains the same. Focus is placed on the spiritual development and transformation of the self so that that embodied self can actively bring about change. The healer's social interactions and 'moral' way of being becomes in its own right (it is hoped at least) an instrument for promoting harmony and "positive growth" with the maximising of one's own potential *so that one may help others*. This includes the negation of internalised representations of the woman's body as less in favour of positive redefinitions of the same as spiritual and sacred, through in Wiccan and some women's groups, the imminent tie to the Goddess.

As a bothsider I am now more aware of these dialogues than I was before I began this research. I acknowledge just how fortunate I have been to be able to spend years in academic study and become a healer. I am just one example of a woman, healer, academic, mother, who walks in a world full of other 'multitasking' others. However, I have not forgotten that I have also been taught precisely how I should *be* in each of these roles. My engendered body is both an instrument of power and the site of struggles over power.

Take, for example, the aforementioned prioritisation of text in academic circles. I have been trained to write academically yet my "new religious landscape" (Spickard and Landres, 2002:4) as healer is, as I have mentioned, experientially based on energetic

touch – a different framework of meaning based on intuitiveness and spirituality rather than rationality and science. And it is I who also has to decide how to 'accurately' represent 'others', healing practices. Here I put on my 'academic cap' and subscribe to discipline-bound conventions. I have to write and make myself visible. Debbie Horsfall elaborates on this dilemma rather well.

There are many tensions in writing, tensions that can be silencing. Many of these surface as we struggle with writing to the people who may read our work. 'The act of writing is addressing the silence of the unknown reader' (Morgan, 1992p.193). I am one of the readers for whom I write. In writing I clarify my thoughts, understand and know myself better. I also take a risk as I make myself visible to you and myself. In writing I make myself vulnerable. Imaginary readers in 'authority' who will judge this work threaten nebulously ... The tension, then, is being true to myself and being accessible to others while at the same time being able to connect with, be understood and validated by those in authority. I experience this tension as a never-ending compromise. I have to be accepted, if I am to be heard, from both within and without. Thus I very rarely end up saying what I want to; the sharp, adversarial edges have by necessity been rubbed smooth (Horsefall, 2001:86).

Hence Horsfall's comments may be usefully related to feminist ethnography. For example, Woolf asserted that feminists need to be sensitive "to power as a factor in all our research" (1992:135). This most certainly appears to be the case. For I too (as feminist ethnographer) have had endless debates with myself with regard to the applicability of "intense reflexivity in [my] research and writing [as to whether it] will be evaluated as being in the post-modernist mode or as tentative and self doubting" (Woolf, 1992:135) by those in positions of academic authority. I have pondered on the difficulties of writing about a field as diverse as New Age healing with its shifting sand of individual epistemologies and ways of being. Where should one start? Where finish?

Who am I to define such boundaries in the first place? However, I am a healer and I want to tell the stories of other women healers in Scotland. Therefore throughout this work I have also become very aware of the difficulties of writing up 'the other' – for the other is also me. And I have attempted to “design [a feminist] research project[s] that women want and need” (Mascia-lees, Sharpe and Cohen, 1989:23). However I have not forgotten that my writing is only “truth-in-the moment...[for I know that] ‘there is no absolute truth when it comes to how we remember the past’” (Horsfall quoting hooks, 1992:xix). I have written about lived experiences in the field. These are not fixed on paper until I put them there.

So let us now return to the wider evaluation of the linkage between healing and gender roles, which I shall relate to my findings in the Scottish context. For as McGuire has stated, religions, quasi religions and healing movements all “raise some interesting interpretative questions about the linkage between religion and gender role, between religious practice and the socialising of emotions and bodies, and about diverse religious responses to fluid or uncertain societal and cultural definitions of maleness and femaleness” (1994:273).

Gendered spiritualities

Meredith McGuire proposes that many “religious and quasi-religious groups are addressing adherents' gender concerns by offering new images of what it means to be a man or a woman and creating rituals and other opportunities for gender identity transformation”(1994:274). She focuses particularly on groups where the gendered self is seen to be intimately tied to the spiritual self. Correspondingly gendered spiritualities allow room for the individual to re-interpret, revise and transform their own

biographies. However, she argues, these gendered spiritualities are not accidentally formed with eclectic picking and mixing from 'spiritual supermarkets'. Rather "they are closely linked with the changing locations and functions of religion, as a social institution, in modern society" (ibid).

Specifically I would argue that emerging gender issues are the epitome of contemporary gender concerns. Sociological analysis of gendered spirituality may shed light on new patterns of individual-to-society relationships, the changing nature of identity and autonomy in modern contexts, and how religion (in both traditional and new forms) shapes and reflects these changes. Gendered spirituality may be a prime example of what Hervieu-Leger (1990) has identified as a 'new work' for religion to accomplish (1994:247).

In order to examine the development of new and empowered gendered identities in New Age networks in Scotland, I am going to return to the questions I raised at the beginning of this thesis. Gender, "as an analytical category" (1986:1055) will, as Scott suggests, remain central throughout this project of constructing a decentralised narrative of power relations in healing circles. My four questions were,

- 1) If New Age healers promote the balancing of 'masculine' and 'feminine' elements within the individual, then who promotes this sort of standpoint and why? How does this relate to representations of the body "as energetic"?
- 2) If healers promote new forms of gender identity, how does this relate "to assertions of power, authority and privilege" (McGuire, 1994:284)?

- 3) How do healers/healees form new conceptions of health and disease? How does this relate to re-inscriptions of the body and discourses of power?

- 4) Are New Age women engaged in a politics of reclamation with regard to healing practice and theologies of the same? How does this relate to the corresponding development of new and empowered identities “as healer”?

In order to answer the first of these questions, I am going to review representations of the human body as provided by healers in the Scottish field and as found in textual material. I shall commence with Barbara Ann Brennan's representations of the human body, which she couches in terms of “reading the aura and the chakras” and “life and world tasks”. And I shall refer to her gendered descriptions of sending healing energy of particular colours, the creator and channelled spirit guides. My first question was,

1) If New Age healers promote the balancing of 'masculine' and 'feminine' elements within the individual, then who promotes this sort of standpoint and why? How does this relate to representations of the body “as energetic”?

Barbara Ann Brennan

In Chapter Three of this thesis I presented a primarily descriptive account of several energetic workshops held at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh. The first of these was based on the interpretative frameworks of Barbara Ann Brennan and very much emphasised experiential practice. Participants would learn to see or feel the energetic body and become able to detect blockages and damage in the same. Key themes here were that “the aura shows all thoughts and emotions” (WMH: 2001:2) and may be

seen as a flowing field of colours. Negative emotions cause dis-ease to manifest in the body. Healing and therapeutic practices such as reflexology may help to clear the body of such negative emotions and return the body to “a state of balance and health. In most instances we are unconscious of what is happening, and healing is about us becoming conscious of what we are holding and doing in life” (ibid).

The process of healing was couched very much in an evolutionary sense. The person (with the guidance of a healer initially) must learn the task that they were reincarnated in this life to learn. Each person has a life or personal task where the aim is to “express a new part of one’s identity” (Brennan, 1988:109) and a world task. “The world task is a gift that each soul carries into the physical world to give to the world” (ibid). Hence, as McGuire has suggested, new images are provided of what it is to be a man or a woman. For from Brennan’s perspective, health is intimately related to all of the energy flows in the body being balanced and in harmony. When this occurs, “The soul has learnt its particular lesson and, therefore, has more cosmic truth” (ibid). Brennan argues that the healer (and in turn the healee) can see in the aura what the life and soul tasks actually are. This can be achieved once the mind is cleared through a process of deep meditation.

Within Brennan and her colleague Pat de Vitalsis’s ontological frameworks, the colours of the aura have meaning. Accordingly, a lot of green in the aura would indicate the soul level of a healer with a lot of healing and nurturing energy. In turn, healing energy will be sent of a particular colour, this having very particular qualities. For example “Purple helps the patient connect to his spirit... Velvet black brings the patient into a state of grace, silence and peace with God. Purple-blue takes away pain when doing deep tissue work and work on the bone cells. It also helps expand the patient’s field in

order to connect to her task” (Brennan, 1988:238). However Brennan also adds here that she herself does not generally choose what colour of energy to send, though she can “sustain a color that comes through [me]” (ibid).

At a certain point in my healing career, the guides suggested that I start using black light. This seemed unusual to me, since the dark colours in the aura usually are associated with illness. This black however was not the black of cancer, but a velvet black, like black velvet silk. It is like the life potential held in the womb. It is the black mystery of the unknown feminine within all of us, which teems with undifferentiated life. Sitting within the black velvet void is another way to be at one with the creator, but this time without form. To sit within the black velvet void means sitting in silence and peace. It means completely being there, in fullness and without judgement. It means going into a state of Grace and bringing your patient into that Grace with you. It means completely accepting everything that is in that moment. Heyoan and other healing guides often sit in this place with cancer patients or other very serious illness for a whole hour at a time. It is very healing. It brings the patient into a state of oneness with the Divine (Brennan, 1988:240).

In the above discourse we see themes that resonate across Scottish healing circles.

- Living in the present (and not holding on to damaging thought processes).
- Living life in as full a manner as possible (by not being judgemental or holding on to judgemental critiques from another).
- Being at one with the creator as much as possible (by remembering who you are and doing your life and work tasks).
- And in listening to other sources of authority (such as spirit guides).

Michael Brown, having researched channelling in America, proposes that,

...channelling is dominated by women who find in communication with spirits a refuge from mainline religions that even today offer little scope for spiritual aspirations. Not only can female channels achieve the religious authority denied them elsewhere, they are free to embody male spirits or 'energies' in ways that many find liberating. Increasingly, both men and women involved in channelling are drawn to androgynous spirits that have moved beyond gender altogether (Brown, 1997:11).

Barbara Brennan has just such an androgynous spirit guide whose "unseen hand" has led her through her life as a healer. The importance of such guides to Brennan – and to many Scottish women and men 'doing' healing practice – should not be underestimated. Working with guides is regarded by many as being an integral part of healing self and healing others.

We are all guided by spiritual teachers who speak to us in our dreams, through our intuition and eventually, if we listen, they speak to us directly... These teachers are full of love and respect for us. At some point along the way, you, too, may be able to communicate with them as I do. This will change your life, for you will find that you are fully and completely loved (Brennan, 1988:16).

But let us for the moment return to Brennan's description of "the creator". In her discussion of healing colours she clearly signifies that "velvety blackness" is of a 'feminine nature'. When one sits in this black void one is with the creator, a creator who embodies life giving potential and mystery. We need to remember here that this is not an external deity. Deity resides within as without and is central to one's growth. This is a considerable move from mainstream Christian religious representations of deity and indeed of women's nature. For by locating the 'divine feminine' within,

women are provided with a simple and profitable, sacralised, model for life. By getting in touch with the inner feminine as nurturing and life giving, women feel empowered. Their bodies become vessels of growth not constraint. Agency as "spiritual being" is accomplished through the body. So while I have asked questions with regard to Brennan's framing of cosmic healing power within a Christian context (as noted in Chapter Three) it appears that she may well just be drawing from Christianity the 'symbol' of Christ as healer so that she can 'add' this to her experientially developed "sense of self" as balanced masculine and feminine energy.

The Goddess/God force is both black and white, both masculine and feminine. It contains both the white light and the black velvet void (Brennan, 1988:25).

In turn, in common with Scottish healing ontologies, the individual as balanced energetic being is regarded as connected to the earth as a whole, with the earth being often related to as Gaia and of the Goddess (as we saw in Chapter Seven where I reviewed dowsing as intuitive tool).

