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Résumé de l'article

Les travaux de recherche sur la sorcellerie qui ont été réalisés au cours de la dernière décennie ont été entachés par divers écarts méthodologiques. Les sources écrites ont été manipulées (soit par inadvertance, soit délibérément) et la mauvaise présentation de celles-ci est venu alimenter la contre argumentation ; on s'appuie sur des sources de second intérêt alors que des sources fondamentales sont écartées, on se réfère à des sources douteuses alors que des données plus fiables sont largement disponibles, on s'appuie sur le sens commun sans prendre la peine de vérifier des données de base, on se réfère à des sources non représentatives quand des données représentatives auraient été faciles à trouver et on met au rancart certaines hypothèses lorsque celles-ci s'avèrent peu populaires. Ce constat donne l'impression qu'on a écarté tout un pan de la démarche de recherche, ce qui donne lieu à une masse de travaux et d'analyses négligés. Cet article porte sur les travaux récents de ce domaine d'étude et présente plusieurs de ces difficultés méthodologiques, dans un effort visant à soutenir les ethnologues pour qu'ils répondent à ce que Simpson appelle la réévaluation des travaux actuels avec un regard plus critique que celui des prédécesseurs, ce qui devrait permettre d'éviter de refaire les mêmes erreurs méthodologiques.

# Methodological Flaws in Recent Studies of Historical and Modern Witchcraft

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In her Presidential Address given to the British Folklore Society (25 March 1995), Jacqueline Simpson called on folklorists to join the ranks of the historians, cultural anthropologists, and sociologists studying Witchcraft[1], both historical and modern (Simpson 1996: 5). In a recent issue of *Western Folklore* dedicated to "Reflexivity and the Study of Belief", guest editor David J. Hufford called on folklorists to re-examine the assumptions that they bring to the study of religious groups and individuals (Hufford 1995: 1-11). I believe that folklorists answering Simpson's call should first answer Hufford's, as academic work on Witchcraft in the last decade has been plagued by fundamental methodological flaws.

## Doctoring of source texts

The most basic flaw in some of the recent studies of Witchcraft is the systematic altering of source texts to support the author's arguments. No one has been more guilty of this than Aidan Kelly. Kelly's book, *Crafting the Art of Magic, Book 1*, purports to be a presentation and analysis of source texts in the history of the modern or Neopagan Witchcraft or "Craft" movement. Kelly's argument is that the modern Witchcraft movement is a modern creation,

1. The question of whether or not to capitalize "Witch" and "Witchcraft" is a difficult one. When referring to the modern religion by that name, and to the practitioners of that religion, it should be capitalized. When referring to the historical phenomena of European witchcraft and the witch trials, it should not. It is unclear what should be done when referring to both. Purely for reasons of stylistic simplicity, I have chose to use the upper case "W" throughout, except when the lower case is used in a quoted text.

largely the work of a single man, Gerald Gardner. Kelly's primary source is a handwritten 275-page book called "Ye Bok of ye Art Magical" (BAM), penned by Gardner sometime in the 1930s or 40s. Kelly reproduces long passages from the BAM, and if for nothing else his book has been praised for making these texts available for study. But Kelly's presentation is worse than useless since he regularly alters the wording, as can be demonstrated by consulting the BAM itself, currently in the possession of Richard and Tamarra James of the Wiccan Church of Canada in Toronto, and available to scholars for study. Two examples should be sufficient to demonstrate the degree of unreliability of Kelly's texts.

Kelly analyzes a Witch text called "the Charge of the Goddess", a poetic speech containing instructions from the Goddess of the Witches to her followers. Kelly purports to present the earliest version of the text, as found in the BAM (the bracketed text is Kelly's):

> [The following gives Gardner's original wording of the Charge, from pp. 263-268 of "Ye Bok of ye Art Magical." This is the text that Doreen Valiente rewrote into verse, then later into a new prose version.]
>
> Listen to the words of the Great mother, who of old was also called among men Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, *Cerridwen, Diana, Arianhrod, Bride*, and by many other names. At mine Altars the youth of Lacedaemon in Sparta made due sacrifice. Whenever ye have need of anything, once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full, ye shall assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of Me who am Queen of all Witcheries *and magics*. There ye shall assemble, ye who are fain to learn all sorcery, yet have not won its deepest secrets. To *these* will I teach things that are yet unknown.
>
> And ye shall be free from slavery, and as a sign that ye be really free, ye shall be naked in your rites, both men and women, and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music, and love, all in my praise. There is a Secret Door that I have made to establish the way to taste even on earth the elixir of immortality. Say "Let ecstacy be mine, and joy on earth even to me, To Me". For I am a gracious Goddess. I give unimaginable joys on earth, certainty, not faith, while in life! And upon death, peace unutterable, rest, and ecstacy, nor do I demand aught in sacrifice (Kelly 1991: 53).

This is *not* the text of the Charge given in the BAM. The same paragraphs of the Charge in the BAM runs (with misspellings preserved and page numbers indicated):

[Page 263] "List to the words of the Great Mother who of old was also called among men Artimis: Astarte: Dione: Melusine: Aphrodite and by meny other names /

At mine Altars the youth of Lacedmonia and Spala made due sacrifice.

Whenever ye have need of anything, once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full.

[page 264] *Then* ye shall assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of me who am Queen of all Witcheries.

There ye shall assemble, ye who are fain to learn all Sorcery, yet have not won to its deepest secrets, to *those* will I teach things that are yet unknown.

And ye shall be free from slavery, And as a sign that ye be realy free, ye shall be naked in your rites, both men and wemen.

And ye shall dance, sing, feast

[page 265] make music, and love, all in my praise.

*For ecstasy is mine, and joy on earth.*

*For Love is my Law, Keep pure your highest ideal: strive ever toward it, Let naught stop you, or turn you aside.*

There is a Secret Door that I have made to establish the way to taste even on earth the elixir of immortality. Say "Let ecstacy be mine, and joy on earth even to me, *To Me.*"

[page 266] For I am a graesous Goddess. I give unimaginable joys, on earth certainty, not faith while in life! And upon death, peace unutterable, rest, and ecstacy, nor do I demand aught in sacrifice (Gardner n.d.: 263-266).

These texts are *not* the same. Aside from the numerous spelling and punctuation differences, there are words and punctuation changed and even *added* throughout the text, in almost every sentence (for clarity, I have italicized and underlined the words in the Kelly version that do not appear in the BAM source text, and words in the BAM text that have been omitted in Kelly's version). The entire "For ecstasy is mine, and joy on earth..." passage is missing from the Kelly version. Additionally, the changed commas in the last few sentences change the meaning of the phrases.

On page 88 of *Crafting the Art of Magic*, Kelly's gives the text of a document called "Of the Ordeal of the Art Magical", defending ritual scourging and blood-flow control as a magical technique as opposed to Christian mortification of the flesh. This document, Kelly tells us, "appears on pp. 71-73 of 'Ye Bok of ye Art Magical'" (Kelly 1991: 88). The text, as given by Kelly, ends with:

> ... The Knights of the Temple, who used mutually to scourge each other in an octagon, did better still; but they apparently did not know the virtue of bonds and did evil, man to man. But perhaps some did know? What of the Church's charge that they wore girdles or cords? (Kelly 1991: 88)

Kelly goes on to comment on this text:

> Note also [Gardner's] homophobia... Aside from English bigotry in general, homophobia was a particular characteristic of flagellants, Gibson (p. 276) points out, the line of thought being something like, "Well, even if I am addicted to being beaten and humiliated by prostitutes, *at least* I'm not a faggot!" — as if homosexuality were somehow even worse (Kelly 1991: 88-89).

