A Coven of Scholars:

Margaret Murray and her Working Methods

Caroline Oates and Juliette Wood

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The Puck Fair at Killorglin (Co. Kerry)

Water colour attributed to Margaret Murray, 1952
(Folklore Society Archives, Murray Collection, MM/34.1)

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Introduction

Margaret Murray, one of the most famous past presidents of the Folklore Society, is best known for her theories about the "witch-cult" and the "god of the witches". Like the fictional secret society which became a reality in Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, Murray's speculations about witchcraft assumed a life of their own in Gardnerian and neo-pagan witchcraft. But they were disparaged by historians, usually with good reason. The academic dismissal of Murray's theories, however, had a correspondingly bad effect on the Folklore Society. Folklorists have often felt the need to demonstrate that they do not (or never did) share Murray's views; that they are no longer (or never were) interested in looking for "survivals" of ancient fertility rites in modern customs; and that the study of folklore, like any other branch of study, has evolved considerably since Murray's time. That folklorists have felt obliged to justify themselves is not, of course, entirely Margaret Murray's fault. It is more the responsibility of the nineteenth-century founders of the Folklore Society that most people still associate the term "folklore" with concepts such as superstition, false belief, survival of pagan fertility rituals, and that consequently many scholars in other disciplines hesitate to use the word "folklore". And some of the perceived need for self-justification is probably illusory: no one seems to feel obliged to apologize for Murray's ideas at University College London, where she taught Egyptology, or at the Royal Anthropological Institute, of which Murray was a member and regular contributor to its journals.

Rather than attempt to explain away, disclaim, justify or otherwise apologize for Murray, the essay below sets her ideas in context, examines her formative influences and shows how her theories corresponded with those of many folklorists and scholars in other disciplines in the first half of this century. Murray's interpretations were of their time and many people prior to the 1960s fundamentally agreed with her on many points. This is evident from the transcriptions, following this essay, of the Murray Collection in the Folklore Society Archives, a miscellany of papers on folkloric subjects collected by Murray during the time that she was active within the Society, and which she donated to the Archives in 1960. A glance at the articles published in *Folklore*, *Man* and *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* during that period indicates that Murray was far from isolated in her method of reading ancient ritual origins into later myths (or rituals as she saw them). Many scholars approached their material in precisely the same way as she did, hunting for cultural fossils and mapping the diffusion of rituals and customs, trying to trace the patterns of evolution and routes of transmission through vast time and space, often via quite fragmentary evidence.

In recent years Murray has become something of an embarrassment to the Folklore Society, embodying as she does the somewhat glib and reductionist assumptions associated with nineteenth-century evolutionary theories and post-Frazerian syncretism which were even by Murray's time outdated in relation to academic folklore studies. In her address to the Folklore Society's Glamorgan conference in 1993, Dr Jacqueline Simpson re-opened the topic of Murray and her relation to folklore studies. The address and subsequent article emphasized Murray's very selective use of material in creating her appealingly romantic, if historically untenable, ancient religion.[1]

Although Murray trained as an Egyptologist, she is better known for her work on the history of witchcraft. In 1921 she produced her first book on witchcraft, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, in which she proposed the thesis that there existed "an old religion" based on the natural cycle and dominated by a horned hunting god. The cult, she argued, had been practised since the Palaeolithic era and it was suppressed by the Christian Church, which persecuted its practitioners as witches. The various letters, notes and clippings in the Folklore Society collection contain material relating to customs, tales and beliefs, and mostly date from the 1930s to the 1950s. During this period, Murray was researching and publishing her later books for which she is now so notable, namely, *The God of the Witches*, first published in 1933, with a second edition in 1952 (following the repeal of the Witchcraft Acts in 1951); *The Divine King in England*, in 1954. In 1962, *The Witch-Cult* was published for the first time in paperback, with a foreword by Sir Steven Runciman.

Wilfrid Bonser, the Archivist and Librarian of the Folklore Society, compiled a list of Murray's publications (which appeared in a special issue of *Folklore* dedicated to her in 1961) and dealt with the material which she deposited in the Archives.[2] An interesting aside for students of the history of the Society is his letter to Murray in 1954 (MM/36 below) lamenting the difficulty of locating material in *Folklore*. It was of course Bonser himself who compiled the first two indexes to the Society's journal. The present publication includes an examination of possible sources and influences on Murray's thought as they related to her activities in connection with the Folklore Society, transcriptions of primary material related to witchcraft and fairy lore, and a schedule of the Murray Collection.

Biographical and bibliographical details

Margaret Alice Murray (1863–1963) was born and brought up in India.[3] She received no conventional schooling and was proud to boast that she had acquired no formal educational qualifications before 1931, when she received her honorary doctorate.[4] Following the advice of her sister, Mrs Mary Slater ("because she wanted something to do"), Murray came to University College London in 1894, where she began working in the Egyptology department under Professor Sir Flinders Petrie. She was at University College throughout her professional career and was elevated to the position of Assistant Professor of Egyptology in 1924. In 1935, at the age of 72, she retired without "any of the painful 'funeral feasts'" but with some bitterness over the retirement of Flinders Petrie, to whom she remained devoted. She wrote that she only stayed on as long as she did in order to "see Professor Petrie 'safely off the premises'", after which "there would be no reason for me to stay, especially as the College is not the College to me any more".[5] She nevertheless remained much in evidence at University College after her retirement and the College continued to show appreciation of her contribution to Egyptology right up to her death in 1963.[6]

In February 1927, rather late in her career, she joined the Folklore Society, whose library had been housed at University College London since 1911. The Society's Honorary Librarian, Wilfrid Bonser, was also Sub-Librarian of University College Library and a good friend of Murray's. Murray was elected to the Society's Council a month after she joined, but stood down in 1929 and did not hold office in the Society again until she was invited, at the age of 91, to be President, a post she held from 1953 to 1955.[7] Although she did not hold any official position in the Society in the intervening years, *Folklore* and the Council's various minute books show that she was an active member of the Society. Negative reviews of Murray's books on witchcraft apparently did not generate much embarrassment among other folklorists at being associated with her controversial theories. She wrote reviews for the journal, gave talks, participated enthusiastically in discussions after lectures, and represented the Society at meetings of other learned societies, including the British Association for the Advancement of Science.[8]

According to Wilfrid Bonser's bibliography of Murray's publications, Murray wrote, co-wrote or edited some forty books and scores of articles and short notes.[9] Most of these are on Egyptology and eastern Mediterranean archaeology, plus a smaller number on witchcraft and fertility, and it is for the latter that she is best known. The majority of Murray's publications date from the 1920s and 1930s, and in the early thirties in particular she seems to have indulged in something of an orgy

of public speaking and publishing (at least one book and three articles a year, plus numerous papers delivered at conferences). This period, when she was around seventy, was in many ways the culmination of her career and consolidated her reputation as *the* authority on fertility cults and witchcraft.[10] In 1929 she had contributed the entry on witchcraft to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and this entry was republished without alteration in every subsequent edition until 1969.[11]

In *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) Murray presented her thesis that witchcraft, as recorded in early modern accounts of witch trials, was a fertility cult which had survived from the Stone Age into modern times. The witches who were prosecuted were practitioners of the cult and their confessions were descriptions of their ritual worship of a god incarnated in human form and disguised as an animal.

She followed this up in 1933 with *The God of the Witches*, which dwelt on the Palaeolithic origins of the early modern witches' worship of a horned deity who was periodically sacrificed when his fertility-inspiring powers waned, to be replaced by a new and more vigorous one. Murray claimed that the "Old Religion" was preserved by the descendants of Bronze Age populations (known as fairies or witches). The cult, organized into covens of thirteen, supposedly survived underground during the Middle Ages only to be suppressed by the Christian Church as a rival religion during the early modern period. She claimed that remnants of the cult lingered on, despite the suppression, into modern times, particularly in the form of seasonal customs, ritual dances and processions, and beliefs and legends about fairies and witches.

In *The Divine King in England* (1954) Murray expanded the theme introduced in *The God of the Witches*, namely, the sacrifice of the witches' god in human form. She proposed that various prominent figures in medieval and early modern Europe, including Gilles de Rais, Joan of Arc and several English monarchs, had been the secret leaders of the witches' sect until the time came for their sacrifice, either in person or replaced by a substitute victim.

The ideas set forth in the three works became increasingly far-fetched and reviewers found them ever less convincing. But this did not seem to diminish the view in certain quarters (notably the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) that her earlier work on witchcraft had been the definitive one.