Maureen Lockhart

In Maureen Lockhart's Healing Circle, this too being held at The Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh, emphasis was placed on the cyclical nature of healing. Healing was also couched in the terms of the feminine and masculine. For in "the survival stage of healing, energy will be low... this is the dark side, the Mother side". In the inspirational side of the healing process you are "in the light side...the Father side". Health would occur, we were advised, when the both Mother and Father 'sides' were energetically united in the body through practices such as correct breathing. Descriptions of spirit guides in these workshops also included both male and female entities and non-

gendered 'images' of "Tibetan singing bowls", green and golden light and gifts of black feathers. The personal search for meaning then, reflects the historically constructed nature of the person involved and the areas to which the person will turn for spiritual guidance – shamanism, Buddhism and Native American being just a few examples here. The emphasis throughout learning to heal is that in order to affect positive change externally in one's life, there must first be an inner change towards harmony and balance of masculine and feminine. In general, in similarity to goddess spirituality, Wicca and women's spiritual groups, there is "a systematic deconstruction of the traditional perception of western culture and religion as the universal norm for humanity and the epitome of human progress" (Hanegraaff, 2002: 295).

Wholistics

A somewhat different model of the human being was presented at this workshop in Dunfermline. For, while emphasis was placed on the necessity of balance and harmony as facilitator for health, this was couched initially in more gender neutral terms. Healing, we were advised, would occur when the healer resonates with the universal frequency of the earth and the universe, as every person is part of the holographic whole. Hence there was no need to channel spiritual power, love or energy when doing healing work on others, but just be in harmonious balance with all energy in the universe. This positioning is rather different to that as found in the healing practice of Reiki, to which I will return shortly.

Our 'teacher' Bari, introduced four elements that make up the human whole; emotion, intellect, creativity and intuitiveness - these to be valued equally. In turn each person is composed energetically of a higher self, whole self and lower self and should be "in

accord with the yin and yang polarity of their energy field". It was in this area that we find his first comments on gender. For he argued that many men do not come to New Age workshops because they work more from their yang "doing" side and continually strive at the expense of balance. (It should be noted that this workshop was composed of six women). He also emphasised the importance of intentionality to healing in that a person will choose their life situation and either a state of balance, leading to health, or imbalance, leading to dis-ease. It is this sort of positioning that often leads to critiques by feminist writers. For to what extent do we really choose our life situation? Do women in actuality have as much freedom of choice as Bari would suggest? However Bari also located within the healing process the requirement for yin, earth healing energy to travel up the ha ra line (central energy channel) where it resonates with the Higher self, energy. This rather suggests that if a balance of yin and yang is necessary, then the higher self would need to be yang for this to be achieved. If so, then there might also be the potential for the location of spiritual 'higher self activities' within male paradigms. Further research in this area would hence be useful. However, let us move on to look at the healing practice of Reiki in relation to representations of balancing the masculine and feminine as part of healing practice.

Reiki

As I noted in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis, Reiki is a rapidly growing form of healing practice in Scotland. It is very difficult to quantify numbers of Reiki practitioners because most are not on 'registration lists' or in groups which are formally counted - and also because of the tendency by practitioners to mix Reiki with other healing modalities. However during the time I conducted this research, in my immediate rural area there are now four initiating Reiki Masters, two complementary health centres

where Reiki is on offer and a beauty salon with two practicing Reiki therapists (in combination with other treatments). As there are only ten thousand inhabitants in this particular area this suggests a high level of interest in this form of healing. In addition, local further education colleges (in Perth and Cupar) both offer courses in learning to become a Reiki practitioner. All of the Reiki Masters and the vast majority of Reiki practitioners noted above are women.

In relation to representations of the masculine and feminine, these were not usually explicitly referred to in Reiki healing circles. For when I asked one female practitioner if gender had any significance to healing practice, the response was “No, I don’t think that it does. Both men and women make equally good healers. It’s more down to practice and intention...the more you practice, the better you get at channelling energy”⁶⁰.

In order to find out more clearly how masculine and feminine elements of the human being are represented in Reiki, I turned to “teaching texts”. For this is one form of healing practice where texts are often used as a forerunner to experiential practice. It is also an area where a theological superstructure is being rewritten primarily by men – a point to which I shall return in the latter stages of this chapter where I engage with narratives of power.

⁶⁰ My couching of the question in this way was problematic in that it was not specific enough in relation to “the definition of gender” and the definition of “practice” (and about every word in between). On looking back at this, I recognise just how important it is to try and couch things ‘correctly’ – not always easy for a newcomer to the field learning qualitative methods “on the hoof”. But it also made me reflect on the potential for ‘silencing’ in questionnaires. My own questionnaire was very simple and was followed up with some phone interviews (see Appendix B). But even so, I set the agenda for what would be discussed and I am the one reporting the findings. My interpretation of the same will obviously also depend on my academic training and my ability to ‘accurately’ represent such findings in the written word.

When I first commenced my journey into Reiki healing I found no particular emphasis being placed on textual constructions of 'the masculine' and 'the feminine'. If any references were made to gender, they tended to be couched in terms of practice. For example, Fiona (my initiating Reiki Master) noted that sometimes women found it easier to learn to do hands-on healing work as they were more used to touching, holding and stroking the body due to their experiences of mothering. As Reiki Master and writer Frank Petter puts it "...women are ahead of us men in the art of touching. Because of their maternal instincts, their basic nature leads them to be willing to touch others, as well as themselves, in a loving way and without any sexual ulterior motives" (1999:20). We appear to have here interesting Reikian assumptions about the underlying nature of gender and sexuality. For are women being represented as sexual beings in relation to procreation only? If so, this is a significant difference to Goddess spiritualities where, as I observed in Chapter Two, the "Mother [is regarded as being] sexual, powerful, loving and demanding... a whole integrated adult" (Griffin, 2000:18).

In my early readings of Reiki training materials - from Fiona and William Rand, the founder of the International Center for Reiki Training - I again found no specific emphasis on Reiki as a form of gendered spirituality. Rather, focus was placed on the nature of healing energy and the energetic body, the Reiki symbols, Reiki history and the basics of healing practice. As I showed in Chapter Five, *Reiki* is represented in the following manner.

It is the God-Consciousness called Rei that *guides* the life energy called Ki in the practice of Reiki. Therefore, Reiki can be described as spiritually guided life energy.

This is a meaningful interpretation of the word Reiki. It more closely describes the

experience most people have of it ; Reiki guiding itself with its own wisdom, rather than requiring the direction of the practitioner (Rand, 1991:1-3, italics original).

Because Reiki is guided by God-consciousness, it can never do harm. It always knows what a person needs and will adjust itself to create an effect that is appropriate. One never needs worry whether to give Reiki or not. It is always helpful (Rand, 1991: 1-6).

As I also observed in Chapter Five, the writing 'of Reiki' is an ongoing process. It was not until 2001 (the year following my initiation into Reiki) that *The Spirit of Reiki, The Complete Handbook of the Reiki System* was published. The authors of this text, William Rand, Walter Lubeck and Frank Petter are described as world renowned Reiki Masters. Each interprets Reiki in their own distinct way while emphasising the need to transcend differences of opinion regarding the same. For tensions do arise between various Reiki traditions as to the most effective forms of healing practice, usage of the term Reiki itself, interpretations of history and significance of lineage. If we look at representations of the energetic body in the aforementioned book, we find healing ontologies based on Traditional Chinese Medicine and Qi Gong (Petter), Indian Chakra Systems, (Rand) and Japanese systems for describing Life Energies, (Lubeck).

This sort of appropriation of non-Western medical and religious traditions is common in Scottish healing circles and has strong resonances of Orientalism. For once transferred and translated out of 'native' contexts distortion often occurs in relation to foundational 'truths' and methods of practice. As Waterhouse states, "When words that express Buddhist truths are translated into English, they take on connotations which may be unintended and which are usually associated with the Christian doctrinal heritage" (2001:119). For example in Scottish healing circles it is very common to find meditation being promoted as a transformatory tool 'in its own right'. Yet few

healers/healees attend organised classes in the same (at least not in rural settings) and seem to prefer self-teach approaches to this practice. This they then mix with communing with Christian angels and the texts and the teachings of, for example, Sai Baba or Osho, these themselves being primarily aimed at western adherents. It is also rather usual to find particular aspects of Buddhist or Hindu thought being mixed and matched with psychological interpretations. This we saw with Brennan in her *Hands of Light* where she refers to “masochistic” or “schizoid” (1998:111) character types.

In relation to the practice of Reiki, here too we find Orientalist tendencies. For when Usui ‘rediscovered’ the Reiki symbols following his meditational fast on Mount Kurama, these have been described by writers such as Stein as being of Sanskrit origin and translations of the healing teachings of Jesus while in India. However, while at the ‘higher’ level of Master teaching and writing authors such as Rand, Lubeck and Petter and Stein do emphasise the significance of deeper symbol interpretation as a transformatory path in its own right, (See Chapter Six of this thesis), we also found that this was not necessarily the case with the “grass roots practitioner”. For at the local level Reiki symbols are utilised for practical healing and not theological debate. Therefore, though “world renowned” Reiki Masters such as Lubeck, Petter and Rand continue to rewrite Reiki theology, often locating this within older religious traditions such as Buddhism – which have been evaluated by writers such as Campbell (1996) and Grosz (1993) as patriarchal in nature and practice – this is not to say that women cannot re-appropriate for themselves elements of the same which they find personally empowering. Therefore I would argue that the appropriation of aspects of non-western medical and religious traditions has a lot to do with re-significations of power and re-defined individual to society relationships. In order to elaborate on this more fully I am now going to draw in the second question that I raised in Chapter One namely,

2) If healers promote new forms of gender identity, how does this relate to "assertions of power, authority and privilege" (McGuire, 1994:284)

Let me first return to Paul Heelas in relation to the above question. For he has argued that underpinning much New Age thought and practice are three "self-ethics", which I introduced in Chapter Two of this thesis. These are, Heelas states, "your lives do not work, you are gods and goddesses in exile and let go/drop it "(1996:18-20) and that these relate to New Age teachers' emphasis on "religions of the self". Correspondingly New Age teachers set up contexts where a person may look within him or herself for sources of authority, rather than turning to traditional forms of religion. (1996:23). In this he is correct. But it must also be noted that it is not uncommon for these same teachers to be repeatedly visited at considerable financial expense in order to clarify 'the authenticity' and 'correct' way of following "self as own authority".

In relation to Heelas' "your lives do not work" self ethic, I argued that all of the points he raised related to the motifs of "power", "desire" and "lack" and that these motifs must be approached from a gender perspective. For example, Heelas proposed that a common refrain running through New Age thought was that human beings malfunction because they have been "brainwashed" by society and find themselves located within societally ordained roles. Here emphasis is placed on competitiveness, materialism, behaving as one has been taught by parents, educational systems and other institutions. In turn, it becomes impossible to live as authentic human beings (1996:18).

For radical feminist Mary Daly, this sort of 'lack of authenticity' would relate to a patriarchal society where women are constrained and contained within misogynist

systems – these occurring in all aspects of life. I, however, would argue for a more decentralised and nuanced narrative of power. For while without doubt patriarchy may be found within most countries' religious, educational and societal systems, they are often vigorously and/or subtly contested by women and indeed by some men. For example, in non-medical and 'spiritual' healing circles, people do resist traditional bio-medical and religious (in Scotland, predominantly Christian) significations of the body, emotions, and ways of being. In turn, new conceptualisations of "what it is to be a human being" are developed and these intimately relate to agency and authority. Hence, as Scott has argued, changes in social relationships also lead to changes in significations of power and new forms of subjectivity.