Kelly has made his point — using Gardner's claimed homophobia to support his contention that Gardner was sexually addicted to being scourged. However, the original text is not as Kelly presents it. The actual text in the BAM ends with:

> ... The Knights of the Temple, who used to mutualy scurg each-other in an octagan did better still, but they aparantly did not know the virtue of bonds (Gardner n.d.: 73)

That's the end of the text in the BAM, followed by a blank page; the rest was added to the BAM text by Kelly. Kelly's claims about Gardner's sexuality are unsupported by the source texts, so Kelly just alters the source texts to conform to his theory.[2]

2. It is possible that Kelly derived this additional wording from a version of "Of the Ordeal..." published by the Farrars in *The Witches' Way*; however the text in the Farrars is clearly identified as being from a source *other* than the BAM *and* the Farrars note that the additional lines in Kelly's version appear to be a later copyist's addition to the text, i.e. they were not in the original version as found in the BAM (Farrar 1984: 57). If Kelly did indeed get these extra lines from the Farrars, he should have indicated as much, as well as hesitated to attribute them to Gardner as part of a personal attack on the man.

The rest of the texts in *Crafting the Art of Magic* are similarly corrupt. Kelly's analysis of the source texts cannot be trusted because the texts themselves have been altered to support Kelly's hypothesis.

What is amazing is that so few scholars seem to have checked Kelly's research.[3] It has been accepted uncritically by virtually the entire academic community. This is surprising in light of the common view, elucidated by David Hufford, that "the general demand for impartiality in scholarship is applied with special stringency to the study of spiritual matters, so much so that it is often assumed that believers cannot be competent scholars of belief traditions." (Hufford 1995: 60-61) Kelly's author biography in the front of his book describes him as "a founder of two of the largest Witchcraft organizations in America".

I would suggest that Kelly's work has escaped this restriction because his work is perceived as hostile to established Craft "doctrine", i.e. the claim of antiquity. This removes from him the stigma of "advocacy". As Hufford points out:

> When a scholar presents findings that are congenial to her or his own personal views, there is the *possibility* that those views have unduly influenced the inquiry. However, to assume that rational conclusions can only be reached by those who do not find them congenial would be ludicrous (Hufford 1995: 66).

In this case, however, part of the problem has been a pervasive ignorance regarding Kelly's position in the modern Craft movement and consequently which views are "congenial". He has been an active member of many Craft groups and has his own personal agendas to advance, agendas that are furthered by the arguments in his book. Far from being exempt from the stain of "advocacy", Kelly is immersed in it, but as the positions being advocated are internal to the Craft subculture, academics have been unaware of them. Precisely what *should* make Kelly's work suspect is what has paradoxically made him acceptable to scholars.

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3. This is all the more surprising given that Kelly repeatedly states in *Crafting the Art of Magic* that the texts he presents have been "augmented" (Kelly 1991: 54), "fleshed out" (Kelly 1991: 67), "reconstructed" (Kelly 1991: 109), etc.

## Misrepresentation of sources

This has taken three forms: blatantly contradictory statements, misrepresentation of an author's positions without actually citing them, and the creation of "straw men". For an example of the former, we can turn again to Kelly.

Throughout *Crafting the Art of Magic* Kelly continually returns to the same theme: Gardner's supposed addiction to flagellation. Kelly gives us some details of the life of the young Gerald Gardner:

> His education for the most part was in the hands of "Con" [sic], a governess to whom the "Bracelin" biography says he was devoted. He did not obtain a university education, but instead went to work for the commercial branch of the British Civil Service in the Far East (Kelly 1991: 27).

In fact, Gardner was entrusted to the care of Josephine McCombie, known affectionately as "Com", at the early age of four. Due to his severe asthma, Gardner could not be raised in the British climate, and so Com was instructed to take Gardner to the Mediterranean to raise, with infrequent visits home. As it turned out, Com did little if anything to educate Gardner and mostly ignored the boy. Gardner taught himself to read and he was entirely self-educated (Bracelin 1960: 14-23). Kelly goes on to say that:

> ... what is most important about Gardner's life for understanding his role in founding the modern Craft movement is the fact that he suffered from a sexual addiction. Specifically, he was addicted to being whipped (Kelly 1991: 27).

Kelly softens our reaction to this provocative statement, and consequently our skepticism, by saying that:

> To blame him or think ill of him for that would be bigotry, ignorance, or hypocrisy, because he had not chosen to acquire this addiction. Instead, it was forced upon him, as it was upon most Englishmen of his generation, by the English educational system (Kelly 1991: 27).

... a system through which, as Kelly has told us only a paragraph before, Gardner never passed. On page 28, Kelly tells us that "Gardner was certainly beaten by Con [sic]", but without any supporting evidence or substantiation. In fact, *nowhere* in this book does Kelly offer *any* corroborative testimony to support this claim of sexual addiction. He asks us to accept it as a given because it is, as he admits above, essential to his argument. Kelly's recurrent use of

Gibson's work, *The English Vice: Beating, Sex, and Shame in Victorian England and After*, to explain Gardner's psychological motivations is thus rendered irrelevant.

For examples of misrepresentation without quotation, we can turn to Jacqueline Simpson's earlier article "Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her, and Why?" (Simpson 1994). Simpson takes Murray, author of *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, to task for resorting to ridiculous rationalizations to explain the more outlandish and supernatural elements in the confessions of Witches during the persecutions. Simpson states:

> Such rationalizations can be unintentionally funny, as when [Murray] accounts for Satan's cloven hoof by saying that it was "perhaps a specially formed boot or shoe" which a coven-leader wore to make sure he was recognized (Murray 1921: 32; Simpson 1994: 90-91).

The problem here is that Murray never says this. What Murray actually says is:

> When in ordinary clothes [the Devil] was indistinguishable from any other man of his own rank or age, but the evidence suggests that he made himself known by some manual gesture, by a password or by some token carried on his person. The token seems to have been carried on the foot, and was perhaps a specially formed boot or shoe, or a foot-covering worn under the shoe (Murray 1921: 31-32).

There is no mention of a "cloven hoof" in this section of Murray's book, dealing with the appearance of the "Devil" as an ordinary man. Simpson is putting words into Murray's mouth to make her look, as she herself says, "funny".

Referring to Murray's avoidance of a likely Hebrew etymology of the word "sabbat", Simpson states:

> The tone and methods are typical: a dogmatic rejection of the normally accepted etymology... reinforced with the hectoring rhetorical "clearly", and followed by a picturesque guess. But the startling thing is that in the course of her book she quotes no fewer than five texts from the sixteenth century which use the equally common term "synagogue" for a gathering of devils and witches (Murray 1921: 125, 129, 133, 145 and 147), which should surely have alerted her to the fact that Jewish words were indeed jeeringly applied to witches (Simpson 1994: 91).

Maybe so, but with her *ad hominem* criticisms Simpson is exaggerating her argument. On page 125 of *Witch-Cult*, Murray quotes two texts using the word "synagogue", one sourced to Danaeus and one to Boquet. On page 129, Murray quotes one text using the word "synagogue", sourced to Michaelis. On page 133, there is *no* quote using the word "synagogue", or indeed any mention of a synagogue. On page 145, Murray quotes one text using the word "synagogue", but it is the same text from Boquet appearing on page 125. Finally, on page 147, there is *no* quote using the word "synagogue", nor any mention of a synagogue.

So, in fact, Murray quotes only three such texts, not five as Simpson claims. Her point is still a valid one, but the evidence has been inflated.