Murray published only one major article on witchcraft in *Folklore*, "Organisations of Witches in Great Britain" (1917), most of which was incorporated into *The Witch-Cult* in 1921.[12] Jacqueline Simpson has drawn attention to this and to the fact that no major articles on witchcraft were published in *Folklore* between 1917 and Rossell Hope Robbins'

"The Imposture of Witchcraft" in 1963. She suggests that this lack of scholarship on witchcraft could indicate that most folklorists did not endorse Murray's controversial theories, but were either too polite or not sufficiently interested to take a stand against them.[13] While it is true that *Folklore* carried no major interpretative articles on witchcraft between 1917 and 1963, there were nevertheless countless short notes on witchcraft beliefs collected in modern times, and many of the articles published during that period contain much relating to witchcraft, magic, and similar subjects. And while it is also true that Murray only contributed another two short notes on witchcraft in *Folklore*, she nevertheless published several more pieces on witchcraft and fertility cults in *Man* and the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.[14]

A change of editor of *Folklore* in 1932 and the currently favoured definitions of folklore and anthropology could perhaps offer a more prosaic explanation than mute disapproval on the part of the folklorists for the relative dearth of interpretative essays on witchcraft in the Society's journal in that period. A.R. Wright was Editor of *Folklore* from 1923 to 1932, and President from 1927 to 1928. In his presidential address of 1927, he stressed that folklore was neither a fossil nor the lingering survival of an ancient, but now decadent past: "Folklore is not a dead thing," he said. "It is alive all around us. The old tree of folk thought and practice has life not only in its *surviving* branches, on which there are both withered twigs and fresh buds, but also in new and vigorous shoots which are being put out from the old trunk."[15] When E.O. James took over from Wright as Editor of *Folklore* in 1932, he inherited an enormous backlog of articles awaiting publication, and he was also concerned to follow Wright's broad definition of folklore as the living traditions, customs and beliefs of modern people. As James later wrote, it was because of these two factors that he "never hesitated to refuse to print contributions which clearly belonged to other journals, e.g. the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*".[16] Since Murray defined her works on witchcraft as anthropological studies and since they had rather more to do with an ancient past than with modern folk customs, it is not really surprising that her articles on the subject appeared in the publications of the Royal Anthropological Society instead of *Folklore*.

The publication of *The Witch-Cult*

Margaret Murray's first and most significant book on witchcraft, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, was published by Oxford University Press. The publication was not without an element of controversy, as the correspondence in the Press's Archives indicates.[17] Both the question of the thoroughness of the research and the sensitive nature of the material seemed to cause concern.

Henry Balfour, then head of the Pitt-Rivers Museum, was asked to comment on the manuscript. In June 1920 he presented his reader's report, for which he was paid two guineas. The concise report is a sympathetic and balanced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Murray's now famous thesis that witchcraft originated as an ancient fertility cult. Balfour thought that she gave undue weight to this hypothesis and failed to consider that witchcraft might be described within the wider context of sympathetic magic with the fertility elements as a secondary feature. However, Balfour acknowledged that this was a matter of opinion and that Murray was justified in emphasizing the connection between witchcraft and animal fertility. He also felt that the work had value in bringing together evidence in such a way as to encourage future research. On the sensitive nature of the material, which in the 1920s was considered quite explicit, Balfour felt that tampering with the quotations "would lessen their value as a faithful record".[18]

Balfour was a personal friend of Murray, active in the Folklore Society, and, like her, he served a term as President of the Society. His suggestion that the study of witchcraft might be more fruitfully linked to sympathetic magic rather than fertility cults was echoed recently by Dr Jacqueline Simpson, who made exactly this point in 1993.[19] On the whole, the correspondence between Murray and the Press indicated that she was pleased with the book and its reception. Murray's conclusions were not without critics, and there were some objections to the sexual content of the material. Her response to criticism, however, seems to have been that the critic objected to her or her theories and never that her arguments might need reworking.

However, the strongest objection came from the Catholic Press when Murray misquoted the words of the prayer "Hail Mary". Murray never made any secret of her antagonism to organized religion, and she made it clear in this and all subsequent books on witchcraft that she sympathized with the practitioners of this ancient fertility cult whom she felt were persecuted unfairly and were the victims of bigotry.[20] The offending misquotation appeared in a note, not the main text, connected to a discussion of apotropaic female carvings known as sheela-na-gigs. Murray wrote extensively on these.[21] Murray claimed in a note to the

Press in 1922 that she had heard a priest in Battersea say these words and that "in so public a ceremony as a street procession one naturally expects the words to be sanctioned by authority". The offending page, however, was cancelled.

When Oxford University Press was considering republishing Murray's book in the early 1950s, she referred to the matter as an attempt by organized religion to suppress her research, somewhat dramatically and grandly ignoring the fact that it was *she* who had misquoted. It is all too easy to let this kind of controversy get out of proportion. Modern scholars have objected to Murray's ideas on academic, not religious or sexual grounds. The misquotation and her belated attempts to explain it do, however, illustrate a fundamental problem with Murray's method, namely her tendency to generalize wildly on the basis of very slender evidence. The Archives of the Royal Anthropological Institute hold readers' reports for Murray's article "Female Fertility Figures" (1934). These reports illustrate how Murray's unsubstantiated speculations found their way into print, despite the valid objections of one referee, because another scholar with more editorial clout at that time approved of Murray's approach and allowed her unfettered freedom of expression. Sir John Myres had advised that she should be asked to supply proper references to substantiate her arguments and that her psychological conjectures should be omitted (Murray had suggested that sheela-na-gigs promoted fertility through the psychological effect on the libido of brides-to-be, who would look at the figures and be aroused by the erotic imagery). But the paper was then referred to C.G. Seligman, who was fond of such psychological interpretations and whose recommendation to publish the article in full prevailed over Myres' more cautious approach. Murray had collaborated with Seligman on articles on ancient Egyptian ritual and it was he who recommended her for membership of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1916.[22]

The *Witch-Cult* was greeted more enthusiastically by the editors of *The Occult Review*, who requested permission from Oxford University Press to quote extensively from the book. The aspect of Murray's work which appealed particularly to the occult movement was her conviction that the witch-cult was a "secret tradition" which survived despite attempts to suppress it. This kind of thinking was very popular among occultists at this period, and *The Occult Review* carried a number of articles throughout the 1920s and 1930s on so-called "secret traditions" among Masons and Templars, alchemists and writers of Arthurian romance. Although it is difficult to estimate the extent of the readership of *The Occult Review*, the article on witchcraft in 1922 undoubtedly provided a degree of popularization for Murray's work, since printed copies of the book sold rather slowly.[23]

However the re-publication of her book in paperback in 1962 occurred in an entirely different climate. By that time the witchcraft laws had been repealed and Murray's work had already had an influence on what was to become a very popular movement of neo-paganism, Wicca. Murray showed herself sympathetic to this movement, led by another member of the Folklore Society, Gerald Gardner. In 1954 she wrote a complimentary preface to his book, *Witchcraft Today*. There were even rumours that Murray herself had claimed to be a witch.[24] However, Sir Steven Runciman's preface suggests that her thesis about a hidden cult was still the focus of interest in her work. In his study *The Medieval Manichee*, Runciman gives a favourable consideration to the reality of a secret tradition existing in opposition to, and to some extent persecuted by, orthodox Christianity.[25]

Influences on Murray's work on witchcraft

In his reader's report for Oxford University Press, Henry Balfour highlighted Murray's exclusive focus on witchcraft as an ancient fertility cult. The consensus today, with the notable exception of certain neo-pagan writers, is that this picture of a benign nature/fertility cult is a construct rather than a record of history. Nevertheless the theory has had considerable influence.[26]

The historian Ronald Hutton identifies some important influences in Margaret Murray's work.[27] In particular he points out the similarities between Murray's characterization of the witch-cult and Charles Godfrey Leland's concept of "la vecchia religione". Leland (1824–1903) was a member of the Folklore Society and his major work on witchcraft, *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* (1899), was published by the Folklore Society's publisher, David Nutt and Co.[28]

Both Leland and Murray were influenced by the nineteenth-century French romantic historian Jules Michelet. In *La Sorcière* (1862), Michelet had presented a picture of witches as members of a secret orgiastic cult rebelling against the oppressive feudal system. Women were central to his view of witchcraft and were sympathetically portrayed as the victims of social and sexual oppression. He suggested that the sabbath and black mass evolved out of a combination of carnival revelries, magical rites for the fertility of the fields, and lingering vestiges of the pagan cults of Pan and Diana. He also discussed Gilles de Rais and Joan of Arc.[29]

Many of these elements are also prominent in Murray's writings on witchcraft, but since she makes no reference to Michelet it seems likely that his influence on her ideas was mediated via Leland's *Aradia* and via an essay by the mathematician Karl Pearson. Leland claimed that a manuscript of the witches' secret gospel had been obtained for him by

his friend, the witch Maddalena, and owed nothing at all to Michelet — but the prominence of the theme of witchcraft as a form of social rebellion casts doubt on that claim.[30] Like Michelet, Leland presented witchcraft sympathetically as a secret magical tradition transmitted, and largely practised, by women. Where Michelet cast this as a medieval social movement, Leland saw it as a pre-Christian religion, "the old religion" of the Etruscans.