As I have already observed throughout this thesis, men and women in healing circles have also developed new ideas of being healthy and whole. These are often based on getting back in touch with "the intuitive self" often aided by spirit guides, these guides in turn assisting in healing practice. This is not to say, as McGuire also observes, that bio-medical approaches to health are rejected in totality. Rather, a synthesis is developed between the two with healing practice being regarded as "an enabler" for the body to self-heal (as we saw in Chapter Seven with John MacManaway's comments on the same, John being of the Westbank Natural Health Centre in rural Fife). McGuire also argues that,

In seeking healing, most respondents make no clear distinctions among physical, emotional, relationship or other problems. Healing was the appropriate response to virtually every problem; holism reduced the boundaries and made it meaningless to segregate, for example, emotional from physical healing (McGuire, 1998:186).

Hence any “healing work” is linked to power and authority as located within the self. It goes without saying that for the New Ager, once power and authority are located within the self then one becomes responsible for “the right use” of such power. For healers commonly acknowledge that they are in a position of privilege in relation to the unenlightened mainstream of society and hence hope that their ways of being as “informed healers” will have a positive effect on society as a whole. This standpoint, as I have noted, was of particular relevance to Reiki healers. For Reiki is very much regarded as a spiritual path and as a way of life. Therefore lifestyle choices become significant factors in the healing process. Note, however, how Walter Lubeck represents Reiki.

As a healing method for the body and mind, Reiki requires at its basis the participation in the appropriate initiations and training in the use of spiritual life energy. This training includes the following, among other things: the whole body treatment, aura work, intuitive Reiki, harmonization of the chakras, special positions for the specific treatments of certain health disorders, as well as rules for a healthy diet and a constructive lifestyle.

However, if you would like Reiki to bring harmony to your soul and guide you on the path to the light, something else will be necessary: knowledge about the mystic aspect of the Usui System of Natural Healing (Lubeck, 2001:245).

In the above we find represented a very particular way of negating – or at least appreciating – why “your lives do not work” (Heelas’ first self-ethic). In order for life to work, that is, for it to be a harmonious holistic whole, one needs to follow the Reiki life path. In order to no longer be “gods and goddesses in exile” (Heelas’ second self-ethic) one must learn Reiki as a “path to the light” (Lubeck, 2001:45). One must let go and drop (Heelas’ third self-ethic) faulty ways of living and replace these with

knowledge of Reiki as a mystical path. This sort of thinking is a significant departure from bio-medical approaches to health and is an implicit critique of the same in that “the whole person” is not treated, just the body or the mind. But let me add a little more to the above quotation. Lubeck continues, in relation to the mystic aspects of Usui Reiki, that

Up to a few years ago, very little was known about this in the West. But through intensive research, a significant amount of which was based on the work of Frank Arjava Petter, it was possible to also shed light on this foundation of Mikao Usui's lifework. In addition to the life principles, the central themes of the mystic path of Reiki include meditation, the esoteric meaning of the Reiki symbols, and the *waka* that Mikao Usui used to teach his students; these are the spiritual diadetic poems written by the Meiji emperor, who Mikao Usui greatly valued (Lubeck, 2001:245).

Here we see that assertions of authority are located in several tiers: Frank Petter's interpretation of the mystic path and life principles (these being written on Usui's gravestone in a Buddhist cemetery in Toyko), interpretation of the Reiki symbols (Lubeck's evaluation being rooted in 300 BCE Confucian philosophy), correct meditational practice (Buddhism), and Usui's *waka* (the Meiji Emperor, nineteenth century Japan). It appears therefore, that though authority may lie within the self, according to these male writers, the self must be developed by subscribing to older traditions where patriarchy had a considerable hold at all levels of society. For Reiki is very much a product of a particular historical context.

For example, following on from Mikao Usui as President of the Usui Reiki Ryoho we find four high-ranking officers in the Japanese Navy, with two Rear Admirals and one Vice Admiral. On the other hand, Japanese society today is still firmly hierarchical with

women being firmly associated with the family and the home. Will there be - if women are located in such a way - a progressive shift in emphasis for Western women Reiki practitioners, to be similarly located? Will this mean that the role of carer and nurturer is presented by male Reiki writers as the 'correct' mode of being for women healers? How does this relate to representations of the woman as 'naturally maternal' as noted earlier in this chapter in relation to Frank Petter? For as I observed in Chapter Five, Japanese Reiki Master Hiroshi Doi, stated that the absent healing symbol "can be sent to your children studying upstairs...[and to] your husband sleeping in the living room" (2000:88).

As I also noted earlier, I found little emphasis on the masculine and feminine in Reiki theology. What, then, does this say about a 'new religious practice' where women predominate at the grass roots level? Is this a positive step towards androgynous spirituality in similarity to the earlier noted significance on androgynous spirit guides? For as Brown has noted, these androgynous guides were regarded as empowering for men and women in American channelling circles.

The purpose of channelling – and by extension, other forms of New Age spirituality – is to bring together elements ripped apart by Western civilisation: science and religion, body and soul, culture and nature, male and female, reason and intuition, thought and matter. Where one half of a dichotomy has overpowered the other, channelling tries to strengthen the weaker partner (1997:48).

I feel that a lot of New Age healers in Scotland would very much agree with Brown's findings. For considerable emphasis is placed on "strengthening the 'weaker' partner". Those of a feminist persuasion, however, might be a little more wary. For by inference, the "weaker partner" is woman. Yet again woman is located as intuitive, natural and

matter bound while men are to be seen as of the intellect, rational, and coming from traditions of reason, science and culture. Therefore it would be wise to keep a very close eye on practices such as Reiki in the future to see just what happens in relation to the empowerment of women and the rewriting of Reiki theology.

This continued observation might also take as a referential starting point feminist critiques of Christianity and "the lack of female presence". Mary Daly, for example, argues that,

Western society is still possessed overtly and subliminally by christian symbolism, and this State of Possession has extended its influence over most of the planet. Its ultimate symbol of processions is the all male trinity itself.⁶¹ Of obvious significance here is the fact that this is an image of the procession of a divine son from a divine father (no mother or daughter involved). In this symbol the first person, the father is the origin who thinks forth the second person, the son, the word, who is the perfect image of himself, who is 'co-eternal' and 'consubstantial' that is identical in essence. So total is their union that their 'mutual love' is expressed in procession (known as 'spiration') of a third person called the 'Holy Spirit' whose proper name is 'Love'. This naming of 'the three Divine Persons' is the paradigmatic model for the pseudogeneric term *person*, excluding all female reality in the cosmos (1991:37-38).

Or we might engage with Monica Sjoo's critiques of the New Age movement as being full of patriarchal thinking, for emphasis is placed on "light gods and light sons...[and] Brotherhoods behind the scenes pulling the strings" (1994:22). Sjoo further states that within New Age networks we will find deity being represented as "light and shining" (1994:25) as "transcendent, disembodied male father spirit, god...[and] "not of the

⁶¹ Daly emphasises that "patriarchal society revolves around myths of Processions. Earthly processions both generate and reflect the image of procession from and return to God the father" (1991:37).

earth" (ibid). I would agree that there is considerable emphasis in Scotland on "love, light and power" - particularly in Reiki. However this is not the picture in totality as we have seen. For within Reikian circles we also find practitioners following on from Diane Stein in 're-appropriating' a modern variation of one of the Reiki symbols – the Master Symbol, the Dai-Ko Myo. This is the symbol that is both used for healing and the transmission of Reiki attunements (initiation into Reiki). Stein states that after she had received the traditional symbol from her Reiki teacher, this woman then suggested that she try this modern form. Stein states that she was initially reluctant to use this new symbol since the older form worked well for her. However once tried, she "never returned to the Traditional form" (1995:96).

The new symbol required no memorisation – it was as I had always known it – my first thought upon seeing it was, 'Of course, it's the Goddess' spiral'. In using it for attunements, I discovered it to be far more powerful and vastly more easy-flowing than the original Dai-Ko-Myo. When I used both on students and asked them to compare them, everyone liked the newer symbol better. It felt clearer, simpler, stronger to them, as it did to me (1995:97).

For Stein, when she uses this symbol in healing sessions, "life changes" and "miracles" (1995:98) most often occur as this symbol heals disease from the "highest source...[for] its focus is healing the soul" (ibid). Its focus is on healing the spiritual level of the etheric body

However, Diane Stein has also disclosed the Reiki symbols – including the Master's initiation symbols – and the techniques for Reiki initiations/attunements in print (as we saw in Chapter Six). For she has argued that the "Goddess gift of Reiki" (1995:2)

should be available to all and not solely to those initiated into Reiki. This disclosure has been heavily critiqued in Reiki circles. For at the present time in the West, a Master may only transmit these symbols to the initiated student in a vertical hierarchy after 'correct' training. The initiate does not see this process, and will only be shown the first three symbols upon initiation to Second Degree Reiki. They are then clearly told not to disclose these symbols to the uninitiated. As Rand puts it,

By keeping the symbols secret you demonstrate respect for them... Since the power of the symbols comes from the attunement, showing them to others who have not received the attunement will not help them and will cause confusion (1991:11-5)

It is not immediately apparent why this secrecy is so necessary and why seeing the symbols would cause confusion to the uninitiated. For if, as Rand has stated "without the attunement the symbols don't appear to do much " (ibid), then perhaps this portrayed need for secrecy has a lot more to do with the dynamics of power and authority in the teaching context than with the symbols themselves. Further, as my Reiki Master had also informed me that she had drawn Mickey Mouse – rather than the Reiki symbols themselves when doing a healing – and that this "had worked just as well", then one wonders about the need for symbol usage in the first place. And, if all people can heal, this being commonly stated in New Age circles, and if initiation into Reiki just heightens this ability, then this discourse may really be about representing Reiki as "better and more powerful" than other healing practices. For tensions do abound with regard to the efficiency of various healing practices in the Scottish context. For example John MacManaway of the Westbank Centre did not regard Reiki favourably, for he saw "many Reiki healers with energy depletion problems". Now this is a very significant critique of Reiki, for one of the primary 'selling points' of this

healing modality is that 'personal energy' is not depleted in the healing process as the person is purely a channel for God guided Ki as I observed in Chapter Five.

But let us return to Diane Stein once more. For it is predominantly Reiki Masters who critique her disclosure of the symbols and not the grass roots practitioner. For many women Reiki healers, her *Essential Reiki* is a focal point on their own healing journey. In fact I lost count of the number of women practitioners who recommended this book to me as an inspirational read. Why? Because she couches the significance of healing practice very much as "coming from the Goddess", while her critiques of power, authority and privilege are wide ranging. Stein regards the earth and all its inhabitants as going through a process of rebirth. "We are in a time of death, and in a time when new life is beginning. The leaders of nations are helpless as are medical authorities to ease the change and pain that no one is exempt from. Misogyny, homophobia, religious intolerance, every sort of discrimination and racism are reactions to this pain and helplessness – futile attempts to find someone (anyone) to blame for it" (1995:141). However, she argues that a new awareness is now being born and that this can be seen in the shift in authority from "'out there' in government and medicine to power from within" (ibid). Here women's voices are of particular significance "Women are refusing to accept the rape of their own bodies, their children and the Earth, and they are insisting on equality, common sense, sustenance and healing" (1995:142). Her critique of medicine is a position commonly held in Scottish healing circles. For she argues that it is over-technological, aloof and lacking in compassion, "treating the body as a dead machine" (ibid). Correspondingly,

There is a resurgence of methods taken from women and the common people by the Inquisition in the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries, and a resurgence of other non-invasive methods of the present and past... They are effective tools and often succeed

where the medical system fails...Reiki is one such method, a major and important one. No tools or products are required, only the healer's hands, and it can be used as part of any other method of healing...Simple and profound, Reiki teaches a basic treatment useful for any dis-ease – emotional, mental, physical or spiritual. It is easily taught. It is part of women's empowerment in an age of powerlessness and fear. Reiki is a return to the ancient past and a birthing of the unknown future.