Continuing in the same article, Simpson states:

> [Murray] does occasionally admit that the clues she is following are very slight and scattered; for example, that only one source names all four of the festivals which she said were held annually everywhere (Murray 1921: 110; 1933, 47; Simpson 1994: 92).

This is very misleading. By repetitious use in her article of the word "admit" and its variants, Simpson continually implies an admission of guilt, i.e. that Murray knew that she was making this up or stretching the facts, but it is Simpson's selective omission of the material that is at issue here. In this case, while Murray does state on pages 109-10 that there is only one trial record (in Scotland) in which the names of all four festivals are given, she also quotes (and Simpson omits) on page 109 records from France in which the Witches state that there are four great festivals and on pages 110-111 records from Scotland, England, and France which name individual festivals of these four in ways that do not rule out the others.

Simpson asks:

> Who now recalls, for example, that it was she who invented the idea that a coven must have thirteen members, on the basis of just one statement in one Scottish trial, as she herself admitted (Murray 1933: 47; Simpson 1994: 89).

Murray "admitted" no such thing. Simpson's bibliography explains that "Murray 1933" refers to the Oxford University Press edition of *The God of the Witches*, but according to the 1981 reprint from Oxford University Press, this book was first published by Sampson Low, Marston and Co., Ltd., in 1931 and was not reissued by Oxford until 1952. It would appear that there is no

1933 Oxford edition of this book. This makes it difficult to check Simpson's alleged citation.

This error can be excused as mere sloppiness, but the statement by Simpson is also seriously misleading. What Murray actually says about the number thirteen is:

> There is only one trial in which the number thirteen is specifically mentioned, when Isobel Gowdie stated that in each coven of her district there were thirteen persons. In the other trials the number is indicated and can be recovered by counting up the accused persons (Murray 1981: 69).

This is *not* an "admission" that she "invented" the idea, as Simpson represents; it is simply a straightforward statement.

Simpson takes Murray to task for whitewashing the Witches' reputation for doing evil, saying:

> [Murray's] logic on this point was even more eccentric than usual, consisting solely in an argument by reversal of evidence: witches were invariably accused of blighting crops, killing animals, killing children and making men impotent, and therefore they must "obviously" have "originally" been doing just the opposite. She cites from Isobel Gowdie's confession a charm in which a toad yoked to a miniature plough was loosed on someone's land to make it sterile, saying such rites must have been "originally for the promotion of fertility, but were misunderstood by the recorders and probably by the witches themselves" (Murray 1921: 115; Simpson 1994: 92).

Note the language that Simpson uses to characterize Murray's position: "...they must 'obviously'...", "... such rites must have been...", etc. Compare this with what Murray actually says:

> The magical ceremonies performed by the witches with the help of the Devil were usually for the destruction of, or for doing harm to, an enemy. Sometimes, however, the spells were originally for the promotion of fertility, but were misunderstood by the recorders and probably by the witches themselves... Isobel Gowdie's magical charms (1662) seems to come under this category (Murray 1921: 115).

Note the way Murray actually presents her arguments: "...usually...", "Sometimes...", "...seems to...", etc. Murray is much more cautious in presenting her position, while Simpson makes her sound dogmatic and absolute. Also, the word "obviously" does not occur in this passage at all. Simpson consistently misrepresents Murray's views in "Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her, and Why?"

Ronald Hutton adopts a very similar approach in *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Hutton 1991). Hutton notes that:

> [Murray] also spoke of gatherings for purposes of business instead of religion, which she termed "esbats". This expression actually occurs only in a single source, used by a French intellectual who did not himself give it this meaning. But Dr. Murray was happy to declare it to be another general rule of her "cult" (Hutton 1991: 303).

As in Simpson, the tone is belittling. Hutton uses language that implies that Murray jumped to a conclusion and held it dogmatically. What Murray actually says is:

> There were two kinds of assemblies; the one, known as the Sabbath, was the general meeting of all the members of the religion; the other, to which I give -- on the authority of Estebene de Cambrue -- the name of Esbat, was only for the special and limited number who carried out the rites and practices of the cult, and was not for the general public (Murray 1921: 97).

In other words, "Esbat" is a useful term for Murray to use to distinguish the two types of meetings. Murray does not in any way hide the fact that it only comes from one source, nor the fact that she is the one ascribing the term to the meetings, nor does she say that the term has universal use. Her position is exaggerated by Hutton so that it can then be attacked.

For another kind of misrepresentation without quotation, we can turn to Hutton's *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Hutton 1996). On pages 422 - 424, Hutton lavishes praise on Simpson's 1994 article on Murray, saying that one purpose of the article was to:

> ... knock a few more nails into the coffin of the Murray thesis by showing how hopelessly flawed her methods were from the point of view of a folklorist as well as of a historian (Hutton 1996: 423).

Hutton goes on to add his own "nails" to the "coffin" in the form of further arguments against Murray:

> [Murray's] opinions upon the subject developed steadily over five decades and became less and less credible... From 1930 onwards, her new books ceased to be published by university presses, and it is easy to believe that by the 1940s and 1950s there was almost nobody in the Folk-Lore Society, any more than academe, who fully endorsed her opinions (Hutton 1996: 423-424).

If I may summarize, Hutton seems to be saying that the fact that no university press would publish Murray's books after 1930 is evidence that she had lost almost all credibility by the 1940s and 50s. But turning to the publishing information page of Murray's second book on Witchcraft, *The God of the Witches* (Murray 1931), reveals the following publishing history:

> First published by Sampson Low, Marston and Co., Ltd., 1931
>
> Reissued by Oxford University Press, New York, and Faber and Faber, Ltd., London, 1952
>
> First issued as an Oxford University Press paperback, by special arrangement with Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1970
>
> This reprint, 1981 (Murray 1931: no page number).[4]

Oxford may not have been the original publisher of *The God of the Witches*, but it made a deliberate effort to acquire the book in 1952, when Murray had, according to Hutton, supposedly lost all credibility, and to keep it in print up to the present. Additionally, Oxford University Press first issued a paperback edition of Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* in 1962. Not only did Oxford decide to reissue the book, but it also added a new forward by noted medieval historian Sir Steven Runciman in which he says:

> Dr. Murray herself did not disarm criticism by producing later books, notably *The God of the Witches* (1933) and, more recently, *The Divine King in England*, in which she somewhat recklessly pursued her theories further... She has always had solid evidence to back up her claims; but it has sometimes carried her into assertions which to many anthropologists and historians seem unjustified and extravagant. The accusations of extravagance cannot, however, be brought against *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Runciman in Murray 1963).

While I agree with Runciman's assessment of the relative merits of Murray's three books on Witchcraft, these problems with her scholarship do not provide a justification for Hutton's attack. Either Hutton did not larry out the easiest kind of research (i.e. looking at the front of a book) or he knew the facts already and intentionally used the wording "...her new books ceased to be published by university presses..." Since this isn't just a passing reference containing an error of fact, but rather an argument made to undermine Murray's credibility, it is either inexcusably sloppy or deliberately deceptive.

4. I might add that Murray's book is *still* in print in its 17th printing from Oxford University Press, the publisher of Hutton's *The Stations of the Sun* as well.

Unfortunately, the evidence of Hutton's book *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Hutton 1991), published five years earlier, supports the latter conclusion. On pages 305-306, Hutton notes:

> ... *The Witch Cult* was still taken seriously by some ten years later, and in 1962 (the year before Margaret Murray's death), Oxford University Press brought that book out in the first of a series of paperback editions, and so made it available to a wider public than ever before (Hutton 1991: 305-306).