However, it may have been Karl Pearson who supplied Murray with the notion that calendar customs could be linked with witchcraft and interpreted as the decadent remains of former pagan religious observance deriving from a matriarchal stage of culture. Pearson saw in "mediaeval witchcraft" the fossil remains of "the mother-age". He put forward the theory that witchcraft beliefs and practices were "more or less perverted rites and customs of a prehistoric civilisation, and that the confessions wrung from poor old women in the torture chambers of the Middle Ages have a real scientific value for the historian of a much earlier life".[31] Like Michelet, Pearson also emphasized the centrality of women and was sympathetic in his description of witchcraft as a body of rites and secrets transmitted through the distaff line.

In her autobiography, Murray explained that *The God of the Witches* had been "a flop" when it first came out in 1933 but that the war helped to popularize her work since people were interested in escapist topics, particularly at a reduced price.[32] Hutton also sees the repeal of the witchcraft laws in the 1950s as a significant factor in Murray's popularity. When *The Witch-Cult* was republished in paperback in 1962, it sold much better than the first edition in 1921. Murray's work certainly appealed to the modern Wicca movement. The relationship between the two is somewhat contentious, academic opinion suggesting Wicca's dependence on Murray as a basis for constructing their rituals and their history. Wicca writers, and in particular Gerald Gardner, who was also involved with the Folklore Society, claim that their sources antedate Murray.[33]

Murray's own ideas about the origin of witchcraft were formed in the few years before *The Witch-Cult* was published in 1921. She had already lectured on or published substantial portions of her first book in *Folklore*, *Man* and elsewhere between 1917 and 1921.[34] Only six years after Murray's first book, Lewis Spence, the Scottish folklorist and Celtic revival writer, suggested that witchcraft was the survival of a Neolithic fertility cult.[35] The idea that memories of Neolithic races survived in later culture as fairies or witches was also central to David MacRitchie's thinking.[36] Theories about the survival of ancient civilization were becoming increasing popular during the nineteenth century.[37] It is not always possible to say with certainty how much of this was "in the air"

at the time and how much was the direct result of Murray's reading. Hutton is right that, in so far as Murray used the specific term "old religion" in the 1930s, she is dependent on Leland's somewhat dubious identification of a supposed witch-cult in medieval Italy. There are, however, several other identifiable influences.

Her early studies in Egyptian archaeology indicate that Frazer's concept of the dying god had a major impact on Murray.[38] The ramifications of Frazer's theories about the evolution of religious behaviour have been treated in depth elsewhere. The theory centres on Frazer's reading of classical texts in which he identified a number of metaphors having to do with seasonality, particularly the return of vegetation, and death and resurrection of divine and semi-divine figures. These he interpreted in terms of an all-embracing primitive ritual aimed at ensuring the continuance of the fertile seasonal cycle, by propitiating natural forces through the actions of significant individuals such as priests, kings and eventually their substitutes. Frazer's own rationalist stance saw primitive man as a kind of proto-rationalist who, lacking an understanding of cause and effect, attempted to control the forces of nature by means of these rituals. Murray believed Frazer to be antagonistic to her ideas and thought he was behind a negative review in *The Scotsman* when her book first appeared,[39] but their methods had much in common. Both proceeded from the study of documents, in Frazer's case classical texts, in Murray's the records of medieval and early modern witchcraft. Significant elements from these documents were selected out and projected backward in time on to the "mind" of primitive man. Both shared a mistrust of organized religion. Frazer eventually included the Christian resurrection story among his examples of the dying god myth. Murray, however, maintained a distinction between her witch-cult and Christianity, although she had moderated this somewhat in her preface to Gardner's *Witchcraft Today* in 1954.

Among the figures who had an impact on Murray and her ideas, one of the most important was Sir W.M. Flinders Petrie (1853–1942), Professor of Egyptology at University College London. An entire chapter of Murray's autobiography is devoted to Petrie, with whom she had a long and close association at University College, and whom she held in high esteem throughout his life. He, too, regarded contemporary customs as the remains of primitive religion.[40] Murray also acknowledged the influence of her sister, Mrs Mary Slater, in her ideas about *The God of the Witches*, which may account in part for its atypical slant.[41] Others who personally encouraged her ideas about witchcraft include the anthropologist C.G. Seligman, with whom Murray collaborated on a number of articles; the religious historian E.O. James, and Karl Pearson,

both of whom will be discussed in more detail below. Murray also acknowledged the archaeologists Herbert Fleure and Harold Peake in her "Organisations of Witches" (1917) for drawing her attention to "a two-faced deity of ancient Britain in the Roman period" and for referring her to Geoffrey of Monmouth's story of King Lear's burial under the Soar at Leicester in an underground chamber dedicated to the god Janus (cf. MM/11 transcribed below).[42] Like Murray, Fleure and Peake were both interested in the idea of very ancient religious practices surviving in medieval or modern folk customs. Fleure suggested in 1918 that there were close connections between the cult of St James of Compostella and the Bronze Age megaliths of northern Spain.[43] Peake expanded on this in 1919, following a line of reasoning very similar to the central prop of Murray's witch-cult theory, arguing that the Iberian Celtic populations preserved their "old beliefs" despite the introduction of Christianity and went on worshipping their dolmens despite the Church's efforts to stop them.[44]

Another important influence was Reverend Professor Edwin Oliver James (1888–1972), editor of *Folklore* from 1932–58.[45] Murray's friendship with E.O. James was evidently of long standing. She frequently attended Society lectures with him and their names appear consecutively in the visitors' books (e.g. 19 January 1927). Murray wrote a testimony to James in *Folklore*, and James wrote her obituary.[46] His theories about the mother goddess use the same kinds of arguments as Murray, and his book *The Cult of the Mother Goddess* is in many ways a companion piece to hers in its use of a Frazerian model moderated by myth-ritual assumptions.[47] For James, as for Frazer, ritual was concerned with the promotion of social fertility, which in the mind of primitive man could directly affect the operation of nature. He stayed close to Frazer in his interest in comparative religion in its widest sense, but, unlike Frazer, James saw myth as an aspect of ritual. James's theories depend on textual material, and he, like other myth-ritualists, included Near Eastern texts as well as classical ones, since the Near East was the source of the myth-ritual model. In effect, although divine kingship and renewing rituals based on the agricultural cycles still remained central, the myth-ritual approach was a more diffusionist position. Frazer, like Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917) before him, assumed a psychic unity in mankind and a universal process of culture evolution. The diffusionist modification of the myth-ritualists had an important effect in that the process of "evolution" from one phase to another became less one-directional and progressive. Myth-ritualists talk in terms of adaptation, disintegration and degradation from the original pattern and this inevitably confers a degree of privilege on the primary pattern.

Myth and ritual, however, remained the product of the needs of an agricultural world and the "pattern" involved dying gods, divine marriages and the rebirth of vegetation re-enacted in a great annual festival. Murray presented a substantive evidence for this by setting the "pattern" in an actual historical context. Neolithic religion, whose rituals were dependent on the agricultural seasons and centred around dying and resurrection linked to the vegetative cycle, actually seemed to survive in medieval Europe. In the Middle Ages, however, the rituals were misunderstood and persecuted as witchcraft. It was a dramatic and profound change in that the Frazerian myth of the dying god and the myth-ritualist Near Eastern religion were academic constructs. Murray made them real and living.