This is a call to action, for women and aware men, for healers, peace workers and light/information workers. This is a call to action – to bring Reiki back to people and make it universal as it was meant to be. Heal the people of this planet, heal the animals, heal the Earth. Heal human awareness. Do Reiki and teach Reiki to manifest peace, healing, wellbeing and change. The techniques are now in print for the first time, there is no more secrecy or exclusiveness ... Remember the qualities of kindness, compassion and oneness that are the basis for Reiki and all healing (Stein, 1995:142).

So let me round up so far how new forms of gendered identity as "holistic being" in Reiki circles relate to assertions of power, authority and privilege. There appears to be, as we have seen, an emphasis for male Reiki writers to evaluate the Reiki symbols in their older Chinese, Japanese or shamanistic forms. These are hence based in systems where patriarchy held sway. At the same time these same writers critique western, predominantly American, representations of a 'Christianised' Reiki as we saw in Chapter Five. Here I told how Reiki writers such as Shuffrey (1998) and Hall (1997) emphasise Mikao Usui's involvement with Christian universities in Japan and America. This led Petter, for example, to argue that "the seemingly Christian aspects of Reiki were added in America to make Reiki more acceptable to Christian countries" (1997:19). Reiki's transmission to the West was through a Japanese woman immigrant in Hawaii, Hawayo Takata. She emphasised the oral nature of the Reiki tradition and

the memorisation of symbols. It was not until the mid 1980s that Reiki teaching moved into a written format. Takata also charged high fees for Reiki attunements hence restricting the number of students. This also altered in the 1980s with initiation fees being lowered to encourage more students to learn Reiki. Japanese schools of Reiki remain closed to Western practitioners as Western forms of Reiki are regarded as 'corrupted'.

Reiki is passed to the student in the attunements/initiations. The efficiency of the Master in transmitting the symbols to the initiate is assessed in relation to their Reiki lineage. For the most authoritative Masters are perceived to be those that have come down from the Usui or Hayashi or similar. As Shuffrey puts it "The Lineage Bearer embodies the essence of the system and with great conscience maintains its purity, simplicity, and upholds to inspire others to their own integrity, as indeed I do" (1998:31). This is why I and several other Second Degree practitioners were asked to leave the room when Masters symbols were discussed at The Salisbury Centre Reiki workshops (see Chapter Five of this thesis).

On the other hand we have women like Stein who implicitly critique the secrecy and symbol usage in Reiki by returning to the Goddess as a central 'power figure' in their Reiki practice. For Stein subscribes to the viewpoint – based on channelled information – that "Reiki was brought to Earth with the first people to incarnate in bodies. Shiva brought the healing energy and wants to be remembered for it" (1995:140). Hence she opens up the doors for those who wish to learn Reiki but are financially unable to do so.

It is perhaps within the realm of channelling then, that New Age women and men find an area of considerable possibility for personal empowerment. For, as we have seen' channelling appears to provide individuals with the opportunity to create their own realities. For as described in Chapter Three, teachers such as Barbara Brennan and Maureen Lockhart both espoused the merits of listening to spirit guides to enable growth on one's spiritual path. They also promoted the benefits of having such guides' help while doing healing work. Hence individuals who have the ability to channel build for themselves new worlds of energetic meaning and an expanded sense of self. For, as Brown has found in the American context, channelling also provides women with the opportunity to "achieve the religious authority denied them elsewhere, they are free to embody male spirits or 'energies' in ways that they find liberating. The complex play in sexual identities in channelling offers unexpected insight into the emotional struggles of middle-class Americans as they try to survive the gender wars of our times" (1997:11).

Yet some Reiki Masters also critique the authenticity of channelled information. Frank Petter, for example, argues that "Channelling has nothing to do with Reiki. With Reiki we channel universal life energy, not entities, gods, or spirits. In order to channel Reiki energy, no preparation other than the Reiki initiations is necessary" (1997:93). This is a position often held in Scottish healing circles. For not all practitioners receive channelled information. However, we need to remember that Reiki is often carried out as part of other 'treatments', where it is regarded as enhancing. Hence we find Reiki practitioners 'doing Reiki' alongside reflexology, Indian head massage and, in my immediate area, as part of beauty therapies. I noted, for example, in Chapter Three of this thesis, that at Maureen Lockhart's Healing Circle we found a woman Reiki practitioner in her thirties called Sue. This woman experienced a 'spirit visit' from "a

female child" who gave her a "white rose and chalice" which she felt symbolised "purity of spirit". In turn, Maureen interpreted these "images" as archetypal and to be found when one connected to the Higher Self while in an altered state of consciousness following meditation. Therefore for Sue, having now 'discovered' her spirit guide, she had a 'helper' to assist in Reiki practice. This she felt to be empowering and proof of her ongoing 'spiritual development'.

However, Frank Petter also suggests that if "channelling happens to you...it would probably be best, too, to find a spiritual master to verify your experience or at least find a true and experienced channeller to help you on your way" (1997:94). Hence once more we find emphasis being placed on finding an authoritative teacher to ascertain whether "self experience" is authentic. I would argue therefore, that discourses of power are a central feature of all healing practice in the Scottish context, for here, power is not "unified, coherent and centralised" (Scott, 1986:1067) but fluidly malleable and discursively constituted. Healers are not subsumed in totality in patriarchal systems, rather they develop personal 'ways of being' based on experiential practice as "active healing agents". They are perennialists. They go beyond traditions as normally conceived to find the "inner esoteric core" (Heelas, 1996:28). Hence even though Reiki Masters such as Lubeck, Petter and Rand rewrite Reiki theology it is still up to the individual "to discern – by way of their own experience, their gnosis or experiential knowledge - those spiritual truths which lie at the heart of, say, Vedanta or shamanism. And although these truths - by virtue of their intrinsic nature - exercise authority, they do not curtail the authority of the New Ager's Self: the truths within the 'traditions' and within the New Ager are the same" (ibid).

For it is in the field that healing takes place and not in the pages of a text. So while, yes, one could argue that in the macro context Reiki symbols are being reinterpreted by men predominantly for teaching purposes, women vastly outnumber men in healing practice at the micro level and can utilise symbols, spirit guides and develop forms of healing practice as they wish. At the 'grass roots level', healing is 'done' by women for women. I am now going to bring in my third question as voiced in Chapter One of this thesis, namely,

3) How do healers/healees form new conceptions of health and disease. How does this relate to reinscriptions of the body and discourses of power?

Throughout this chapter I have flagged up that power is a central element of healing practice, this being the power that heals, the power to heal, and perceptions of being healed. As part of this we have seen how there are multivalent discourses relating to, for example, the authority and authenticity of symbols, spirit guides and written knowledge. However discourses of power also are intimately related to academic writing on the New Age and healing. Take for example Wouter Hanegraaff's usage of Kleinman's theoretical distinction between illness and disease (as presented in Chapter Four of this thesis). This is summarised as follows.

DISEASE refers to abnormalities in the structure and/or function of organs and organ systems; pathological states whether or not they are culturally recognised; the arena of the biomedical model.

ILLNESS refers to a person's perception and experience of certain socially disvalued states including, but not limited to, disease. (Kleinman in Hanegraaff, 1998:42)

Hanegraaff regarded his academic appraisal of this definition in relation to healing to be more precise than emic evaluations of the same. However I had found this definition to be problematic. For in the Scottish context, healers describe the “dis-eased body” as being the “not at ease with itself”. Dis-ease is not, within healing frameworks, solely a pathological state. Rather, as we have seen, the dis-eased person is regarded as being “out of harmony” with his or her spiritual path. This Brennan called the “life task”, while for Myss it was a “sacred contract”. Being in a non-harmonious, un-balanced state was also related by healers to feelings of being out of control, de-valued and not at ease with the self.

Hanegraaff hence provides us, in relation to the above definition, a useful example of how an academic may locate a medical anthropological interpretative framework ‘over’ emic evaluations and perceptions. For, as noted throughout this thesis, a person visiting a healer in the Scottish context is usually suffering physically and will have visited their medical practitioner and have found his or her treatment in some way lacking. They may have been ‘cured’ by the medical practitioner of some acute symptoms - these indicating some pathological malfunction, to use Kleinman's terminology – but they still will not feel healed. And as “some kinds of sickness episodes also perform an ontological role – communicating and affirming important ideas about the real world” (Young cited in McClain, 1989:8), then how these episodes are dealt with can also tell us a lot about gendered ideas of health, healing and “being at ease with one’s self”. But let us return, for the moment, to an evaluation of *curing*, bio-medical models of health.

From a bio-medical perspective the treatment of disease is predominantly concerned with the curing of bodies and minds so enabling the person to return to society where

he or she can usefully contribute to that system. Throughout the curing process the medical practitioner's knowledge is generally located 'over' that of the patient. And this is why sociologists of medicine and medical practice find a Foucauldian analysis of power "particularly useful in understanding the functions of the medical profession and the related spheres of psychiatry" (Turner, 1997:xi). I would however, like to reiterate here that this thesis is not a project in applying Foucauldian thought. Rather, I am interested in how sociologists of medicine and ethnographers of alternative religions engage with Foucault in relation to the dynamics of power and the body and the applicability of these perspectives to New Age healing practices.

As I observed in Chapter Four, Foucault sees power as operating at the local micro level where it may be typically disguised in the social system and embodied in day-to-day practices. Power, for Foucault, was not to be regarded as coming from a central point from which "secondary and descendant forms would emanate" (Foucault, 1994:163). Rather power's "condition of possibility" (ibid) lies in fluid, unequal, unstable, local force relations, where it is continually produced and exercised in innumerable day-to-day interactions. In the clinic, hospital or medical setting this will be through the practices of doctors, social workers and other medical professionals all of whom will, in their discursive evaluations of the patient, "produce identities or roles [for that patient]...these identities...then become the object and focus of medicalisation and normalisation" (Turner, 1997:xii). For power is always exercised with a set of aims and objectives (Foucault, 1994:164). This, as far as healing practitioners would be concerned, would very much relate to bio-medical approaches to health negating "the spiritual" as a factor that influences health. Hence the healers I have met would agree, I feel, with Diane Treacy-Cole when she states that "One might rightly ask whether the dismissal of religion/spirituality from consideration [as a factor that influences health]

serves the interests of the patient, or merely serves the self-interest of academic medicine" (2001:141).

Sociologist Brian Turner states that the medical sociology inspired by Foucault is now highly critical of the power dynamics of the medical institution. For professionals in this field "discipline individuals and exercise surveillance over everyday life in such a way that actions are both constrained and produced by them" (Turner, 1997:xiv). The patient is observed from a position of medical rationality where the "sovereign power of the empirical gaze" (Foucault, 1989:xv) holds sway. S/he is held in a dependent position awaiting the doctor's signification of disease and treatment of the same. Throughout the patient's course of treatment, and particularly at the time of their discharge, there may also be put forward 'lifestyle choices' to enable a 'healthy life'. Adherence to these 'choices' depends on the patient's belief in the authority of medical knowledge as truth and in the "moral authority" of the medical professional based on institutional training. Hence as Turner proposes, "medicine and religion exercise a hegemonic authority because their coercive character is often disguised and masked by their normative involvement in the troubles and problems of individuals. They are coercive, normative and voluntary" (1997:xiv).

As I have observed throughout this thesis, New Agers often resist the hegemonic authority of medical institutions. This often relates to the perception that the 'medicalised body' is depersonalised and powerless. Of equal significance, however, is the belief that bio-medical institutions have difficulty in acknowledging and treating conditions "that are not purely biophysical in manifestation and cause" (McGuire, 1998:203). Correspondingly psychosomatic dis-ease may be signified as less, by the medical professionals, with religious/spiritual belief being regarded as outwith the

realm of medical intervention. Hence the body becomes the domain of medical surveillance and the soul/spiritual – the church. For New Agers, this is highly problematic in that holism holds centre court in all evaluations of health and well being as does a wish to, for some, find a higher synthesis of science and spirituality. However, medical science's exclusion of the spiritual as a factor in ill health may now be changing. For as Diane Treacy-Cole has found, there is also an increasing number of bio-medical practitioners interested in the possible connections between spiritual/religious beliefs and medicine.