How, then, can Hutton say five years later that "by the 1940s and 1950s there was almost nobody in the Folk-Lore Society, any more than academe, who fully endorsed her opinions" when he knows that Oxford University Press made the book "available to a wider public than ever before" in 1962?

Also, while it may or may not be true that "by the 1940s and 1950s there was almost nobody in the Folk-Lore Society... who fully endorsed her opinions" (Hutton 1996: 423-424), the fact remains that she was elected President of the Folklore Society in 1953 (Simpson 1994: 89).

The third type of misrepresentation found in much recent work is the creation of "straw men". For example, Hutton states of Murray's Witch-cult:

> It worshipped the Horned God — Dr. Murray's paganization of the Christian Satan who featured in the early modern accusations and confessions — and also the Goddess — whom she took from high medieval records of magical practices (Hutton 1991: 304).

In point of fact, there is no Goddess associated with the Witch-cult in any of Murray's books, only a Horned God. There isn't even any mention of a Goddess in Murray's introduction to *Witchcraft Today* (Gardner 1955: 15-16). The assertion of a divine pair in Murray's Witch-cult is Hutton's, not Murray's. It is important to Hutton that there be such a divine pair in the Witch-cult so that he can then use this "straw man" as a point to attack. I'll come back to this under "Misleading or inaccurate generalizations".

In recent academic work on Witchcraft, there has been a notable bias against those authors who assign some kind of historical antiquity to the Witchcraft movement. There has been a tendency to be sloppy, to put words into those authors' mouths, and generally to make intellectual laziness on the

part of the academic presenter appear to be intellectual weakness on the part of the authors in question.[5]

## Reliance on unreliable sources

Given Aidan Kelly's doctoring of texts and his contradictory analysis, it is amazing that he appears to be the single most cited source on the history of the modern Witchcraft movement, and that his conclusions are seemingly accepted without question. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in *New Age Religion & Western Culture*, states:

> Gardner claimed to have been initiated into Wicca by a member of a secret coven tracing its lineage back to the period of the witchcraft persecutions. In fact, as Aidan Kelly has conclusively demonstrated, Gardner did not revive an old religion but created a new one (Hanegraaff 1996: 87).[6]

Loretta Orion, in *Never Again the Burning Times*, supports Kelly's analysis, saying:

> After analyzing several revisions of the Book of Shadows [the liturgical manuals that descend from the BAM], a Neopagan scholar, Aidan Kelly (1991), concluded that Gardner fashioned a new religion based mostly on the writings of Murray and Leland (Orion 1995: 24).

Dennis D. Carpenter, in "Emergent Nature Spirituality: An Examination of the Major Spiritual Contours of the Contemporary Pagan Worldview", also uncritically supports Kelly's views:

> Interested in the relationship between the foundational myths and the actual history of Witchcraft, Kelly (1991) utilized interviews with important figures in this history as well as exhaustive textual analysis to investigate the authenticity of Gerald Gardner's claim that he was initiated in 1939 into one of the last surviving covens in England. Even though Kelly concluded that no evidence existed to suggest that Gardner was actually initiated into

5. A prime example of such "intellectual laziness" is Kelly's summary dismissal of a valid alternative hypothesis solely because it "complicates life" (Kelly 1991: 176).
6. I recently had the opportunity to speak with Hanegraaff at the 1997 meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Francisco. I showed him the photographic proof of Kelly's doctoring of texts. Hanegraaff acknowledged the unarguable weight of the evidence and said that he would be changing his references to Kelly accordingly in the future.

> such a coven and that Gardner had actually pieced together material from the variety of texts produced by Leland, Murray, Graves, and others, Kelly credited Gardner as the creative genius behind an important new religious movement in the twentieth century (Carpenter 1996: 45-46).

Carpenter even refers his readers to Kelly for "an in-depth discussion of this controversy", as if Kelly were an accurate and impartial source (Carpenter 1996: 378).[7]

James W. Baker, in "White Witches: Historic Fact and Romantic Fantasy", also supports Kelly, noting that he "...eventually found that many of [his] observations and conclusions had been paralleled by Aidan Kelly when *Crafting the Art of Magic* was published in 1991" (Baker 1996: 174) and that "...there is no reason to recapitulate Aidan Kelly's thorough work on Wicca..." (Baker 1996: 179).

Note that what most of these writers really say about Kelly is that he has done a lot of work. Few, if any, of them seem to have actually taken the time to investigate and evaluate that work themselves.

I also must ask a rather pointed question: Since when is a book from Llewellyn Publications accepted without question as a work of solid scholarship? Llewellyn is know for its "pop" and "New Age" books on crystals, UFOs, tarot cards, Witches, and other occult themes. It has never had any kind of reputation for academic reliability, let alone excellence. If the topic in question were anything other than Witchcraft, for instance the philosophical schools of Weimar Germany, and the primary source cited was *Secrets of the German Sex Magicians* by "Frater U:.D:." (published by Llewellyn the same year as Kelly), the work would be summarily dismissed by the academic community. Why, then, is *Crafting the Art of Magic* considered a credible source?

## Reliance on "common knowledge"

Repeatedly, scholars studying modern Witchcraft make unsupported statements of fact, while seemingly appealing to "common knowledge". Simpson notes the following:

7. I also had the opportunity to speak with Carpenter at the same AAR conference and to show him the proof of Kelly's doctoring. He said that I should report that he "no longer necessarily supports" his statements about Kelly in his 1996 essay and that he will re-examine the evidence.

> ...and yet in the 1950's [Murray's] descriptions of alleged rituals, festivals and organizations of Witches were used by Gerald Gardner as a blueprint for setting up a new system of magical and religious rituals, the Wicca movement of Britain and America... (Simpson 1994: 89).

Simpson does not give any citation supporting this assertion, probably because there isn't one. In fact, Gardner's own writings (as well as his biography *Gerald Gardner: Witch*, 1960) make it clear that he was skeptical of Murray's claims *until* he was brought into a secret group and told that this group was the Brotherhood of the "Wica" [sic] (Bracelin 1960: 165). Gardner's pejorative usage of the word "Witch" in *Keris and Other Malay Weapons* (Gardner 1936: 10) and *A Goddess Arrives* (Gardner 1939: 190) indicate that he did not have a positive image of Witches before his return to England and subsequent joining of a coven in late 1939.[8] The material he received from this earlier coven, as preserved in *Ye Bok of ye Art Magical* (the oldest known "Book of Shadows"), contains absolutely no trace of Murrayite influence. It would appear that Gardner's discovery of this group caused him to re-evaluate Murray's claims and to subsequently incorporate some elements of Murrayite Witchcraft into the oral lore of what later came to be called Gardnerian Craft. However, this oral lore only changed the context; the written lore stayed the same, i.e. without Murrayite influence.

It was only later, as Gardner started to popularize the material that he received, that the "foundation myth" of descent from the European Witch-cult (as propounded by Murray) developed and had a shaping influence (Gardner 1954). The popular image of Craft, as opposed to the core textual material, definitely took on the appearance of having been influenced by the work of Murray and the folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland, and this went on to have an overwhelming influence on the popular Craft movement. The movement accepted the "Murrayite" theory of Craft origins, i.e. that modern Witchcraft is descended from Celtic paganism by way of medieval and Renaissance Witchcraft, and consequently adopted "Celtic" terms, deities, festivals, etc.