Murray gives very few hints in her autobiography about the sources of her work, but she did go to Glastonbury for six weeks in 1915 to recuperate from an illness and she became interested in the Holy Grail.[48] When she returned to London she wrote a piece linking it to Coptic religion. A chance remark from someone whom she claims not to recall (Karl Pearson, perhaps?) that witches had their own religion "'for they danced around a black goat'" sparked her interest in witchcraft. She began her research "only from contemporary records", and "had the sort of experience that sometimes comes to a researcher":

> When I suddenly realised that the so-called Devil was simply a disguised man I was startled, almost alarmed, by the way the recorded facts fell into place, and showed that the witches were members of an old and primitive form of religion, and the records had been made by members of a new and persecuting form.[49]

Murray considered her witchcraft research, which she characterized as "the interpretation of beliefs and ceremonies of certain ancient forms of religion", to be her most important role.[50] For a woman who paid great attention to detail and had excellent memory recall to forget who started her on this important endeavour is a little suspect. Indeed, the whole passage has the kind of heightened dramatic tension which so often characterizes autobiographical discourse.

Murray was convinced of the continuity between pre-Christian religion and modern folk customs. She turned her attention to early modern witch trials because she saw them as confirmation of an interim stage in the evolution of a continuous tradition from the Neolithic to the modern period.[51] Her autobiography tells us little about the formulation of her witch-cult theory, but correspondence with other folklorists reveals more about their development. A letter of July 1915 from Sir John Rhys (transcribed below, p.79) replying to Murray's

questions about Arthurian legends, demons, druidic emblems, Celtic place-names and fairs, suggests that, following her research into the legend of Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Grail at Glastonbury, she had already begun to look for survivals of an ancient secret cult in Britain. Sabine Baring-Gould's letter of March 1916 (also transcribed below, p.80) reveals that Murray had by then formed her idea of witchcraft as a mystery religion. She had asked him for information about where the witches of north Devon met, whether there was a formula for initiation, and whether witches' sabbaths were still held in that area. By 1917 she had assembled what she considered sufficient evidence of the meetings of organizations of witches in Britain to publish her first articles on the subject.[52]

There is an evident progression from her Egyptology studies prior to 1915 and the formation of her ideas about European witchcraft. Between 1908 and 1914, she was writing in Frazerian style about female priesthoods, sympathetic fertility magic, dying-gods and king sacrifices in ancient Egypt, with continuities in later folk customs. During her stay in Glastonbury in 1915, she studied the Grail legend and published an article, "Egyptian Elements in the Grail Romance", in 1916.[53] Her study of the Grail Legend led her to the theme of child-sacrifice in medieval literature and in her essay "Child-Sacrifice among European Witches" (1918) she refers to a child-sacrifice legend in *Morte d'Arthur*.[54]

A crucial stage in the formation of Murray's witch-cult theory was the discovery of the "Dorset Ooser". During this stay in Glastonbury she came across the Ooser, described and depicted in *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* (1891).[55] The "Ooser" was a horned mask, sometimes worn at seasonal events, whose wearer chased young girls — which Murray clearly interpreted as a survival of an older fertility rite. The 1891 *S&DN&Q* article derived the term "Ooser" from "wurser", meaning "the Devil" or arch-fiend, and gave several citations from medieval canonical condemnations of ritual animal disguises. In her "Organisations of Witches" (1917), Murray not only adduced these medieval texts as evidence for the existence of the witch-cult, but she also gave the example of the Dorset Ooser as extant "proof" of the mask and disguise worn by the horned god incarnate (or Devil) who presided over the witches' sabbaths in earlier times.[56] She later used the *S&DN&Q* photograph of the "Ooser" in *The God of the Witches*. The Ooser was also discussed by Frederick Elworthy, a Somerset man and former member of the Folklore Society, whose *Horns of Honour* (1900) Murray also read and cited. According to Elworthy, the Ooser was "a relic of a very ancient custom," and its name was possibly derived not from "wurser" but from "osor", which also meant "Devil". He compared the Ooser with Hobby Horses,

which were sometimes said to be "acting the Devil" to frighten girls and children. Elworthy also traced the iconography of the European Devil, as symbol and mask, from the cult of Pan, transmitted from the east to Egypt and from there to Greece and Rome via the Gnostics. With what looks like a prophetic invitation to Margaret Alice, Elworthy closed his chapter on the Devil's horns referring the reader to John Murray's *Historical English Dictionary* as "a veritable epitome of all that can be said upon the subject", and calling on other scholars to explore fully the concept of the Devil's body.[57] Given the central importance which Murray, in her autobiography, attached to her realization that "the Devil was simply a disguised man", an idea on which her whole witch-cult theory depends, the Dorset Ooser clearly played an essential part in the formation of her thesis. That she said it came to her in a flash that the Devil was a man in disguise is not really surprising, since Elworthy had pointed her in the right direction. Murray was still interested in the Dorset Ooser during the 1930s. She wrote in *The God of the Witches* that the mask had been "stolen from its Dorsetshire owners within the last thirty years".[58] But according to a letter of 1935 (below MM/3), from a correspondent who had been trying to trace the mask for Murray, it had simply perished. It had last been used around 1900, at which time it was already dropping to pieces and it had hung in the attic of the doctor's house in Crewkerne until the house was demolished, mask and all.

In 1897, the statistician Karl Pearson, Professor of Applied Mathematics at University College London, published a collection of essays, one of which foreshadows Murray's ideas.[59] Pearson was interested in eugenics and social reform, and this led him to speculate, as did so many intellectuals of the day, on the nature of society. His essay "Woman as Witch" draws very heavily on Erich Neumann's concept of "mother-right" (matriarchy). Pearson anticipated several themes which appear in Murray's theories. His essay treats the beliefs and customs of medieval witchcraft as fossils of the "old mother age" of prehistoric civilization. Besides witchcraft, such fossils were to be found in the folklore of agriculture, spring and harvest festivals, and peasant dances (all of which were of interest to Murray). Both witch gatherings and peasant ceremonies were considered relics of ancient rites. Those which Christianity repressed were called witchcraft; those which it tolerated became associated with seasonal folk festivals. The characteristic features of witch gatherings (as Pearson understood them) included the common feast, the choral dance, sacrifice under a sacred tree. Since inheritance during the period of "mother-right" was through the female line, the deities were female and, by extension, so was the presiding spirit of witchcraft. Pearson suggested that originally the male deity was

subservient to the female one and only later became prominent. Eventually he became the "Devil" of the witch trials.

Pearson was probably also responsible for pointing Murray towards the notion that Joan of Arc was a white witch or folk healer, although Murray later claimed to have come to this conclusion about the Maid of Orléans all by herself.[60] Joan of Arc had been canonized in 1920 and Murray's attitude created some controversy. She referred to this in her autobiography:

> My view of Joan of Arc roused, and still rouses, fierce opposition. I am not usually a fighter, but when I am attacked with words like "I don't believe one word you say about Joan of Arc," I have to defend myself. I have one effective reply which is "Have you studied the original documents?" I have always found that these ardent worshippers have to acknowledge, when pressed, that they have not read anything of the kind. Then I retort "Well, I have."... I wind up by saying ... "I argue from contemporary evidence and you from hearsay."[61]

Although Murray claimed to have used original documents, it is exactly on this point that her reviewers made their most telling criticisms (which will be discussed further below).

At the centre of Murray's witch-cult was a male deity. Following Frazer, she turned the Diana of the historical documents into Dianus-Janus-Dionysius by philological sleight of hand.[62] She was influenced by the literary cult of Pan popular in the Edwardian period, but Pan also found his way into the kind of cultural re-creation which Murray produced.[63] He became an important metaphor for Victorian and Edwardian writers. Nietzsche defined Pan as primary emotion to challenge Apollonian authority.[64] Soon, he also became a symbol of duality, of savage sexual release, of a life of wildness opposed to the strictures of civilization. Murray provided anthropological validation for such a cult and created the possibility for joyous orgy without the need for messy promiscuity.