She also proposes that it is science, and not religion or theology, which is setting the agenda for investigations into health and spirituality. Scientific and medical researchers are now "willing, and increasingly able, to explore the new frontier of mind/body/spirit interrelations. Spirituality and healing in medicine is no longer a mere curiosity, but has become something of a demand. Medicine and religion are entering a new dynamic of mutual respect and enquiry" (2001:148). Now this is a thought provoking statement. For "Despite opposition from a not insignificant number of medical researchers, Levin, Benson, Koenig and their colleagues have identified and are substantiating their observations [on the relatedness of spirituality and healing to health] following sound scientific methodology" (Treacy-Cole, 2001:145). Benson, for example, was at time of writing, MD of Harvard University Medical School. He states that following twenty years of medical research,

More and more I have become convinced that our bodies are wired to benefit from exercising not just our muscles but our rich human inner core – our belief, values, thoughts and feelings. I was reluctant to explore these factors because philosophers and scientists have, through the ages, considered them intangible and unmeasurable, making any study of them 'unscientific' (Benson, 1996:50).

But explore them he does. Benson has also organised twice yearly symposia under the wing of the Harvard Medical School from 1995, topics including the “physiological, neurological and psychological effects of healing resulting from spirituality, and the power and biology of belief” (Treacy-Cole, 2001:144). Much of this research is based on a bottom up collection of evidence – that is “researchers’ contact with individuals whose health has been positively affected by religion or spirituality” (ibid). Hence as Foucault has proposed, power’s “conditions of possibility” (Foucault, 1994:164) lies in fluid, unequal, unstable, local force relations where it is continually produced and exercised in innumerable day to day interactions. The individual believer forces the system as a whole to take a look at its long held rationalist presumptions, claims to truth and the power that goes hand in hand with such authorised truths.

Now Treacy-Cole also raises a further couple of interesting points. She proposes that, while medical researchers are interested in spirituality and health, mainstream Protestant Christian religious denominations are predominantly not. Yet even here, we find a bottom up power dynamic. For the Right Rev. John Perry, Bishop of Chelmsford and chair of the Churches Council for Health and Healing states that there has been “a considerable growth in interest in healing inside and outside the church in the last twenty years” (in Treacy-Cole, 2001:147). I would argue that this relates very much to a critique of the perceived loss of instrumental function *in relation to healing* in the mainstream Church. For mainstream Protestant churches still ‘pay lip service’ to healing services, favouring rather a twentieth century theology which accepts the view “that no supernatural agency could break through natural law. The notion of wellness being wired into biology had not yet been mooted” (Treacy-Cole, 2001:146). Treacy-Cole hence observes that,

The affirmations of growth in Christian spirituality and healing today still come from outside the churches and the academy [academic study of religion]. The public concessions made by the *spokesmen* [italics original] quoted are not substantiated, an omission all the more glaring in contrast to the increased body of evidence presented by researchers in spirituality and healing in medicine (Treacy-Cole, 2001:148)

It would be interesting to note whether the absence of women's voices in positions of authority in the church is reflected in those that are attending and demanding healing services. It would also be useful to reflect on where women are going specifically to find such healing ministries. For McGuire found faith healing a significant feature of Pentecostal (working class), neo-pentecostal (middle class) and charismatic Christian healing groups (predominantly middle class) in America. It has, however, been outwith the remit of this particular research to engage with Scottish, Christian healing groups – this would be valuable ethnographic research for the future. So let us now return briefly to bio-medical evaluations of health and critiques of the same, before we return to specific examples of energetic conceptions of health and dis-ease and how these relate to power.

For Mary Daly, once a woman enters a bio-medical setting she becomes the victim of violent and oppressive patriarchal practice. "Reduced to a state of an empty vessel/vassal, the victim focuses desperately upon physical symptoms, therapeutically misinterpreted memories, and 'appearance' frantically consuming medication [and] counsel" (1991:233). She further argues that women pursue ideals of "man-made femininity, the normal state of feminitude" (1991:231). This perspective may be related to Margaret Shildrick's evaluation of women, power and medicine as introduced in Chapter Four of this thesis. Shildrick argues that "all women are positioned *vis-à-vis* an

idealised body ideal" (1997:55). Daly and Shildrick both state that this ideal of the 'perfect body' is unattainable which, for Daly' is particularly damaging to women in that it "swallows up the remnants of naturally wild femaleness" (ibid). Therefore both of these writers examine the micro-politics of power in the medical setting and examine how these are played out on the woman's body in relation to, for example, elective cosmetic surgery, weight control and reproductive technologies. This is a huge area of investigation in its own right. The point I want to flag up here is that the objectifying gaze of medical institutions aims to produce a disciplined individual who engages in her own bodily surveillance. She works on herself to be healthy and tries to fulfil man-made ideals of 'correct' forms of behaviour. Her body is hence the site of power and the location for struggles over power. This is related to medical, political and governmental and religious institutions all of who promote idealised images of "what it is to be a woman", and ideologies of the active healthy agent. Responsibility for the same is hence thrown back on to the woman herself. She must self-discipline so that she maintains a healthy, working, body.

Shildrick also proposes that women may complicitly support bio-medical and societal strategies of normalisation 'over' their bodies with the acceptance and promotion of some forms of health care, these being seen as beneficial by women for women. Hence bio-medical surveillance may be found in the ultrasound of pregnancy or the triannual check for the elderly woman. However, as I have already observed, once women recognise such strategies of normalisation are occurring (as with the New Age woman refusing to comply to scientific, rationalistic, bio-medical definitions of the body, emotions and health) then devalued identities can be dissolved in favour of new constructions of holistic embodiment. So let us build up a simple representational picture here of how a woman may become a healer and feel re-empowered. For the

purposes of clarity let us call her Jacqui. I shall then relate Jacqui's journey into healing to discourses of power and authority.

Jacqui is a thirty five year old woman who has long term persistent digestive trouble. She has been repeatedly assessed by her doctor and has been prescribed a long term course of pain relief, though no official diagnosis has been made. These drugs, and her condition, leave her feeling lacking in energy. This is highly problematic as she has two school age children and works full time in health care. She feels that her partner, though helpful, doesn't really understand how limited in life she now feels.

Jacqui has a long held interest in spirituality and healing. She has read many books on the same. She is concerned about the long term potential side effects of drug use and the masking of symptoms with pain relief. She feels that her health condition is not being treated seriously by bio-medical professionals. Correspondingly she feels trivialised and anxious. She decides to 'go alternative' as nothing else has worked.

She turns to a healer recommended by a female friend. This healer works from a position that the body is an energetic entity. Jacqui is comfortable with this way of representing the body as she has read of chakras and has tried acupuncture. The healer, having assessed her energetic state promotes a new lifestyle regime of eating organic natural foods, meditation, yoga (when possible) and Indian head massage. The healer then commences with Jacqui a course of energetic healing work. She explains to her that while her pain might not be removed in entirety, she should feel significant improvements in discomfort and tiredness and should be able to progressively reduce or discontinue her drug intake. A level of trust is built up between the two women who feel they can relate to each other on more equal terms. Jacqui becomes aware that healing is not necessarily about the removal of 'symptoms' in totality (though this may occur). Through practical experience she begins to value other ways of appraising her state of health. As new aetiologies of health are

constructed, she begins to feel part of her own healing process. She feels that she is being really listened to and that her problems are of genuine importance. She is no longer just a 'chronic medical condition'.

Jacqui finds the emphasis on the interlinking of her mind, body and spirituality to the energetic whole empowering. She feels less isolated and 'disabled' as she is beginning to feel connected (following healing sessions and meditational practice) to 'all that is'. The emphasis on holism also enables her to feel that power is located within for she is a spiritual, energetic being. She is engaged in a project of redefining herself.

She decides to learn to become a healer herself. For, as she has been made aware, everyone has the ability to heal. Her levels of pain are now greatly reduced and sometimes absent. She feels that being a healer will provide her with some supplementary income so that she has more independence. She also takes healing practice back to her previous work situation. Primarily, however, Jacqui wants to help others as she has been helped. She wants to put into practice her experiential awareness of herself as energetic being. For she feels that she can actively engage with these 'new' frameworks of being and transform her life. She feels empowered. A whole new world of possibilities has opened up to her in her continued self-effort and reconnection to God/dess within. She feels at ease and has a new sense of self-authority.

In the above picture we should note several significant features. Firstly, Jacqui has felt trivialised and isolated in that her doctor has attempted to treat her pain but doesn't appreciate her suffering. Jacqui needs to find some meaning for this suffering and wants to feel more in control of her own health. As McGuire puts it "Rational medicine had no time and no place for the patient's need for meaning and order or even recognition as a person (rather than a case [of digestive trouble] "(1994:241). When she visits the healer, the meaning of her illness is made clear within a holistic

framework. She trusts the healer because she now feels a part of her own healing process. For the bio-medical 'power over' dynamic has been broken down in favour of one where Jacqui feels that she is a valued part of the energetically connected "world as a whole". She feels empowered. She has hence engaged in a project of personal redefinition and reclamation of her embodied being.

Jacqui's sense of connectedness is increased with continuing contact with other healers. She now relates the state of her health to her own holistic development and wishes to learn how to help others. As she becomes more effective at healing she feels transformed. She feels this is her path for life. She is no longer suffering, for her world has meaning and order.

I am now going to relate this representational image of a woman's journey into healing back to the third chapter of this thesis where I presented ethnographic material relating to workshops on the energetic body. In particular, I am going to refer to Barbara Ann Brennan's conceptions of health and disease. For I feel that questions need to be raised about the potentiality for the playing out of power in relation to "seeing levels of the aura". Foucault shall also be related to this enquiry.

At Helen Stott's workshops, these being based on Barbara Ann Brennan's *Hands of Light*, emphasis was placed on "the body as energetic" and feeling this for oneself through experiential practice. This promotion of "trying it out for yourself" is central to all types of healing practice in Scotland as we have seen, with a corresponding downplaying in the need for "belief" for healing to work. The human body was described in these workshops as having a dense physical core 'around which' were the auric layers, these being 'tied in' to the chakras. Brennan states that it is possible for

people like *Jacqui* to learn to see the aura by moving into High Sense Perception.

Once one can see or feel the aura (for many healers tend to use their hands to sense energy flowing in the body), a transformatory shift in perception takes place. I found this out for myself. One is left with a sense of considerable wonder when you begin to appreciate that there is more to the human body than has been described within scientific paradigms.

However I would like to draw out a couple of points here with regard to Brennan's description of disease interpretation in the aura. Firstly, she proposed, "It is essential that we deal with the deeper meaning of our illnesses. We need to ask, what does this illness mean to me? What can I learn from this illness?" (1987:7). Brennan also stated that if we wish to return to health we need to get back in touch with "the spark of divinity within" (ibid) by changing our personal lives and ridding them of "the source that caused the disease in the first place" (ibid). *For Jacqui, this means that she needs to get back in touch with her 'spiritual nature' and bring healing into her life on a practical level.*

I noted in Chapter Three, how for Brennan this "allowing of one's process to evolve" was part of an evolutionary path where through the making of personal life changes, one would enable reconnection to the divine with a corresponding removal of dis-ease from the physical body. *For Jacqui, this would mean a whole new diet regime, daily meditation and self work on the energetic body.* However, one wonders how radical feminist Mary Daly would regard the sort of self-help therapy as promoted by Brennan. Would she regard it as just another example of a woman being told to get back in touch with the divine spark by a therapist who also feels the need to psychologise (patriarchal) her evaluations of being human? Would she regard Brennan as yet

another example of a “token woman” (1991:8) whose mind had been bound and deceived, so that she thinks she is free “but in reality is chained and possessed” (ibid) *and that she is correspondingly leading Jacqui down a similar path?*

Might she agree with a Foucauldian interpretation of Brennan ‘as therapist’, in that when she emphasises that the ‘sufferer’ should take personal responsibility for the self, she is promoting a particular type of ideology tied to ‘governmental’ conceptualisations of the autonomous, active agent. *Here Jacqui is obliged to be healthy so that work can be done (as wife and mother and in the public sphere) so that ‘goods’ may be produced for the marketplace.* For, as Brennan might say, it is morally good to work and be healthy and I have the expert knowledge (culturally derived) to help (for a price) you on your path. Your life will be better if you listen to me (as expert) for I can tell you how to think about your ‘self’. I will shape your self-perceptions.