In turn, the current ease with wich one can approach and study the popular manifestations of the Craft, at festivals and in Llewellyn publications, has

8. While *A Goddess Arrives* was published in 1939, the same year that Gardner returned to England and joined a coven, it was written earlier, during his travels in the eastern Mediterranean before returning to England.

obscured the fact that the older, traditionally more secretive Craft groups bear very little resemblance to the popular phenomenon studied by most scholars.[9]

Simpson makes the assumption that the Gardnerian Witchcraft movement is obviously based on the works of the anthropologist Margaret Murray. This assumption is echoed by Orion above, who adds the influence of the folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland to the mix, and by Carpenter who adds the poet Robert Graves as well. The magician Aleister Crowley is also usually included as a part of this picture. Such assumptions *may* be traced in part to Kelly's assertion in reference to the collection of Gardner's books and papers then in the possession of Ripley's Believe-It-Or-Not in Toronto (now mostly owned by the James' of the Wiccan Church of Canada) in 1975:

> I was able to look through Gardner's entire personal library. It represented a healthy selection of what had been published on Witchcraft and the occult between about 1890 and 1950, and included precisely the books — Murray, Crowley, Leland, etc. — that I already knew he had used as sources for his rituals. It was mildly interesting to find that he did own these books, but there were no surprises among them. There were also about a hundred older "rare" books and manuscripts on occult topics ranging from the 16th to

9. I do not mean to use these terms in the "valid/in-valid" sense discussed by Leonard Primiano in "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife" (*Western Folklore*, vol. 54, #1, California Folklore Society, January 1995). I use the terms "traditional" vs. "popular" in the sense that has become common among current Craft scholars, i.e. "traditional" Craft groups are based on texts handed down from a perceived antiquity, typically tracing to the British Isles and to a time before living memory. In contrast, "popular" Craft groups tend to be more recent, datable inventions, often adopting the institutional structures and ritual forms of "traditional" Craft, but combining these with a theology and liturgy grounded either in ideas of a "Celtic" past or a prehistoric matriarchal golden age (sometimes both) that owe more to 19th century scholarship and fantasy than they do to reality. "Popular" Craft tends to be "high-profile" and is most often encountered in books from Llewellyn Publishing, the large Neopagan festivals, and publicly advertised Craft study-groups. "Traditional" Craft tends to be much more private, secretive, and "low-profile".
The problems for scholars studying modern Craft are compounded by the self-censorship that is common in "popular" Craft books, articles, and rituals open to the public. Material intended for the general public almost always downplays the reality of magic, deity possession, the existence of benign and malevolent spirits, the "sacramental" nature of sexuality and even hallucinogens, etc. William A. Wilson addresses this problem of self-censorship by informants in "Folklore, a Mirror for What?" (ibid.).

> 19th centuries, but a close examination did not reveal them to be interesting, valuable, or relevant to the Craft (Kelly 1993: 3).

By "precisely the books — Murray, Crowley, Leland, etc. — that I already knew he had used as sources for his rituals", Kelly means Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* and Leland's *Aradia*, among others, as is clear from the rest of his arguments. The problem is that these two works were never a part of the collection owned by Ripley's. According to the inventory made by Ripley's when they bought the Gardner collection in 1971 and sold with the collection to the James' in 1987, there was and is indeed a book by Murray in the collection, *Egyptian Temples*, as well as a book by Leland, *The Breitman Ballads*. But these are not the books Kelly would like the reader to believe that Gardner owned.

Regarding Gardner's connection with Aleister Crowley, according to Crowley's diaries and guest logs (currently in the possession of the organization he headed, the OTO), Crowley met Gerald Gardner on Thursday, May 1st, 1947, in the company of Arnold Crowther and a Miss Eva Collins. According to their reminiscences of this meeting, Crowley a) said that he had been in the Witch-cult as a young man around the turn of the century, b) said that he had left because he did not want to be bossed around by women, and c) left Gardner with the impression that he might have written material for the Witch-cult when he was involved (Bracelin 1960: 174; Crowther 1970: 14; Gardner 1964: 47). That Crowley made such claims has been corroborated by other witnesses, including Crowley's executor, Louis Wilkinson (King 1970: 177).

Gardner met with Crowley three more times, on the 7th, 14th, and 27th of May, 1947. On one of these occasions Crowley gave Gardner a copy of *The Book of the Law* (currently in the possession of the James') inscribed "From Baphomet X* to Scire, P.I., on his affiliation", indicating that Gardner only joined the OTO during these meetings in May 1947 (and that Gardner was already a 3rd Degree Freemason, as is supported by other documents and statements by Gardner). Crowley gave Gardner a charter to open a lodge of the OTO, calligraphed by Gardner, but signed by Crowley. Crowley also signed a copy of his poetry collection "Jephthah" which Gardner had acquired in a used bookstore. After this, Crowley sent Gardner eight letters between May 23rd and June 24th, 1947 (currently in the possession of Ripley's), informing Gardner of OTO meetings. In December 1947, Crowley died. There is no record of any other communication between Gardner and Crowley.

The evidence of the BAM is that the few paragraphs, worth of material which allegedly were "copied from Crowley" were embedded within the Witch texts before Gardner received and copied them; i.e. textual evidence supports the conclusion that (except where explicitly indicated by Gardner) the contents of the BAM were all copied from earlier texts, without composition by Gardner. His meeting with Crowley only confirmed that this material was indeed a part of his Craft heritage, as he expressed to Doreen Valiente and as recounted by her in *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (Valiente 1989: 57). Whether this material was written by Crowley and copied by the Witches, or part of the Witch-cult and copied by Crowley, and whether it entered the Witch texts only one generation before Gardner or a few generations earlier, is yet to be determined.

Regarding the influence of Leland's *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches*, there is very little Leland material evident in the early Witchcraft texts recorded by Gardner in the BAM. The few sentences from Leland that do appear in the BAM (and are quoted above in the "Charge of the Goddess") are colorful and evocative, but do not appear to have had much of an effect on the rest of the traditional Craft material, nor is there any hint of Leland's Goddess of the oppressed and marginalized in the earliest known Craft material. A Goddess, yes, but little contextual material to connect her to Leland. The earliest version of the "Charge of the Goddess", a poetic speech said to be the Goddess' own teachings, is 25 lines long in the BAM, of which four are the same as lines in Leland's *Aradia*. This constitutes almost the total written influence of Leland on the early modern Witch material. While the Charge has had a great influence on the development of the popular Craft movement, its role in early modern traditional (e.g. Gardnerian) Craft was minor and peripheral.

The "common knowledge" underlying most recent academic work on Witchcraft has been that Gardner invented the modern movement. This in turn has limited the study of the origins of modern Witchcraft to "What were Gardner's sources?" However, the common knowledge needs to be questioned.

Recently, in researching my own book on Craft origins, I was examining an unattributed invocation when a friend observed "Well, that certainly sounds like Gardner's writing." I thought, "That should be easy enough to check. Let's just compare it to a known sample of liturgical writing by Gardner." There isn't one. As far as I have been able to determine, there is not a single example of liturgical or ritual text that is unambiguously Gardner's writing.

In Gardner's first novel, *A Goddess Arrives* (1939), whenever he gets to a ritual scene he skips over it with words like:

> ... Then a series of mysteries, incantations, exhortations and prayers, which seemed to last for hours, though they were much less, and of which he grew so wearied that at last his mind could no longer attend, and he followed blindly... (Gardner 1939: 327).

Given an opportunity to write original rituals, Gardner avoided doing so.