Murray's bibliography reveals a great deal, albeit obliquely, about her theory. She published several articles on witchcraft in the journal *Man* in the four years before her first book appeared in 1921. She knew Olga Tufnell and Mary Williams who produced post-Frazerian studies of vegetation myths but concentrated in biblical studies and medieval romance respectively. Both these scholars demonstrate the mix of evolutionary theory moderated by diffusionist considerations, and suggest links between rituals and myths. A further point can perhaps be made in the way this witch-cult was realized. *The Occult Review* was

interested in Murray's thesis as an example of a "secret tradition". Although Murray rejected the occult, she did consider the same themes and ideas which interested occult writers. Jessie Weston's influential book *From Ritual to Romance* appeared in 1925, and Weston's great friend Mary Williams — a pioneer in Celtic studies — was still producing "dying god" interpretations of medieval romances in the 1960s, when she became interested in the Glastonbury Zodiac and was President of the Folklore Society.[65] Such scholarship suggested that coded in the Grail narratives were records of secret societies and rites which had to be kept hidden from prevailing Christian orthodoxy. These secret rituals were related to mystery religions that involved a kind of sacred kingship of the type described in Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Although Murray never took up the occult angle[66] and her writings were always presented as history, she did, in effect, turn the vegetation myth into a mystery religion. The implications of this are still being worked out by modern neo-pagan writers.

Murray and modern witchcraft

One of the effects of Murray's work was to inspire Gerald Gardner, the co-founder of the modern Wicca movement.[67] He was an active member of the Folklore Society for a time, and Murray wrote an enthusiastic introduction to his *Witchcraft Today*, published in 1954. Murray probably never imagined that her literal interpretation of witchcraft tradition would provide an authenticating history for modern witchcraft cults, whose rituals were modelled on her own descriptions of the "Old Religion" as she fashioned it from assorted fragments of early modern witch confessions. Jacqueline Simpson has suggested that Murray would not have approved of Gardner, and, as Rosalind Janssen reports, Murray remarked to a friend who had forwarded a letter from someone seeking a coven in 1962: "What asses there are in the world! I have replied to that idiot ... with a snorter".[68] Gardner maintained that the "Old Religion" of witchcraft had not in fact died out but had continued to be practised, covertly, into the twentieth century. He claimed to have been initiated in 1939 by Dorothy Clutterbuck into an English coven with an authentic, ancient ancestry. Katharine Briggs expressed her regret that Gardner was so secretive and that his publications yielded little to resolve the much debated question of whether a sect of witches had existed in earlier times.[69] But, as Tanya Luhrmann has pointed out, Gardner published "fictitious ethnographies of supposedly contemporaneous witches who practised the ancient secret rites of their agrarian ancestors", and there is "no reason to suppose that if such a group existed, it necessarily predated the publication of Murray's book".[70]

Although Murray's publications had considerable influence on Gardnerian and neo-pagan witchcraft, her theory was not transcribed verbatim. One notable difference is the important place modern witches assign to the worship of a female principle and, as Jacqueline Simpson remarks, they are in this respect closer to the description of the "Old Religion" as a cult of a goddess in Leland's *Aradia*. Leo Martello, writing in 1973, clearly reveals a combined debt to Murray, Leland and Gardner:

> The Old Religion has always worshipped both a Horned God, known as Cernunnos, Pan, and other names, symbol of the hunt, during winter, and the Goddess, generally known as Diana, but with many other names, symbol of fertility and harvest, during the summer months.[71]

Martello also noted that witches found it regrettable that Murray "stressed only the Horned God and did not explore the main deity, The Goddess".[72]

Murray, in fact, was not always consistent regarding the gender of the witches' deity. In "Organisations of Witches" (1917) and in *The Witch-Cult*, Murray indicated that she considered the early modern witches' veneration of a male deity to be a decadent form of an earlier cult of a goddess:

> The position of the chief woman in the cult is still somewhat obscure. Professor Pearson sees in her the Mother-Goddess worshipped chiefly by women. This is very probable, but at the time when the cult is recorded the worship of the male deity appears to have superseded that of the female ...[73]

Several of Murray's writings, from the 1910s to the end of her life, also show that she held the veneration of a female principle to be chronologically prior to the cult of a male god. In some undated lecture notes, probably prior to the 1930s, Murray expressed her conception of the evolution of religious cults from that of a mother-goddess to a married pair, and then later to a male god: "In tracing out the conception of the deity, we find that it falls into three stages, each of which corresponds with a definite stage of culture. I: Mother Goddess ... ; II: Married Gods ... ; III: The Male Deity ..."[74] *The Genesis of Religion*, Murray's last book, published the year she died, reveals that Murray still held the view that the very first religious behaviour of *Homo sapiens* was the worship of a female principle. Her reference in the *Witch-Cult* to a female god of the witches probably preceding the cult of the male deity was consistent with these other texts. *The God of the Witches*, however, shows her vacillating on this point in the early 1930s, as she

traced the horned god back to the Palaeolithic era and stated that the worship of a female principle appeared at a later stage in the cult. It seems most likely that she simply changed her mind for a time, following the discovery of the so-called "shaman" cave painting at Trois Frères, which seemed to suggest a much more ancient antecedent for the cult of the Horned God than she had previously supposed.

Vivianne Crowley, an important exponent of modern Wicca, acknowledges Murray's importance, but defends the prior existence of the ancient witch-cult.[75] Despite this, her chapter on the witches' god follows Murray's argument and use of material. She, too, begins her argument with the Palaeolithic cave drawing known as "the shaman" in the cave of Trois Frères. Murray wrote an enthusiastic note about this figure, and used it in all her books.[76] Crowley's description of another cave drawing of a male accompanied by female figures strongly implies a god/king sacrifice.[77] In the first edition, Murray is mentioned four times; twice in connection with the sacrifice of kings, once in connection with initiation rituals and once in a discussion of the predecessors of the Wicca movement in which she is given pride of place. In the revised and updated edition of 1996, Murray is less prominent. Crowley still acknowledges her contribution, but treats her as one among several early writers on the ancient cult. The revised edition stresses Murray's testimony to Gardner, omits reference to the self-sacrifice of English kings presumably since this later phase of Murray's research was getting increasingly far-fetched, and mentions Frazer only (i.e. omits the earlier reference to Murray) in connection with ritual king murders.[78]

Murray's place in the historiography of witchcraft

According to Leland E. Estes, witchcraft trials have provided successive generations of historians with a metaphor of evil applicable to their own age. For enlightenment historians, who blamed peasant credulity and superstition for the witch trials, writing about witchcraft was a way of showing the contrast between their own illumination and the ignorant credulity both of the previous age and of those who continued to believe in witchcraft. For the late nineteenth-century historians in the liberal rationalist tradition, the *bête noire* was religion. Thus George Lincoln Burr and Henry Charles Lea in the United States, and Joseph Hansen in Germany, presented the witch trials as the dire consequence of irrational theological dogma, reflecting the then current fear that religious bigotry posed a serious threat to rationalism.[79]

As Simpson pointed out, between the liberal rationalists' view of witchcraft as a myth invented by deluded religious fanatics, and the interpretation of occultists and believers like Montague Summers who

held that demonic witchcraft had been (and was still) capable of causing real harm in the physical world, there was no real middle ground and no possible agreement. But the publication of Murray's *The Witch-Cult* re-opened the discussion of witchcraft and witch trials from a new angle. Murray, a die-hard rationalist, maintained that a sect of witches really had existed in opposition to Christianity and actually practised much of what they described in their confessions. Her work encouraged a different type of disagreement, now between those who accepted that a sect of witches really had existed, and those who did not.[80]

Murray was by no means the first to propose the theory that early modern witches were followers of a secret religion. As Norman Cohn observed in 1975, the idea of witchcraft as an ancient cult surviving into early modern times in opposition to Christianity had been put forward by Karl Ernst Jarcke in 1828 and Franz Josef Mone in 1839, both of whom were staunch Catholics, antagonistic to the cults they described.[81] In 1862, Michelet, rather more sympathetic towards his subject, had also portrayed witches as a secret, anti-Christian movement of peasant women assembling in revolt against the oppressive feudal Church and State, practising magic for the fertility of the fields and indulging in erotic rites with a wooden demon. Michelet's characterization of witches, although more fiction than history, revealed very clearly his concern for the socially and sexually oppressed in contemporary society. A similarly sympathetic view of witchcraft as an ancient religion secretly practised by women until modern times was offered by Leland, who, like Michelet, was a champion of oppressed social minorities. In his chapter on the modern history of the idea of the sect of witches, Cohn argues that Murray simply applied Frazer's ideas about rituals for the magical promotion of fertility and regeneration, to the theme of the secret society of witches which Michelet had already made popular. This is no doubt true, although it appears that Murray was as much, if not more, influenced by Leland and Pearson.