Foucault argues that “All the practices by which the subject is defined and transformed are accompanied by the formation of certain types of knowledge” (1980:160) which in the West, tend to be scientific in form. He further states that, in the ‘scientific west’, “one of the main moral obligations for any subject is to know oneself, to tell the truth about oneself, and to constitute oneself as an object knowledge both for other people and oneself” (ibid). Therefore we need to find out “which techniques and practices form the Western concept of the subject, giving it its characteristic split of truth and error, freedom and constraint” (Foucault, 1980:161). Brennan’s discourse above sounds, potentially, to me like a technology of the self. Foucault describes technologies or techniques of the self in the following manner.

I think, in all societies whatever they are...[one will find] techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own

bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on (1980:162).

Might, then, Brennan's 'technology of the self' also be related to a form of pastoral power? Let me relate this possibility to the writing of Sarah Nettleton for she draws on the work of Foucault in relation to governing the risky self. Nettleton points out that since the eighteenth century governmental mentality has been primarily concerned with the economic and social health and well being of the individual - its subjects. Foucault proposes that governmental activity prioritises the gathering of data about its subjects, the population. Hence data is gathered on employment, health, disease, birth and death etc. These institutional activities are in turn complemented by the individual subject engaging in "practices of the self or self government. Individuals shape their own lives as well as react to the influences and actions of others" (Nettleton, 1997:210).

However as I noted above, how an individual shapes his or her own life and produces a sense of self-identity is intimately tied in to cultural constructs. "These are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society, his group" (Foucault, 1988:11). Therefore in order to govern its subjects, the state collects data, measures health, gains knowledge of the population so that these can be 'helped' to be healthy, happy and productive.

Foucault however, also identifies a transformation in power relationships with the development of power techniques oriented towards individuals rather than the centralised state. "If the state is the political form of a centralised and centralising power, let us call pastorship the individualising power" (Foucault 1979:136). Foucault

states that within the early Christian context this pastoral power - as pastorship - had four particular characteristics which Nettleton usefully summarises in the following manner,

...it assures individual salvation; it does not command sacrifice (like royal power) but must also be prepared to make sacrifices for subjects; it looks after each and every individual for his or her own life; and it exercises the need to know people's minds, souls, secrets and details of their actions (1997: 211)

Foucault argues that this form of pastoral power cannot be exercised without "knowing the insides of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and how to direct it" (1982:783). This is tied in to 'experts' enabling the person to know him or herself. As again Nettleton usefully summarises, "Government has increasingly come to rely on these 'technologies of the self' to shape and enhance the capacities of individuals. The subjects of government within this context are autonomous, independent and self reliant" (Nettleton, 1997:212).

It might, therefore, be rather easy to regard some aspects of New Age healing as a contemporary form of pastoral power. Let us return to Kleinman's categorisation of disease as a starting point here. Kleinman states that disease "refers to pathological states whether or not they are culturally recognised...[while] illness refers to a person's perceptions and experience of certain socially disvalued states including but not limited to disease" (in Hanegraaff, 1998:42). One could argue that in the healing context, disease is a person's perceptions of a disvalued state now pathologised; this being culturally recognised. For within healing frameworks, as we have seen, there are very specific ideas of what it is to be healthy and whole. Pastoral power might now be

disguised at the micro level in day-to-day practice. This might be observed in statements such as Brennan's "it is essential that we deal with the deeper meaning of our illness" where the nature of dis-ease is signified (1987:18). For healers such as Brennan do need to know the inside of healees' minds and 'souls'. To this one might add another layer however, in that Brennan et al. also need to know the "inside of people's auras". And as the healee is told that that these cannot be hidden from the healer, and that deception is not possible, then it brings a whole new dimension to the surveillance of the human body. This 'need to know' then, might not be too dissimilar from earlier Christian traditions of the same.

It might also be the case that many healers want to produce the new identity of 'the healer' in their subjects. This new identity 'as healer' is seen to be tied into higher power, with "techniques of individualisation" (Nettleton, 1997:211) being downplayed in favour of the philosophy, "we are all part of one interconnected whole". For within healing frameworks it is often posited that there is no such thing as an individual. This, one is told, is a purely ego-driven fallacy that must be ignored. New Age healing hence could then be regarded as a contemporary form of medicalisation.

However Nettleton also argues that psychological theories (and Brennan locates the human being within this sort of framework) and practices "have contributed to the reconfiguration of the individual, or subject, from being a relatively 'docile', passive recipient of advice and health care to one who possesses the capacity for self control, responsibility, rationality and enterprise" (1997:213-4). Within these fields experts "must also seek out the subjective truth of a body capable of consciousness. Accordingly risk [health risks that the individual can insure against] is determined not only by one's personal circumstances but also one's personal capacities" (1997:214).

These capacities are, in the area of health, of particular importance in relation to the person's ability to take preventative steps with regard to illness. Hence a person should take self-responsibility for his or her lifestyle and 'master the self'. Failure to do this through lack of self-control means that the individual is at risk from 'his or herself'. "Such notions of the self reliant and enterprising self are of course reflected in the New Right, but its conditions of possibility are to be located more in the activities of the 'experts' of the human condition" (ibid). In turn, individuals must draw from 'expert' knowledge so that they can "assess their futures and take control of their biography" (Nettleton, 1997:215). Risk factors such as unhealthy lifestyles become diseases in themselves and as such can be cured. Experts provide 'truths' about how one should live one's life as an active agent and hence also have an ethical dimension, for we can choose to be 'healthy' or 'unhealthy'. To be healthy is to be admired. And in the fields of complementary health, there are many providers of expert advice to choose from to enable the development of this sort of subjectivity.

Power is exercised over free subjects. And only in so far as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse compartments, may be realised (Foucault, 1982:790).

So where does this leave our composite woman, Jacqui. Well, she now finds herself in a position where she has to take responsibility for her life and her health and work on her life task. Dis-ease will now be regarded as being related to states of energetic imbalance, these being displayed in the aura and chakras. In turn, she will have been told that "We all create disease to some extent in our physical bodies. If you look back at the original cause, it is always based on forgetting who we are. As long as we believe that we must be separated in order to individuate, we will continue to create

disease” (Brennan, 1987:145). She will also have been advised that pain is in fact a learning tool and not just a physical state. Pain will manifest if we “ignore what we know we want or need to do...Pain teaches us to ask for help and healing and is, therefore, a key to the education of the soul” (ibid). And she will be locked in to a system of continual self-surveillance where she is the cause of her own health or disease. She will, initially at least, return to the expert healer and ‘confess’. She will literally reveal the hidden truths of herself by displaying them in her aura. The trained healer will have privileged access to these truths as she is in a state of ‘higher spiritual development’.

However, Jacqui will also have the option to move away from a Brennan type of evaluation of her body. She will most probably continue to adhere to ‘the body as energetic’ but she may learn new healing practices (such as Reiki) with different conceptualisations of the same. She may read Diane Stein and subscribe to a Goddess centred approach to healing self and others. She may redefine her identity as of the Goddess. Whatever way she chooses to develop ‘her self’ she will be doing so in a position of active agency. She will be implicitly critiquing rationalised bio-medical evaluations of her bodily state. She will have rejected Christian notions of her body as ‘sinful’ and will regard the same as a valuable vessel for growth and self transformation. She will have learnt to listen to her body. Hence as Meredith McGuire states,

Much alternative healing promotes a qualitatively different perspective from that of the rationalized dominant culture. Many alternative healing approaches encourage a reflective and reflexive attitude toward oneself, one’s body, and emotional and social life. They affirm the right and power of the individual to choose the quality of experience of body and emotions, to choose how to achieve health and healing, to

choose and assert identity. They also promote a holistic perspective, a strong sense of connectedness with one's body and with other persons. If successful, such transformations of self could have far reaching consequences for the sociocultural and politico-economic spheres in modern society (1998: 257).

I shall turn now to my final question,

4) Are New Age women engaged in a politics of reclamation with regard to healing practice and theologies of the same? How does this relate to the corresponding development of new and empowered identities "as healer"?

In this final part of the chapter I am going to argue, in conclusion, that New Age women are engaged in a politic of reclamation and that this has interesting parallels with Goddess, Wiccan and feminist Witchcraft spiritualities on two counts: firstly, because these women critique the exclusion of women's religious experiences - including healing - by patriarchal world religions; secondly, in that all of these women subscribe to a holistic worldview rather than to mechanistic rationalised accounts of human existence as found within scientific and bio-medical approaches to health. Hence these women have developed - and continue to develop - important ideas about the "real world" based on their own experiential practice.

I shall construct this concluding section in the following manner. Firstly, I will note briefly some of the tensions to be found between science and healing. This I shall draw from Jeanne Achterberg's examination of the historical role of the feminine in Western healing traditions. And I shall revisit Diane Treacy-Cole's evaluation of the contemporary relationships between science, healing and medicine. These I shall then relate to spiritual feminists critiques as noted above and my own ethnographic

material. In this way I will “complete the circle” and show how women are active agents in healing practice and are not subsumed in entirety under patriarchal systems. For women do healing work within fluid “fields of force” (Foucault, 1980).

Science and healing

Jeanne Achterberg states that,

Women have always been healers. Cultural myths from around the world describe a time when only women knew the secrets of life and death, and they alone could practice the magical art of healing. In crises and calamity, or so some of the stories go, women’s revered position as keepers of the sacred wisdom was deliberately and forcibly wrested away from them. At other places and in other eras, women’s legal right to practice the healing vocations was gradually eroded by changing mores and religious dogma (1990:1).

She continues that this interest in healing may be seen in the contemporary health care system where, in the United States at least, over eighty percent of workers are women (ibid). This trend is also apparent in the UK, though I would argue, one must not forget that these same women are primarily located in the nursing and caring professions and are outnumbered at higher medical and teaching levels by men. Even so, healing (rather than curing) does still take place officially and unofficially in such settings with, for example, nurses being trained in therapeutic touch⁶² and Reiki practitioners healing in the hospital setting. So let us commence with a necessarily brief review of the historical exclusion of healing from bio-medical health settings with

⁶² See Hedges and Beckford’s material in Chapter Four of this thesis.

the rise of rationalistic science. For representations of this form of science as 'the pinnacle of scientific evolution' are explicitly critiqued by many New Age healers.

Ziaddin Sardar states that Western science has represented itself as being "the apex of science" (2000:53) in relation to truth and efficiency. It has done this by not recognising other "civilisational or cultural sciences" (ibid). He proposes that science has "maintained its monopoly in four basic ways" (ibid). First, the

...conventional western history of science...denied the achievements of non-Western cultures as real science, dismissed them as superstition, myth and folklore. Second, the histories of non-Western science were largely written out of the general history of science. Third, it rewrote the history of the origins of European civilisation to make it self-generating... Fourth, through conquest and colonisation, Europe appropriated the sciences of other civilisations, suppressed the knowledge of their origins, and recycled them as Western (Sardar, 2000:53-54).