In his next novel, *High Magic's Aid*, none of the rituals are of Gardner's creation. As he stated in a letter to Mr. Gordon Bay, apparently dated 6-8-54 (the handwriting is hard to read):

> Actually, I wanted to write about a witch & what she'd told me, & she wouldn't let me tell anything about Witchcraft, but I said why not let me write —— to —— the Witch's point of view. You are always persecuted & abused & ——.
>
> So she said I might if I didn't give any Witch's magic, & it must only be as fiction. So, as I had to give some magic, I simply copied it from Jewish Ritual Magic, chiefly "The Key of Salomon the King" (Private correspondence in the possession of the Wiccan Church of Canada, reproduced in Kelly 1977, plate 1).

Given another opportunity to write original rituals, Gardner copied some instead.

The liturgical and ritual material in Gardner's non-fiction, *Witchcraft Today* (1954) and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959), is all attributed to Witches of Gardner's acquaintance.

There is not a single document of which I am aware (having read everything in the collection of Gardner's books and private papers in Toronto, in addition to Gardnerian Books of Shadows from all over America and the UK) that is an original ritual or liturgical text attributed to or signed by Gardner, or even where his name simply appears as author.

I have asked both "Robert" and "Dayonis", British Witches who were initiated by and worked with Gardner in the 50s about this: "Did Gardner ever write any original rituals? Did he ever say 'Look at this wonderful new invocation I wrote?'" Both of them have told me "No". Gardner never wrote anything that they knew of. When he needed a new ritual text, he always asked someone else to write it, especially Doreen Valiente. This was one of the things that he admired about Valiente: her ability to write new material.

In sum, it would appear that there is as yet *no* evidence that Gardner wrote *any* of the liturgical material in the Book of Shadows texts, save a few

lines of commentary and marginalia. The sole possible counter-example, the Craft Laws, may have been compiled by him, but if so it likely comes from earlier texts, some of which still exist in the BAM, that he himself did not compose. Rather than asking if there is any part of the Gardnerian Witchcraft movement that is *not* Gardner's, we should be asking if any of it is his *at all.* A planned misspelling frequency analysis of the various texts in the BAM, including those commentaries and marginal notes known to be by Gardner, may resolve this question, but until that is completed, we have no reason to believe that any of the Witch texts are his, and more than a little circumstantial evidence leads us to conclude that they are not.

Of course, questioning Gardner's authorship of the early Craft material in no way rules out the possibility that the material was composed only one generation earlier; i.e. Gardner could have copied the rituals from the person or persons who actually did compose them. Until more evidence is presented, there is just no way to know.

## Reliance on unrepresentative sources

There has been a tendency for scholars writing about the Craft to turn to any handy book for information, seemingly without making any effort to determine how representative that book is. Consequently, many statements about the modern Witchcraft movement end up being erroneous to the point of being ludicrous. Simpson states that:

> At first [Gardner] prescribed worship of the Horned God only, and used prayers and rituals taken from the intensely phallocentric writings of Aleister Crowley; later, apparently in response to strong persuasion by his High Priestess Doreen Valiente, he rewrote his rituals and shifted emphasis to a Goddess as chief divinity (Guiley 1992: 412-13; Simpson 1994: 92).

I have not seen this article by Rosemary Ellen Guiley, but as a contributor to her *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft,* I can attest to the extent to which it should not be relied on as an academic source. Her information is mostly accurate, but often quirky. As her biographies of prominent Witches were mostly written by the Witches themselves, they are often more self-serving than accurate. In any event, in this case she (and consequently Simpson) are very much in error. Gardner's interest in, if not devotion to, the Goddess is evident in his first published novel, *A Goddess Arrives* (1939), and predates his involvement with his first coven. The focus on *both* a Goddess and God is evident in *Ye Bok of ye Art Magical* and certainly appears to be in the Witch

material before Gardner receives it. Additionally, in *The Witches' Way* (1984), Janet and Stewart Farrar give the texts of the initiation scripts in use when Gardner initiated Doreen Valiente in 1953 — texts copied from the BAM. These scripts focus on the Goddess and must, of necessity, predate Valiente's involvement. The alleged connection with Crowley has already been dealt with above. However, the supposed "phallocentrism" is notably absent from the texts available for examination in both the BAM and the texts recorded by the Farrars.

There are many books on modern Witchcraft commonly available and a glance at the bibliographies of any few at random makes it abundantly clear which sources are referred to most often: Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon* (1986), Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* (1989), and Janet and Stewart Farrar's *The Witches' Way* (1984). Additionally, there have been a number of fine books from university and other academic presses, e.g. Tanya Luhrman's *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (1989), and Loretta Orion's *Never Again the Burning Times* (1995), as well as first-person accounts of the early history of the modern Witchcraft movement, such as Doreen Valiente's *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (1989). There is, then, no justification for this tendency of academic writers to turn to any convenient popular non-fiction book by a little-known or "fringe" author as their one and only source on modern Witchcraft. Even a modicum of research should easily lead to more reliable sources.

A good example of such use of an unrepresentative source can be found in an otherwise fascinating book by Oxford D.Lit. Lotte Motz, *The Faces of the Goddess*:

> In the late 1960s the Women's Spirituality Movement came into existence, also known as Wicca, the Witches of the West, the Craft, Goddess Worship. The name Wicca, Witches, was chosen because it was believed that the Witches, persecuted by the Church in the Middle Ages, had preserved and transmitted the ancient prepatriarchal tradition of the Goddess which was now to be restored (55) (Motz 1997: 37).

There is so much misinformation in this one small paragraph that it is hard to know where to begin. The "Women's Spirituality Movement" is not synonymous with modern Witchcraft. There are many in the "Movement" who pursue revised forms of Judaism or Christianity and would take great offense at being labeled "Witches". Nor is either term synonymous with "Goddess Worship" (Eller 1993). Witches do relate to a goddess or goddesses, but most relate to gods as well. I have never heard the term "the Witches of the

West" before. The modern Witchcraft movement, per se, started in 1954 with the publication of Gardner's first non-fiction book on the subject, *Witchcraft Today*. The name "Witches" was not "chosen" by anyone still living; rather it was the self-identification of the group in England in the 1930s that Gardner joined. It is as yet unproven whether they chose the name or inherited it.

It is hard to understand how Motz could get so much basic information wrong. Her footnote leads to the following citation:

> 55. One of the founders of the movement was Z. Budapest: Stein, *Goddess Celebrates*, 12-13. A similar organization is the Fellowship of Isis, founded by Olivia Robertson in 1976; Matthews, *Voices of the Goddess*, 30 (Motz 1997: 209).

This only compounds the problems. Budapest was a prominent early figure in the modern Witchcraft movement in America, but the publication of her first book, *The Feminist Book of Lights & Shadows* in 1975, post-dates the earliest published books on the movement by twenty-one years. Budapest was a fifteen-year-old child in Hungary when *Witchcraft Today* came out in 1954; in no way could she be considered a "founder" of Wicca as a whole.

Motz's source for this misinformation, indeed her sole cited source for *all* information on Wicca, is Diane Stein's *The Goddess Celebrates* (1991). Stein is not, nor has she ever been, a spokesperson for the modern Witchcraft movement. She *has* published work on Women's Spirituality, but she is not referenced or cited in the works by Adler, the Farrars, Luhrman, Orion, or Valiente mentioned above. There is no reason to treat her as a reliable source on modern Witchcraft. On the other hand, Stein's work on the descent of space-people from the Pleiades star cluster to found the pre-historic matriarchies of Atlantis and Lemuria, published in the same year as *The Goddess Celebrates*, should be ample justification to treat her work with more than a grain of salt (Stein 1991: 32 ff.). Motz's exclusive reliance on a single unrepresentative source leads to very faulty statements. A simple check of the literature could easily have led her to more representative sources.