While Murray evidently did not invent the theory of witchcraft as a secret religion, it was her version of it which became popular and influential in Britain and North America. It is easy to see why. Where Mone, Jarcke, Michelet and Leland had all written about secret societies of witches in Germany, France and Italy, Murray made the cult British and, following Pearson, extended its secret history much further back in time. Here was an image of ancient British culture just begging to be revived.

Estes also argued that the "real source of the strength" of Murray's ideas "has been the impetus they have given to a reformulation of the witch metaphor". They allowed "the re-emergence of the witchcraze as

an important historical and moral analogue of contemporary events in the mid-twentieth century, especially in America". Where the liberal rationalists had more or less ignored the witches themselves, Murray's theory now made them central, and witch-hunting was now presented as the suppression of free thought and dissent. Hence the analogies with McCarthyist purges of Communists in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in North America.[82] Hence also the emphasis of modern neo-pagan writers such as Martello and Pennick, who cast witchcraft as a benevolent nature religion and demonize Christianity as a manipulative, repressive one.[83] Most recently, environmental issues have begun to emerge in discussions of modern witchcraft: witchcraft is now being presented as environmentally friendly, a nature cult, in opposition to the consumer society whose industries pollute the environment. Murray's construction of witches as persecuted devotees of a minority religion devoted to fertility provides the backdrop to this identification of modern witches with green issues.[84]

Since the early 1970s, the focus of interest in the historiography of witchcraft has shifted to gender issues. Modern histories of the trials are hardly complete without a section on the "gendering" of witchcraft, while several feminist writers have interpreted early modern witch trials as the persecution of women *per se* resulting from élite misogyny and inbred patriarchal values. The trials have furnished many feminists with a powerful example of male violence towards women, provoking the coinage of terms such as "femicide" and "the burning times".[85] Murray's theories have had some influence on this recent manifestation of the witch-hunting metaphor. Murray not only made the witches central but she also drew attention to their gender and presented them in such a way as to encourage the recuperation of the term "witch" by feminist writers. She conferred on her witches a sort of normality in the routine stuff of their religious observance (notwithstanding obscene kisses and bloody sacrifices, which Murray described in matter-of-fact, non-judgmental terms). She also gave them an enviable enthusiasm for wild parties and, above all, a degree of dignity in their loyalty to their fertility cult and to their god, for whom they were willing to sacrifice themselves. Murray shared the rationalist assumption that witches were persecuted innocents, but her presentation of them as voluntary sacrifices transformed them from passive victims to active martyrs; it also neatly accounted for spontaneous and untortured confessions.

Murray did not explicitly ask why more women than men were tried for witchcraft, but the question is nevertheless answered, albeit rather confusingly, in *The God of the Witches*. Witchcraft, as she saw it, was a religion of very ancient origin:

> All organised religions have a priesthood; early priesthoods appear to have been largely composed of women; as the religion changed, men gradually took over the practice of the ritual ... But when a religion is decaying and a new one taking its place the women often remain faithful and carry on the old rites, being then obliged to act as priestesses.[86]

Although Murray was sometimes inconsistent on the question of whether a male or a female deity was the "original" object of veneration in the cult of the horned god, her vacillations do not entirely mask her lifelong view that the cult of a male god was a decadent form of a religion which had originally worshipped a female deity. In this respect, Murray was following Michelet, Leland and Pearson. All of them saw witchcraft as a secret cult largely practised by and transmitted by women worshipping a female deity. However, where Michelet, Leland and Pearson had written of witches in France, Italy and Germany, Murray's witches were British, mostly female, and the writer describing their fertility cult was herself a woman whose publications bear an unmistakably feminist stamp.[87] It is no surprise, therefore, to find Murray's *The Witch-Cult* listed, along with Michelet's *Satanism and Witchcraft*, in the short bibliography of the highly influential feminist pamphlet published in 1973 by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English. It was only a small step from Murray's portrait of witches as women engaged in acts of devotion to their religion, and persecuted for them, to Ehrenreich and English's representation of witches as female folk healers persecuted by male medical doctors eager and anxious to protect their own professional interest.[88] Add to these features the "continuing attraction of the fantasy of the secret society" as Christina Larner put it, and the long-lasting appeal of Murray's theory is hardly to be wondered at.[89]

Reception of Murray's witchcraft books

Murray's *The Witch-Cult* and *The God of the Witches* received a number of unfavourable notices, especially from historians. W.R. Halliday reviewed *The Witch-Cult* for *Folklore*. He complained that she had insufficient knowledge of medieval and early modern history to form her conclusions, and that she misused documents taken entirely out of context.[90] In *The American Historical Review*, G.L. Burr pleaded for Murray's "complacent reviewers" to look at her sources, while George L. Kittredge seems to have been wryly amused at Murray's literalism.[91] While these were valid criticisms, it is clear from her autobiography that she herself was convinced that her sources *were* "the original documents". It is also apparent from the admittedly sketchy account in

her autobiography that her ideas about the witch-cult were an *idée fixe* and any real criticism was taken as a personal attack. Murray claimed that she never took any notice of adverse reviews of her books, but she did mention in her autobiography that she considered the people who gave her bad reviews were motivated by religious prejudices.[92]

Another blast came from C. L'Estrange Ewen, whose own two books on witch trials in the English Assizes (published in 1929 and 1933) had been venomously reviewed by Murray in *Folklore* and *Man*.[93] His response, picking great holes in her scholarship, was privately published in a pamphlet in 1938, in which he bitterly lamented the fact that there was no such thing as a free press if editors refused to publish responses to unfair reviews. It is not known whether Ewen approached the editor of *Folklore*, E.O. James, in an effort to publish such a rejoinder.

But not all of the reviews of Murray's books on witchcraft were unfavourable, even if there were few who were entirely convinced by her theories. Richard Sayce reviewed *The God of the Witches* in *Man* in 1935, commenting that "the book contains a good deal that is puzzling and much that is interesting and stimulating", and then congratulated her on "a very interesting and provocative book, and one that will provide material for much argument".[94] Sayce, a shrewd and undervalued folklorist, hit the nail on the head. Harold Coote Lake was not particularly critical when reviewing *The God of the Witches* in *Folklore*: "Dr Murray's theory of the Witch-Cult in Western Europe, though not wholly accepted by everyone, must be taken into account in any work dealing with the problem."[95] Mary Williams, in her introduction to the special issue of *Folklore* in honour of Murray's ninety-eighth birthday, commented that "Dr Murray has made many revolutionary suggestions, particularly in regard to witchcraft and its cults. She has been the first to suggest that 'witchcraft' as we know it today, is a survival of an old, honourable religion dating back to prehistoric times ... This alone is a great contribution to scientific study of the past on which so much of the present is based ... "[96] E.O.James was generally quite polite about Murray's books, although even he could not find anything complimentary to say about *The Divine King in England*, which he described as not very convincing when he wrote Murray's obituary.[97]

Despite the unfavourable notices and relatively poor sales of the original editions of *The Witch-Cult* and *The God of the Witches*, Murray's theory eventually became popular (largely, as Simpson has said, due to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry). And although it met with little approval from most medieval and early modern historians, it had a definite impact on a number of witchcraft studies and popular histories. Arno Runeberg and Pennethorne Hughes fully espoused and elaborated

on Murray's thesis in their books on witchcraft.[98] Her theory also features in the work of the medical historian Thomas Forbes and in G.B. Harrison's preface to *The Trial of the Lancashire Witches*.[99] Keith Thomas listed some of the eminent names who had followed Murray's theory, including Sir George Clark and Dr Christopher Hill; Christina Larner mentioned a number of writers on Scottish witchcraft who were equally persuaded; and Geoffrey Parrinder noted Murray's influence on Aldous Huxley and Robert Graves.[100] As Norman Cohn commented, the popular appeal of the "Murrayite" thesis was such that Parrinder's criticisms in his *Witchcraft: European and African* (1958, reprinted in 1963 and 1965) did not deter Longmans from reprinting Hughes' *Witchcraft* in 1965 (and again in 1972).[101]

Among the folklorists, only Gerald Gardner seems to have been completely persuaded by Murray. But there were nevertheless many others who shared some of her ideas, even if they remained doubtful about the witch-cult theory as a whole.[102] Christina Hole, Editor of *Folklore* after E.O. James, politely criticized Murray's thesis but still accepted the possibility that the fairies were a dwarf race.[103] And although Katharine Briggs did not wholeheartedly accept Murray's theory, she still offered folkloric evidence in support of some aspects of it, in particular, medieval and early modern fairy lore revealing traces of much earlier beliefs regarding fertility.[104] She was also willing to entertain the idea that a witch-cult might have existed in medieval and early modern Europe. Unconvinced by Murray's characterization of the supposed cult, Briggs found a more plausible hypothesis in contemporary fiction than in "the elaborate reconstructions of the anthropologist". In particular, she said, Mary Renault's novel, *The King Must Die*:

> ... deals precisely with those cults from which witchcraft could have arisen, those chthonian rites which combined the annual sacrifice of a king with a matriarchal society, the only one indeed in which the habit of royal sacrifice could long survive without substitution ... The whole witch situation as it is generally conceived could arise from this — the predominance of women among witches, the orgiastic revels, the powers over life and death, and the sacrifice of the god, if indeed any real evidence of that sacrifice is to be found among the witchcraft material.[105]

There was no sustained attack on Murray's theory before the mid 1970s. Most historians of witchcraft either ignored her witch-cult theory altogether or summarily dismissed it as unconvincing and based on poor scholarship. In 1959 and 1963, Rossell Hope Robbins forcefully restated the rationalist view of witchcraft as an invention of fanatical inquisitors,

and spent little time arguing against Murray's thesis.[106] In *The European Witch-Craze* (1967), Hugh Trevor-Roper simply repeated L'Estrange Ewen's judgement of Murray's work as "vapid balderdash", while Keith Thomas offered just a couple of pages of fairly restrained criticism in 1971.[107] Jeffrey B. Russell remarked on her bad scholarship, but also commended her for drawing attention to what other historians had underemphasized, namely that pagan folk beliefs and practices relating to witchcraft and sorcery did not all die out with the introduction of Christianity but remained long afterwards and provided "the fundamental substratum of witchcraft".[108] Geoffrey Parrinder and Elliot Rose devoted rather more space to arguing against Murray in their respective works of 1958 and 1963. Parrinder raised the important objection that, if the witch-cult was a survival of an ancient pagan cult, why did the Church do nothing about suppressing it until the early modern period?[109] In *A Razor for a Goat* (1963), Elliot Rose applied "Occam's Razor" ("the principle of the economy of hypotheses") to show that the theory of the underground survival of paganism was redundant because there were always simpler explanations for witch beliefs. As Katharine Briggs commented, however, Rose left "some tufts of his own fancy unshaved" — not least in his acceptance of the existence of an organized sect of witches.[110]

Jacqueline Simpson may be right to observe that the lack of any full-scale confrontation with Murray by either historians or folklorists before the 1970s allowed her theories to flourish unchecked.[111] But it must be wondered whether such a confrontation would have had much impact on many of those whose letters to Murray are transcribed below, who found in her writings endorsement and "rational explanations" for apparitions they had seen.

Where Parrinder and Rose had pruned and shaved, Norman Cohn took an axe. His principal argument in *Europe's Inner Demons* (1975) is that the witches' sect was a myth rather than a reality, and much of the book is an explicit demonstration of the fallacy of Murray's thesis. His most effective mode of attack was to show up her manipulation of her sources. For example, he showed that where Murray inserted three dots to mark a passage missing from a text she quoted, the omitted passage usually contained impossible elements which did not support her theory. Sometimes she simply omitted such passages without even inserting the three dots. In Cohn's view, if a record of a witch's confession contains any impossible features, like flying or transformation, nothing in the record can be trusted as having any literal truth. By highlighting Murray's untrustworthy editing and manipulation of the sources, Cohn dismissed the whole of her theory as absurd.[112] One of Murray's papers in the

Folklore Society Archives also illustrates the same procedure. An extract of a sixteenth-century French witch's confession copied from a local history publication describes the sabbath on the top of the Puys de Dôme where the witches danced back to back in a ring. Murray referred to this confession in *The God of the Witches* as evidence that the witches' sabbaths were festive assemblies with dancing. But a comparison of her published account with the extract among her notes reveals that here, as in many other instances, she had picked out of her source only what suited her theory and omitted what went counter to it — in this case the witch's account of having been carried through the air on a black horse to the Puys de Dôme more than twenty leagues from her home (MM/14).[113]

Cohn's attack was very successful in discrediting Murray's work among American and British scholars, among whom it has now become axiomatic that the witches' sect was a myth not a reality and that there is no reliable evidence that they really assembled in the flesh to practice witchcraft. Christina Larner wrote in the early 1980s that it was now possible to ignore Murray's thesis that witches were members of a pre-Christian fertility cult.[114] In 1996, Robin Briggs devoted barely a page of his *Witches and Neighbours* to a summary of familiar criticisms of Murray's theory.[115] In the same year, James Sharpe merely commented in his *Instruments of Darkness* that Murray's ideas were now completely discredited "among serious scholars" thanks to Cohn's effective "demolition job".[116] And in Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons* (1997) Murray merits only a passing comment as an example of the implausible but logical conclusion of interpreting the symbolic inversions common to both the witches' sabbath and festive misrule as rites aimed at reinforcing moral and social norms, since such a reading would presuppose intention on the part of the participants and therefore also that people really had attended witches' sabbaths.[117]

A number of European scholars, however, have shown more tolerance for some aspects of Murray's theory in the last three decades. In 1966, the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg generously acknowledged that, even though her scholarship was inadequate, there was a "kernel of truth" in her intuition that a pre-Christian fertility cult lay behind witches' accounts of the sabbath. But she had made the big mistake of confusing dreams and myths with real activities and rituals.[118] He reiterated his approval, albeit with emphatic qualifications, in 1983 and 1989,[119] arguing that the witches' sabbath stereotype derived in part from ecstatic dreams of assemblies and battles against mythical aggressors for the fertility of the fields. These assemblies in spirit, he maintained, formed part of a complex system of beliefs and rites of very ancient origin and shamanistic character, probably originating in central Asia and transmitted to western

Europe via the Celts. His attempt to rehabilitate the interpretation of witchcraft as the remains of once positively charged myths and rites aimed at fertility and abundance has coincided with a growing syncretism among neo-pagans, whose spiritual activity blends elements of Wicca, Druidism, Celtic mythology and shamanism. Thanks to Ginzburg's emphasis on shamanism and the Celts, Ginzburg has now taken Murray's place as provider of an authenticating history for British neo-pagan witchcraft.[120] At the same time, he has also supplanted Murray in furnishing a provocative interpretative model for the current generation of witchcraft historians to contend with.

Murray's working methods

In 1960 Murray donated a box of papers to the Folklore Society, with a note to Wilfrid Bonser instructing him to keep what might be of interest to the Society, and throw away the rest. Presumably he did so, because the material in the box seems to have been roughly sorted into thematic bundles. Most of the material dates from the 1950s, although some items go back much earlier, and some of what is in the box clearly found its way into her publications.

The papers in the Folklore Society Archives provide further insights into Murray's sources and working methods. In some ways they confirm what Simpson and Hutton have suggested. They demonstrate that, however extreme her conclusions, Murray's working methods were much the same as those of other contributors to the Folklore Society's journal in that period.

Murray's correspondents were primarily other educated individuals, often connected with local parishes or councils. She asked quite specific questions to which she received quite specific answers. These she obviously took as further substantiation of her assumptions. One must add in her defence that this was typical procedure at the time. Collecting meant finding a "good" informant who would have access to more popular sources. Ministers or their wives, and local officials fulfilled both criteria. Among the papers, however, are a number of descriptions of contact with fairies and witchcraft activities which are transcribed here for the first time. Some of these illustrate her regular working methods, that is contacting someone who would have access to tradition bearers. The material was on the whole collected from individuals of a lower social class from the correspondent. One finds a pattern here of educated men and women collecting material from servants, employees and rural workers within a parish context or encountered on a holiday to some "exotic" locale within Great Britain. Interestingly, one correspondent sent Murray an account of a survival of witchcraft practice

(a conjuring charm) and expressed surprise that it was collected from a Kensington char rather than a rural farm worker (MM/22). A letter from another correspondent, on holiday in the Prescelly mountains, Pembrokeshire, furnishes a good illustration of how focused Murray's correspondents were on collecting witchcraft material (MM/27). The correspondent had approached a suitable informant in the area, a clergyman and teacher named Mr Lloyd Richards, to collect some local witch legends. Mr Richards, however, was also an exceptional raconteur whose numerous stories were collected by the Museum of Welsh Life at about the time Murray's correspondent had his holiday. There is, in fact, very little witchcraft material in connection with the area and what there is comes from a rather suspect source. The correspondent's attitude, however, indicates how the problem of lack of material was overcome by assuming that local people would be reticent to discuss sensitive topics.[121]

There are also accounts of supernatural experiences, apparitions and sightings of fairies sent to Murray from people who had read her books and felt that she was a kindred soul. Several are first-hand personal accounts of fairy contact. Murray stated in her autobiography that she believed that apparitions really did occur but that they were attributable to natural causes.[122] In this respect she demonstrated a laudable willingness to accept people's accounts of apparitions as genuine experiences rather than errors of perception or faulty judgment. But in applying her own explanatory categories to account for them (for example, people sometimes saw fairies because fairies were a real race of very secretive little people), Murray was doing much the same as the early modern judges who applied their demonological explanations to witches' descriptions of encounters with suprahuman figures.