This meant for example that Islamic, Chinese and Indian sciences were subsumed or excluded, which many New Agers see as a significant loss. Correspondingly, they have appropriated elements of such sciences (and philosophies) and have incorporated them into their own healing ontologies as we have seen. For all of these non-Western systems have well-developed notions of the relationships of, for example, spiritual practice to health. However, of particular significance to this thesis is the fact that this "real Western science" has also excluded women and denounced "the earth as spiritual". For by the seventeenth century men of science "believed there were divine purposes in nature but held that they should play no role in the scientific account" (Barbour, 1990:28). And theoretical structures were set in place that continued to deny women a place within the fields of science and medicine. These

were supported by the belief that "men were superior to women [and of the mind, while] women were closer to the earth. [Hence] woman...was enslaved by the seventeenth-century metaphor linking her to nature, instead of being enthroned by it, as she had been much earlier" (Achterberg, 1990:103). This positioning was to be found, for example, in the writing of Francis Bacon who also argued that "Nature could be known through its association with the feminine, and mastery and domination must occur if civilisation was to progress" (ibid). Hence, "In a patriarchal society, the exploitation of women and nature have a common ideological root" (Barbour, 1990:149).

Achterberg also reflects on another significant consequence of the Scientific Revolution. For it was not solely mind (man) and matter (woman) that were rendered apart and located in a power hierarchy. Spirit "was conceptually eliminated from matter" (ibid) leading to a denial of the body as sacred.

Hence medicine no longer regarded itself as working in the sacred spaces where fellow humans find themselves in pain and peril, and where transcendence is so highly desired (Achterberg, 1990:103).

As we have seen, this positioning is heavily critiqued by New Agers and all those who hold holistic standpoints. For from these perspectives, all elements of humanity and nature are intimately spiritual. Nature is sacred. Health is reflected in the levels of energetic balance and connectedness. The embodied state is a sacred state. I shall return to these points shortly. For I have picked out here the key 'elements' that women engage with in a politic of reclamation. But let me briefly return to Sardar. Sardar argues that scientists have now got to confront "new realities". For, he

proposes, we are moving in to a “post-normal phase in which, to use the words of Ravetz and Funtowicz⁶³ ‘facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high, and decisions urgent’ (in Sardar, 2000:63).

Post-normal science requires science to expand its boundaries to include different validation processes, perspectives, and types of knowledge. Thus, post-normal science becomes a dialogue among all stakeholders in a problem, from scientists themselves to social scientists, journalists, activists and housewives, regardless of their formal qualifications or affiliations.

This is the essential novelty of post-normal science. It inevitably leads to a democratisation of science. It doesn't hand over research work to untrained personnel; rather it brings science out of the laboratory and into public debate where all can take part in discussing its social, political and cultural ramifications (Sardar, 2000:64-65).

As I noted earlier in this chapter, such a shift in thought may now be beginning to take place. For as Treacy-Cole has observed, scientists and medical researchers are starting to investigate the affects of spirituality on health, this “attracting attention from medical practitioners, those working outside of conventional medicine, and religious professionals from across a wide spectrum of traditions” (2001:139). On the other side of the coin, New Agers are drawing from various sciences and philosophies and bringing healing practices into mainstream bio-medical settings. There is a sort of democratisation (and appropriation) of practice even if Western science still appears to hold the key ‘power card’ in relation to the legitimisation of healing practice in the bio-medical setting. As Ross states,

⁶³ See Funcoicz, S. and Ravetz, J., ‘Three Types of Risk assessment and the emergence of Post-Normal Science’, in Krinsky, S. and Golding, D. (eds.), *Social Theories of Risk*, Westport, Connecticut: Prager, 1992.

On the one hand, the devotion to alternative, non-rationalistic belief systems places New Age thought outside the hierarchical structure of cultural capital observed by the legitimated scientific culture. On the other hand, the New Age commitment to transforming science into a more humanistic and holistic enterprise involves taking on, to some degree, the structure of deference to authority that governs the institutional system of rationalist cultural capital (Ross, 1991: 26-27).

Therefore as Foucault has argued, power's "condition of possibility... [lies in] the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender [local and unstable] states of power" (1994:163).

However, we would do well to remember that Western science still, as a whole, favours a predominantly androcentric perspective. Correspondingly feminist critiques engage with science at all levels in relation to, for example, equal access for women to science education and employment, the focus of research projects and funding for the same, and male biases in theoretical standpoints and data interpretation (Barbour, 1990:147-148). Barbour also observes that the dualisms "so pervasive in Western thought: mind/body, reason/emotion, objectivity/subjectivity, domination/submission, impersonal/personal, power/love" (ibid), where the first element is culturally defined as male, the second female, are also to be found in the scientific sphere. For here "mind, reason, objectivity, domination, impersonality, power" (ibid) hold sway. Barbour sees no point, however, in reversing such dualisms and favouring 'the feminine' for this, he argues, will lead to equal imbalances and the perpetuation of dichotomisations (ibid).

And yet within New Age and Goddess 'philosophies' just such a reversal is promoted as we have seen. This does not mean, however, that the masculine is 'negated'. Both

masculine and feminine are needed to “make up a balanced whole”. And there is another major difference in relation to the location of power. Within New Age circles, *power and love* are regarded as being one and the same. Think here, for example, of Reiki Master Hiroshi Doi who emphasised that Reiki was intimately tied to “the wave of love”. For love is “the life energy emanating from the higher consciousness and spreading outwards in all directions equally” (Doi, 2000:28). Therefore when Reiki practitioners heal self and others, ‘love as power’ may be cited as the medium for this occurrence.

But let us return to science and spirituality for the moment. I drew in earlier Treacy-Cole’s observation that science may be becoming more interested in the connections between belief, spirituality and health. I feel that a hermeneutics of suspicion ought to be applied here. For, not wishing to state the obvious, if women dominate in New Age spiritual healing practice – with, in the case of Reiki, male codification of theology and a perceived need to evaluate healing scientifically - and if science itself is interested in healing practice, (science being full of gender laden assumptions) then where does this leave women? For it does appear that this ‘scientific interest’ has a lot to do with containment, management and organisation of democratised healing under the scientific umbrella. Further, as scientific empiricism is based on capitalist foundations, which go hand in hand with industry, pharmaceutical companies and technologies which may be damaging to individuals and all aspects of the environment, then why would New Age women healers wish to work within such overarching paradigms? Why not become Wiccan or a feminist witch? Why be accused of being “fluffy”, in that, as one female Druid observed,

New Agers think that the universe is this great and marvellous place. There are marvellous parts, but there are many horrible things. Expressing nothing but white light, positivity and love is just not realistic at all. That is fluffy ⁶⁴.

However, I would argue that New Age women are subversively engaging with science and bio-medical approaches to health. They do this on several levels which have parallels with Goddess and feminist critiques of the suppression of women's religious experiences by patriarchal world religions. It is to these resistances that I turn next.

Powerful Healers

For women of the Goddess, power resides in the sacralised body where the Goddess is imminent. As Susan Greenwood observes in relation to Feminist Witchcraft, it has a holistic emphasis on the unification of the goddess with individuals on all levels of being as part of the universal whole. This holistic emphasis is common in all magical cosmologies and, as we have seen, in New Age cosmologies (though the Goddess may not be invoked in the latter).

Greenwood also proposes that the practice of feminist Witchcraft cannot be separated from the politics of the same. For emphasis is placed on the reclamation and reinvention of historical traditions "of a golden, matrifocal age whose mythology reveres women and Nature, before urban cultures of conquest with their patriarchal religions divided spirit from matter, shattering the former symbiotic wholeness with their emphasis on a divine force outside the world" (Greenwood, 2000:136)). Hence these women actively critique patriarchal paradigms and, through ritual, attempt to reconnect

⁶⁴ This drawn from an interview as carried out by PhD candidate Aislinn Jones of Stirling University Religious Studies Department. April 2000, Glasgow.

with pre-patriarchal states of existence, while healing the “wounds of patriarchy” (ibid) both at individual and planetary levels. Feminist Witchcraft is, hence, according to Greenwood, a “transformatory politics” (ibid). So too, I would argue, is New Age healing. Rand, for example, emphasises Reiki’s potentiality for “bringing world peace” (1990:269) through its unifying and transformatory nature.

Because Reiki is spiritual, yet not a religion, it has attracted students from all religious and spiritual backgrounds. Catholic priests and nuns practice Reiki. Jews, Protestants, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists practice Reiki. Jains, Zoroastrinists, Taoists, and Shintoists practice Reiki. Wiccans, shamans, native people, and those on independent spiritual paths practice Reiki. Those in virtually all religious groups are attracted to the practice of Reiki. An important reason is that Reiki gives each person an immediate experience of the divine. Reiki places more people directly in contact with the higher power (regardless of the name one may call it) and provides direct experience of the higher power’s grace and compassion. Reiki is thus helping unite all people of the world regardless of religious or ethnic background (Rand, 2001:269)

There is another key theme that underpins feminist, Witchcraft and New Age thought. For emphasis is also placed on finding “a coherent and stable self” (Greenwood, 2000:137) in the face of postmodern “fragmentation and discontinuity” (ibid). This search is reflected in New Age circles and may be seen, for example, in the increasing array of self-help and spirituality books and materials – these appealing to people on “independent spiritual paths “ (Rand, 2001:269). Treacy-Cole draws from publishers’ responses in relation to this increased demand. These are informative. For publishers suggest that the book buying public feel that “religion has become ghettoised....being only for academics or committed believers” (2001:137). Hence there is increasing demand for material that can enable the solitary searcher to re-find a sense of spiritual

tradition and community, this search often being grounded in personal experiences of transformation, growth and health (ibid). This is not a new phenomenon however. Robert Fuller has documented the historical roots of such searching in relation to health and spirituality in the American context.

The concept of metaphysical linking of the individual's inner mind with a higher cosmic power pointedly addresses the societal dis-ease that accompanied the dawn of modern American culture. Urbanisation, industrialisation, immigration, and the splintering of any theological consensus around which national life might revolve all jarred the American loose from traditional sources of stability (Fuller, 1989:63).

Correspondingly, individuals began to search, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for sources of help with psychosomatic and stress related illnesses. And here a paradox arose. For the "demands which a pluralistic society places upon a person to be inner-directed" and to draw upon "higher healing energies" (1989:64-5) could not be effectively addressed by the individual. For what were these inner sources of authority? Unable to find such inner reserves, the individual was forced to look 'without' - to medicine and the church for answers (ibid). However, "the nation's 'official' religion' like its 'official medicine', had little to offer those afflicted with nervous exhaustion [this also relating to stress induced illness]. A cultural niche was thus opened in which metaphysically inclined healing systems might flourish, and flourish they have" (Fuller, 1989:65).

In the contemporary period little has changed. For there are, as we have seen, a multiplicity of healing practices all of which attribute dis-ease to metaphysical causes and which appeal to middle and upper educated classes. "These alternative healing systems appear to be expressions of an unsatisfied spiritual hunger rather than signs of desperation among the poor or ill-educated (Fuller, 1989:91).