## Reliance on secondary sources

This has been the greatest problem lying behind almost all recent work on the origins of the modern Craft movement, with the sole surprising exception of Aidan Kelly, who at least went back to original source texts for his study. The problem is clearly evident in Hutton, opening his discussion of modern Craft:

> Their publications are now numerous enough for the (literally) uninitiated to form a good impression of their beliefs and practices. Virtually all are the products of that particular section of the movement called Wicca, but this does seem to be the original and by far the most influential part of the modern faith (Hutton 1991: 330).

In the attached endnote, Hutton lists a number of these publications, books by Gardner, Valiente, the Farrars, the Crowthers, Vivianne Crowley, Margot Adler, and others. The problem here is that while all of these texts are an important part of the Craft as it exists today, and do indeed "form a good impression of their beliefs and practices", not all of them have equal merit as source texts on Craft origins. Nearly everyone after Valiente is reacting to, describing, or interpreting the Craft as it has been mightily influenced and rewritten by her. She, in turn, is building on material she received from Gardner. Gardner's published books, by his own admission, are his interpretations of the material he received from the coven he joined. In other words, in the question of origins, none of these authors are primary sources.

In the question of Gardnerian Craft origins, the only source texts are the BAM and those other texts that Gardner clearly states came from the earlier group. All else is interpretation by Gardner and those who came after him. Gardner's interpretation must be separated from the earlier texts. To date, very few scholars have looked at these texts, and a reliance on the secondary sources, such as those given by Hutton, has led to wasted effort. For example, Hutton speaks of "the Horned God" and "the idea that this religion had essentially been concerned with fertility" (Hutton 1991: 334) as borrowings from Murray, except that "the Horned God" is not in the BAM, nor is there any mention of fertility. The apparent fact that Gardner, Valiente, and others grafted Murrayite interpretations and Celtic material onto the material from the earlier group has obscured the original material to such an extent that most writers are looking for the origins of something before knowing what that something really is.

## Misleading or inaccurate generalizations

Much of Ronald Hutton's case against there being any antiquity to modern Craft rests on its supposed dissimilarity to actual religions of antiquity. In making this point, Hutton makes sweeping generalizations about ancient religions that just aren't true. Hutton begins:

> How did the "Wicca" which was developed in [the 50s and 60s] actually compare with the paganism of antiquity? One fundamental difference is that it deliberately blurs the distinction between religion and magic... It would have been inconceivable to any ancient European pagan of whose thought we have evidence, that the purpose of religious ritual was to "raise" a deity and "work" with her or him. No ancient goddess or god worth the name could be summoned by worshippers, to a particular place, and there employed (Hutton 1991: 335).

Hutton is evidently completely unaware of theurgy, the spiritual magic of late antiquity. Specifically associated with Hecate, the Graeco-Roman goddess of the moon, magic, and (appropriately) Witches, theurgy was practiced by both the Hermeticists and Neoplatonists of the late Roman Empire. Ruth Majercik explains in her edition of *The Chaldean Oracles*:

> ... theurgy should be understood in the sense of "working on" or even "creating" the gods, thus emphasizing the role of the theurgist as the principal agent... But theurgy involves more than just "working on" the gods; it also involves the active participation of the gods themselves. Theurgy, then, can best be characterized as "divine action," since theurgy properly involves not only "divine actions" on the part of men, but the "action of the Divine" on behalf of men... Theurgy, therefore, should be regarded basically as a religious phenomenon, albeit one that is comfortable with the outward forms of magic (Majercik 1989: 22-23).

Majercik goes on to discuss the purification of sacred space for theurgy with salt, water, and incense, the use of magical tools, the invocation of the gods into the sacred space, deity possession, and indeed most of that blurring of religion and magic that is so typical of modern Craft. Hutton's blanket statement that no pagan of antiquity would ever do this simply isn't true.

As to Hutton's assertion that: "No ancient goddess or god worth the name could be summoned by worshippers, to a particular place, and there employed.", Majercik gives a relevant oracle delivered by the goddess Hecate to her worshippers:

> Why, from the eternally coursing ether, do you need to invoke me, the goddess Hecate, by constraints which bind the gods? (Majercik 1989: 221)

Explaining this, Majercik notes:

> The technique itself involved the "binding" of a god in a human medium (again, via the utterance of *voces mysticae*) and then "loosing" him (via similar formulae) when the rite was completed... what is important to stress here is

> that it was not the theurgist, but the god invoked, who had ultimate control over the rite... [the theurgists] did not then claim to have power over the gods, as the gods themselves had communicated the very spells which would bind them (Majercik 1989: 27).

It would be hard to find a more succinct description of the current Craft practice of deity invocation, a practice that Hutton argues has no historical precedent.

Hutton's objection that modern Craft "deliberately blurs the distinction between religion and magic" is based on a position that he elaborates on pages 289-291:

> Historians, theologians and anthropologists seem to be in general agreement upon the distinction between the two [religion and magic]... in historic European societies the difference has been fairly clear... All the literary sources for European paganism also make plain that magic of any kind was not connected with the worship of deities. The distinction in pre-Christian society between a priestess or priest and a sorcerer or Witch was usually plain (Hutton 1991: 289-291).

Leaving aside the counter-example of theurgy, discussed above, Hutton's views on the supposed distinction between religion and magic are woefully outdated. The eminent scholar of religions in late antiquity, Ramsay MacMullen, concludes a recent discussion of magic by noting:

> In my survey of assimilation, these later pages on magic may need two words of explanation. The first is today easily offered, where, even a generation ago, it would have required considerable discussion: namely the relationship between magic and religion and the exact meaning of the two terms. For historians of the west, knowing only their own discipline and only the one Judeo-Christian religious tradition, these matters used to be intellectually as well as theologically indigestible. Now, the lessons of anthropology grown familiar, it is common to accept the impossibility of separating magic from religion and to move on to more interesting subjects (MacMullen 1997: 143-144).

In other words, the views espoused by Hutton are so antiquated that MacMullen feels no need to address them in any detail, although he does provide citations to the work of ten different scholars discussing this very inseparability. Hutton continues:

> Another notable distinction between the "Old Religion" and the old religions lies in the two presiding divine figures of the former, goddess and god. From the beginning Wiccans recognized that the ancient world worshipped

> an enormous number of deities of both genders. They incorporated a selection within their rituals, but made it plain that these were not individual beings but different names, and aspects, of the great couple. This is a vision very remote from the genuine polytheism of antiquity (Hutton 1991: 336).

Again, Hutton's apparent lack of knowledge regarding Neoplatonism leads him to a blanket assertion that isn't true. The statement of Dion Fortune's that "all the gods are one god, and all the goddesses are one goddess" (Fortune 1978: 172), repeated by Valiente as the Craft view of the gods (Valiente 1978: 29), would seem to be in complete accord with the view of the Neoplatonic writer Macrobius, who argued that all gods were ultimately manifestations of the Sun God, just as all goddesses were the Moon Goddess, and that ultimately there were just these two gods (Godwin 1993: 142), with "the One" beyond them. Additionally, Hutton also ignores, or is unaware of, Dryghton, a concept found in British traditional Craft groups of a divine unity beyond the god and goddess; a concept very much like the Neoplatonic conception of "the One". Gardner himself asserts that the late Neoplatonic theology is virtually identical to that of the coven he joined (Gardner 1959: 188-189). Hutton continues:

> There are other differences between old and new. No known cult in the ancient world was carried on by devotees who all worshipped regularly in the nude like the Witches portrayed by Leland and inspired by Gardner (although many present-day pagans prefer to have robed ceremonies) (Hutton 1991: 337).

Again, Hutton shouldn't make such blanket statements; when he does so he is almost always wrong. Just such a mystery group, with male and female initiates meeting naked, is described by Hans Leisegang in "The Mystery of the Serpent" (Leisegang 1955). Discussing a ritual bowl full of Orphic and Eleusinian mystical symbolism and imagery, Leisegang notes:

> More illuminating is the circumstance that the sixteen [male and female] figures on our bowl are totally nude... the scene on the bowl can represent only a mystery cult, and only a mystery cult to which women [as well as men] were admitted (Leisegang 1955: 236).

Additionally, the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus says of the Eleusinian Mysteries:

> ... so, to those that approach the Holy Celebration of the Mysteries, there are appointed purifications and the laying aside of the garments worn before, and the entry in nakedness... (Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.7, in MacKenna 1992: 70).

Hutton goes on to make several more blanket generalizations about ancient religion and how different it was from contemporary Craft, all equally unfounded, ending with:

> All told, the paganism of today has virtually nothing in common with that of the past except the name, which is itself of Christian coinage (Hutton 1991: 337).

In fact, the Paganism of today has quite a lot in common with the paganism of the past, just not with the paganism with which Hutton is apparently familiar. This reflects on Hutton's scholarship rather than on the still-debated antiquity of contemporary Paganism.

The question as to whether or not the name "pagan" is "of Christian coinage" or not strikes me as irrelevant. Whoever coined the name, the fact remains that, as Prof. Mostafa El Abbadi has pointed out, from the 2nd century AD forward the members of the mystery cults started to think of themselves as a single faith in response to the growing threat of Christianity (El Abbadi 1998). Whether they coined the word or not, pagans in antiquity *did* use the term to describe themselves, as the pagan writer Thabit ibn Qurra of Harran did in his address to the Caliph of Baghdad at the end of the 9th century AD:

> We are the heirs and propagators of Paganism... Happy is he who, for the sake of Paganism, bears the burden [of persecution] with firm hope. Who else have civilized the world, and built the cities, if not the nobles and kings of Paganism? Who else have set in order the harbours and the rivers? And who else have taught the hidden wisdom? To whom else has the Deity revealed itself, given oracles, and told about the future, if not to the famous men among the Pagans? The Pagans have made known all this. They have discovered the art of healing the soul; they have also made known the art of healing the body. They have filled the earth with settled forms of government, and with wisdom, which is the highest good. Without Paganism the world would be empty and miserable (quoted in Scott 1982: 105).

The term may or may not have been created by the Pagans themselves, but this one, at least, seemed proud to claim it.

## Neglect of alternative hypotheses

This has, for the most part, been a problem with studies of historical Witchcraft. Jacqueline Simpson's 1995 Presidential Address to the British Folklore Society, titled "Witches and Witchbusters", summarizes research into

historical Witchcraft published over the last thirty years. The address opens with:

> In a recent article (Simpson 1994), I argued that British folklorists had remained unconvinced by Margaret Murray's ill-founded claim that witchcraft was a survival of paganism, and had wisely ignored it (Simpson 1995: 5).

With the very first sentence, Simpson establishes her fundamental position: Witchcraft was *not* a survival of paganism. This explanation for historical Witchcraft has been ruled out *a priori*; therefore, other explanations must lie behind the phenomenon. Simpson goes on to survey the field and the various explanations put forward by leading authors.

Alan Macfarlane "offers a plausible socio-economic explanation", echoed by Keith Thomas (Simpson 1995: 6). Christina Larner "sees a process of repression of deviants typical of an age of faith" (Simpson 1995: 7). Annabel Gregory "explains the situation [at Rye, Sussex] as a political one, arising from feuds between commercial factions in the town under economic stress", while Carol Karlsen believes that "the accusations reflected a struggle to claw back control of property into male hands and force women to accept their proper role" (Simpson 1995: 8). Clive Holmes argues that "men...were the prime movers in prosecutions, women the ancillaries; the issue of gender... cannot be eliminated", while Hester concludes that "witch-hunting... was a form of sexual violence against women" (Simpson 1996: 9).

What Simpson fails to consider, because her pre-set parameters forbid it, is that Witchcraft *could* have existed as a survival of paganism *and* all of the above still be true. That is, a socio-economic or interpersonal or religious explanation does not automatically rule out the possibility that certain people *really* are (or believe themselves to be) practicing Witchcraft as some form of pagan survival.

The example of the recent Satanic crime hysteria, examined in tandem with the phenomenon of historical Witchcraft, opens the door to alternative explanations. This modern phenomenon has been discussed in depth by Shawn Carlson, *et al.* (1989), Jeffrey Victor (1993), Robert Hicks (1991), and others. In recent years, accusations of devil-worship have been unfairly leveled against hundreds, if not thousands, of adults. A significant number of them have been

practitioners of modern Witchcraft or Wicca.[10] In most cases, the motives have been the same as in centuries past: socio-economic, interpersonal, religious. The difference has been that in this more enlightened age and country, accused Witches have publicly proclaimed their Witchcraft, invoked their First Amendment right to Freedom of Religion (in the U.S.), and attempted to educate the public as to the realities of contemporary Witchcraft.

But what would have happened if those same people with those same motivations had been in Europe in the 16th century? The accused Witches would have steadfastly denied their involvement in Witchcraft — to say otherwise would mean death. And the court records would record a case that could be analyzed several centuries later for its socioeconomic, interpersonal, and/or religious motivations. In such historical cases, the accused could really have been practicing some form of Witchcraft or other pagan survival and the surface, more mundane, explanation still be true.

I'm *not* saying that the hypothesis that Witchcraft was a survival of paganism is proven — only that it can't yet be ruled out and that the plausibility of alternative anthropological or sociological explanations should not weaken its case. Carlo Ginzburg, in both *Night Battles* (1985) and *Ecstasies* (1991) demonstrates through historical records that in fact there *were* cases of accused Witches practicing what were clearly pagan "survivals" (a problematic term in and of itself), who were targeted and accused because of it, probably for other socio-economic and ideological reasons as well.

## Some conclusions

Recent work on modern and historical Witchcraft has fallen prey to many basic flaws in methodology. There has been doctoring of source texts (either through sloppiness or deliberate deception), misrepresentation of sources to bolster counter-arguments, reliance on secondary sources to the exclusion of primary, reliance on unreliable sources when reliable ones are readily available, reliance on "common knowledge" without checking basic facts, reliance on unrepresentative sources when more representative sources are easy to come

10. I am unable to provide numbers on this, but the observation is based upon my personal experience. I have been a police consultant on occult crime for over 12 years and was co-author of one of the first books to critically examine the Satanic Crime Hysteria, *Satanism in America* (Carlson *et al.* 1989).

by, and neglect of alternative hypotheses when such hypotheses are unpopular. The over-all impression is one of a dismissive attitude towards a fringe subject resulting in slip-shod research and analysis.

Ascribing such faults to amateur historians and folklorists, Ronald Hutton explains that:

> Some of this can be ascribed to the simple fact that unacademic writers of history do not usually work with the same rigour as present-day professionals (Hutton 1991: 144).

Unfortunately, it has been demonstrated that professionals have the very same feet of clay as the rest.

Jacqueline Simpson's call to folklorists to join the ranks of the historians, cultural anthropologists, and sociologists studying Witchcraft, both historical and modern, has great merit. It is to be hoped that folklorists responding to this call will also listen to Hufford's and re-evaluate the current work in the field with more critical eyes than have their predecessors and so avoid the same methodological pitfalls.

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