This searching for wholeness is, I would argue, part and parcel of a project of re-claiming the *embodied self* as empowered. For women, this means a re-valuing of their bodies as sacred mediums for active agency. "Bodily experience is the very essence of feminist spirituality and is seen as the locus of women's power. The body is thus the source of self-affirmation and identity" (Greenwood, 2000:139). What we have in the contemporary setting then, is a continuing breaking down of "theological consensus [with regard to] traditional sources of stability" (Fuller, 1989:63) and an ongoing critique of 'science as truth' as we have seen. This means that women healers are engaged in parallel project of re-claiming their bodies from rationalistic, mechanistic bio-medical designations of 'health' and in asserting the validity of their own 'religious' experiences. They do this so that they may develop "functionally useful ways of understanding [the] world" (Fuller, 1989:115) as 'whole' women. As healing work progresses, the individual chooses which elements of 'metaphysical causation' to embrace and which to discard. Science and bio-medical approaches to health are not rejected in totality but are located alongside other interpretative mediums. Similarly, elements of mainstream religiosity are appropriated – such as the Jesus as healer motif - and are integrated into personally developed experiential practice. The 'seeker' eclectically picks and mixes aspects that *work* and which provide senses of meaning and belonging.

For example, within Goddess spiritualities, emphasis is placed on the central significance of theologies. This means that female divinity, *thea*, replaces male representations of the same and space is made for women to re-define themselves outwith of, for example, Christian theological representations of women. This we saw with Reiki teacher Diane Stein and her location of Reiki as "a gift from the Goddess". This shift is made in part to move on from Christian representations of the woman's body as 'fallen, corrupt and of the flesh'. For within the Christian tradition women's

symbolic resources are often “multiple and contradictory” (Scott, 1986:1067) as represented in Eve [virgin and temptress] and Mary [virgin and Madonna]. This means that women have historically been located in relation to “myths of light [men/God] and dark [women/Goddess], purification [men/male priests/doctors] and pollution, [menstruating women], innocence [Adam] and corruption [Eve]” (ibid). These representations as expressed within religious doctrine and “typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine” (ibid). Little room appears to be left for women to grow into whole, integrated, sexual and spiritual, empowered adults.

However, Goddess theologies do contest such fixed assertions and do provide empowering symbolic resource pools for women to experience their bodies as sacred. For “Many of the goddesses from ancient and contemporary times have been reclaimed and adopted by modern Western women as symbols of creativity and healing, liberation and empowerment” ((Puttick, 1997:201). Hence space is also made for women to break away from traditional, patriarchal, representations of what the female body is ‘supposed to be’ (virginal daughter, wife, mother) so that women can explore what women ‘want to be’ (strong, independent and valued in their own right) enabling a move (metaphorically at least) from male promoted ‘positions of dependence’.

Yet as Puttick also states, drawing from the work of Ursula King, questions must be asked in relation to the *actual* power of women of the Goddess in society. For women are still subject to male power in the social and religious spheres. Hence while men may worship the Goddess, this may ultimately also rest on male projection and superimposition of “divine beauty and grace on the most seemingly unworthy of mortal

women” (King, 1989:125) or on the denigration of women while still worshipping the divine feminine (ibid). This sort of tension may also be found in ritual practice. Helen Berger states that “The efforts to create gender equality [among Neo-Pagans and Wiccans] do not, however, mean that sexism has been obliterated. As one of her female Neo-Pagan interviewees asserted, “I think half the men who get involved with Pagan/Wiccan stuff do it as a ploy to get laid. And the other half are trying to prove that they’re better ‘Witches’ than women. Poor babies” (Berger, 1999:46). One does wonder if these sorts of tensions are raising their heads in Reikian practice. For it does appear that certain aforementioned male Reiki writers are trying to appear ‘better healers’ than their female counterparts while systematically developing new ‘more powerful’ forms of Reiki practice : such as William Rand’s Kahuna Reiki, Walter Lubeck’s Rainbow Reiki and Frank Petters ‘true’ Usui Reiki – particularly when all of these new forms require additional training by the Masters themselves at not insignificant financial costs.

Hence further questions ought to be asked in relation to the perceived status and authority of New Age teachers such as Petter, Lubeck and Rand. For these writers might be engaged in cultivating a sense of dependence from their students, as they are key sources of ‘information’ on Reiki theology and practice. They are also ‘part and parcel’ of the esoteric healing messages they deliver in that they produce ‘new’ world views for students to learn.

Tanice Foltz has examined such leadership in relation to a Kahuna (Hawaiian energetic healer) named Kalii in the American context. She observes that, “Kali has been extremely successful in introducing his students to a new way of looking at the world, and in obtaining their commitment to his reality. As the disseminator of the

healing knowledge, Kali is considered the source and catalyst of the student's growth and transformation (Foltz, 1994:119). However Foltz also argues that this process is democratised in that students progressively learn to heal for themselves. "This results in 'a diffusion and effusion of superordinate power, available to all to recharge their spirituality and to transform their daily lives'" (Lopez in Foltz, 1994:119). This democratisation is to be found, as we have seen, throughout Scottish healing circles. It also occurs among women of the Goddess, for one may learn to be, for example, a Witch even if one is self taught rather than initiated into a coven – though debates are also to be found about the need for formal training in Wiccan circles (Berger, 2000:105).

Therefore I would still argue that there are multiple spaces for women to work as active healing agents within New Age circles, and that fluidity of practice – and the centrality of one's own religious experience – is liberating for women. For as McGuire has noted in relation to healing in the American context, though individuals engaged collectively in healing rituals where "symbols of power and order" (1998:244) were pervasive, they also "simultaneously sought privately experienced self-transformation and self validation" (ibid). They developed their "own alternative world images [such as Stein's 'Goddess spiral'] - and these were reflected in their ideas and values defined as "health", sources of healing power, individual responsibility, and the nature of self and self-transcendence. These world images were emphatically holistic – beyond the sense of mind body holism, to an insistence of all aspects of the cosmos" (ibid).

I have provided a number of examples of forms of holism within this thesis as it is indeed the central theme underlying all forms of energetic healing. For example in Chapter Seven I presented material relating to dowsing as an interpretative medium

which confirmed women and men's ability to work as active healing agents. Here I drew in John and Patrick MacManaway's critiques of the historical activities of the Christian Church in downplaying healing in favour of theological debate. Though this is a rather sanitised interpretation of the historical role of the church in that it does not incorporate how women suffered particularly in relation to their healing being seen as "devil's work", it is still a position that allows for a re-valuation of healing practice as a medium for growth and self-empowerment. Similarly, their evaluation of the church's 'appropriation' of energetic power (by locating church buildings on the same) in actuality shows just how significantly human beings felt they were connected energetically to the earth as a whole. Therefore in learning to dowse and read how one's energetic being is affected by earth energies, the individual is provided with visible proof of cosmic connectedness that has long historical roots. Connectedness to the earth is hence re-presented as a natural part of human existence in that "human consciousness meets and dialogues with the Spirit of the Earth" (GO, 2002). Health is hence intimately tied to the earth as part of the cosmos whole.

We also found re-valuations of intuition being promoted in dowsing ontologies – this being common in all New Age thought as we have seen. For John MacManaway stated that "intuition is often regarded in a derogatory manner as women's stuff which needs to be crushed by male logical and rational explanations" this positioning being based on a long held misogynist values. However the Macmanaway's et al regarded intuitive abilities as the cornerstone of healing and dowsing work. Intuition is a gift to be nurtured. It is hence a valuable tool that all humans have for "self-growth through holistic connectedness". Note how Barbour relates this to gender. "*Holistic thinking* is not limited to women, but it appears that in our culture women may be more sensitive than men to connections, contexts, and interdependencies and more attuned to

development, co-operation, and symbiosis. There may be a biological basis for some of these gender differences, but they are mainly attributable to cultural patterns of socialisation" (1990:150 italics original). I am sure that women would be pleased to note that they have been so successfully socialised, in that they can now continue to do, in healing practice, what they have always known has worked - touch, intuition, loving care and compassion for self and others as part of an interconnected whole! For experiences of 'connectedness' are eminently empowering. Barrett draws from Carol Christ to describe this in relation to feminist Goddess ritual work. "Common to women's rituals is the experience of immanence and transcendence. Women's spirituality rituals seek to allow women an experience of connection to the life force within all living things (Christ, 1987). Through this experience, many women feel that their rituals set a standard of how life should feel outside of the ritual circle" (Barrett, 2000:187). This is equally applicable to Reiki, where all group gatherings are ended by "sending energy round the circle", and to individual healing practice. For *healing is connection* to cosmic power, all that is, love, the Goddess etc. Healing rituals are about also, in Wiccan practice as in New Age work, effecting change, both at individual (as part of 'the whole') and global levels as we have seen.

Which brings us back to the central underlying theme of this thesis, "what it is to be healed". Eller states that,

Healing is a metaphor for any form of self-transformation, whether emotional, physical or mental. It is the name given to the overall effort to gain self knowledge and marshal personal power (Eller, 1993:10).

This personal power may be seen as "of the Goddess" or as love, ki, prana etc. and resides within the individual. Being healed is not an end result but an ongoing

transformation of self-to-society relationship. Healing is an embodied experience. It is about becoming a balanced energetic whole. To be healed is to free oneself from long held mores and societal constraints. For women, this means re-valuing their bodies positively as sacred mediums for growth. It is about re-valuing receptivity as empowering. For being "open to the Goddess" or being open energetically (as in the chakras) enables one to be healthy and whole. On a practical level, emphasis is placed on the fact that there are alternatives to bio-medical and mainstream religious designations of being human as we have seen. New models are individually developed based on experiential practice, where the sacred becomes re-embodied and the self empowered. For women, this is active engagement in a politics of reclamation. For they reclaim "from such institutions as religion and therapy the powers and tactics which were rightfully our own to begin with, and which have been warped and watered down after having been stolen by patriarchy" (1991:282-3). Women question curing models of health and bring healing to medical settings. Women ask for healing services and rituals in the mainstream churches. Women demand acknowledgement as active healing agents. They network with other healers and 'work' locally and globally. They reject the centrality of striving for material gain as a lifelong task. They honour the masculine and the feminine divine in self and others and critique dualistic divisions. They acknowledge that healing is a process that involves not just the health of the individual's molecular and energetic body, but also "the integrity of community, the environment, and concerns for the spirit" (Achterberg, 1990:193). The woman healer no longer passively conforms to predetermined gender roles but actively engages in her own self-definition. She has "learnt to see the world anew and name and shape it differently" (King, 1989:2). Woman as healer has re-claimed her voice and she demands to be heard. Hers is a voice of "protest and promise" (King, 1989).

Appendix A

Primary 'New Age' Sources (in alphabetical order)

- FRW1:** Fiona's Workbook for 1st Degree Reiki, 2000.
- FRW2:** Fiona's Workbook for 2nd Degree Reiki, 2000.
- GO:** 'Mid Atlantic Geomancy', www.geomancy.org, 2002.
- PWM:** Petter Workshop Manual, 'Reiki Techniques', 2001.
- NFSH:** National Federation of Spiritual Healers Leaflet, 2000.
- RICRT:** William Rand, International Centre for Reiki Training, www.reiki.org, 2001.
- SC1:** Salisbury Centre Brochure, Spring, 2001.
- SC2:** Salisbury centre Brochure, Summer, 2003.
- WMH:** Helen Stott Workshop Manual, 2001.

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Frank Arjava Petter's 'Reiki Techniques Workshop

I am currently researching 'healing' at the University of Stirling, Department of Religious Studies for my PhD. As Reiki is a central focus of my research I am very interested in trying to build up a clearer picture of the networks of practitioners in Scotland. It would therefore be extremely helpful to me if you could spare a few minutes in this workshop to answer a few simple questions, answers to which will be treated in strictest confidence. However, if you prefer *not* to answer a specific question that's absolutely fine.

If I could speak to you at a later date in a little more depth could you please also give me a contact number.

1. What is your first name and gender? M/F
2. Tel. No:
3. What is your home location, town, county?
4. How long have you been involved with Reiki?
.....
.....
5. What drew you to this healing practice?
.....
.....
.....
6. What do you perceive to be its primary benefits? ie. self-healing, healing others, global transformation
.....
.....
.....
7. Any further comments you wish to make, please add here
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for your assistance.

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