Murray, like other folklorists, was keen to record traditions and popular customs before they vanished altogether. In one of the documents transcribed below Murray apologized for asking so many questions but explained that she felt that her enquiries were important as "the ceremony ought not to die out without some exact record" (MM/32). But at the same time Murray's own publications were instrumental in stimulating action to suppress some of the very customs she was interested in recording. There are many instances of religiously motivated attempts, sometimes successful, to put a stop to seasonal festivities such as May Day celebrations on the grounds that they are pagan fertility rituals. One recent example was reported in the Folklore Society's newsletter *FLS News* in 1989.[123] Another may perhaps be seen in a letter to Murray in 1940 regarding the "Skippings" at Bartlow (Cambridgeshire) (MM/23).[124] The "Skippings" was a fair and dancing

event (adolescent boys only in the morning, girls included in the afternoon) which took place on Good Fridays beside the home of the correspondent, whose late husband had gone to the courts to prevent access across his property to the slopes where the fair took place. The closure had caused resentment among people who used to come from outside the village on Good Friday for a day out. She said that the fair had been "most distasteful" to her husband "from a religious point of view". His distaste may simply have been for any form of profane celebrations in Holy Week, but it may also have been fuelled by the popularization of the interpretation of seasonal customs as the vestiges of pagan fertility cults. From Murray's point of view, attempts to suppress such customs fitted neatly into the paradigm of the war waged by bigots against the "Old Religion" of the witches.

A number of items in the collection reveal a shared conviction that rural people were repositories of ancient secret traditions which they may, or may not, be prepared to divulge to the outside observer. This preconception not only coloured the observers' interpretations of the information they gathered but in some instances it also influenced their actual perception of the events they witnessed. In the materials relating to the Puck Fair at Killorglin, transcribed below (MM/32–MM/36), Murray's assumption that the festival was a surviving ceremony of the ancient religion of the witches/fairies was so strong that she simply heard what she wanted to hear. One of Murray's companions, the archaeologist Olga Tufnell, noted "I thought I heard the M.C. say 'the Queen of the Fairies calling (or crowning) the goat', but the local press said 'Queen of the Fair'" (MM/33). Neither Murray herself, nor her other companion, Miss Annie Baker, showed any sign of hesitation in describing the girl as "the Queen of the Fairies" in their accounts of the event (MM/33.1, MM/35.1). The conviction that the "folk" preserved secret traditions also meant that several of Murray's correspondents attributed their fruitless enquiries to people's reluctance to talk to strangers, rather than simply to their lack of knowledge of the subject of the enquiry. One correspondent wrote that he would be unable to find out anything for Murray about a Dorset story because he was a "furriner" (MM/7). Another, who was trying to find out if people in the Hebrides ever saw the fairies, blamed her lack of success on the local people's unwillingness to share their secrets with outsiders — even when some of the people she questioned clearly saw the enquiry as a joke. She reported to Murray: "On the whole I have been most unsuccessful as the people refuse to give themselves away — for fear of being laughed at I suppose. When I asked if people ever see the fairies they said 'Och — the whiskey is not as good as it used to be'" (MM/20). This is not to say

that all of Murray's informants were all afflicted with what Katharine Briggs described as "an innocent solemnity which makes them [i.e. folklorists] forget that things may be done purely for fun. ... I should not be surprised if I heard a folklorist say that reading *Men Only* was part of a lost ritual."[125] Some of the letters in the collection are light-hearted and witty, and Murray herself evidently had a sense of fun.[126] Professor Charles Thomas, who kindly donated a letter from Murray to the Folklore Society Archives (MM/0.2), remembers Murray with great fondness from the time he was active in the Society. By then she was known as "Ma" Murray. Her letter to Professor Thomas shows her as rather less relentless in her attitudes to folklore than some of the more far-fetched theories in her books might imply.

Description of the Murray Collection in the Folklore Society Archive

The Murray Collection consists of seven bundles containing a mixture of handwritten and typed notes, letters and clippings. Some are in Murray's handwriting but the majority were written by her informants — friends, acquaintances and contacts in various places and positions well-suited to gathering folklore on her behalf, and usually at her request for information. These well-placed informants include local school teachers, doctors, reporters, friends on holiday and so on. Other items were sent to her by readers responding to her publications, and there are various clippings from newspapers and magazines on some of her pet subjects (devils, witches, fertility figures, sheela-na-gigs, fairies, fairs, calendar customs involving dances, etcetera). There is also an assortment of photographs, postcards and book illustrations.

The first bundle (MM/1–MM/7.2), marked "Not dealt with at all 1960" (presumably by Bonser), contains materials on Dorset customs, including the Dorset Ooser and the Shaftesbury Bezant or Prize Besome (MM/1), a decorative staff which featured in a May procession and dance, first mentioned in a late seventeenth-century account. The same bundle also contains an account of sightings of fairies in Ireland (MM/4); a story of an encounter with "a Phantom Wolf" by a "private psychic investigator" (MM/7); and a number of letters prompted by Murray's books on witchcraft, including one from a woman asking for help to cure her bewitchment.

In the second bundle (MM/8–MM/15), marked "Witchcraft — miscellaneous", there are notes and a list of names of the Devil in Murray's hand; and letters from five informants in response to Murray's requests for information about sheela-na-gigs, modern witch legends and incidents, sightings of fairies, and other local folklore. Several of the items on

witchcraft were clearly incorporated into her books. Murray asked a friend to find out about the Salem witch trials for her while he was staying in New England (MM/12). He sent her some typed extracts which indicate that he had been looking at the records for specific evidence of rituals and organizations of witches (which he did not find during his short visit).

The third bundle (MM/16–MM/23.1) contains items relating to apparitions and visions, and several letters to Murray in reply to her enquiries about fairies, witchcraft and popular seasonal customs.

The fourth bundle (MM/24–MM/30.1) has material on the Fenlands and East Anglia, mostly compiled by Miss Annie Baker. These include detailed accounts of sightings of fairies, witch legends and other related subjects. Several of the witch legends differ little from those printed in *Folklore* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the witches are usually described as individual practitioners, with eccentric habits and dubious reputations, and the harmful effects attributed to their hostile powers are remediable by common practices such as scratching the witch, etcetera. But a few features of Miss Baker's witch legends would clearly have appealed to Murray as evidence for her conception of the witch-cult: the witches were said to meet together as a group, at a certain crossroads which they arrived at unseen via a secret tunnel. Evidently, Murray found a kindred spirit in Miss Baker, who shared her views and later accompanied her and Olga Tufnell to Ireland to attend and record the events at the Puck Fair at Killorglin in 1952.

The fifth bundle (MM/31–MM/36) contains items on the Puck or Pook Fair at Killorglin in Co. Kerry, Ireland, an annual fair in which a goat was set on a platform amid crowds of people and crowned and then proclaimed king. Murray went to see the Puck Fair in 1952, and she and her companions made notes at the time; there is a picture postcard showing the goat on his platform, and a little watercolour of the same scene by Murray herself, who always travelled with her paints.[127]

There are two detailed descriptions of the event by Murray, one of which is a first draft of the article published in *Folklore* in 1953, but with three additional unpublished pages of speculations about the origins of the festival.[128] In the published version she draws a telling analogy between the fair at Killorglin and the witches' sabbath as described by the French magistrate Pierre de Lancre, quoting his remark that the sabbath of the witches was like a merchants' fair. It is quite clear that she saw the Puck Fair as a continuation of the witches collective celebration and worship of the horned god in goat form, and she referred to the ceremony explicitly as "one of the very few instances of the Divine King and the substitute animal" (MM/32).

There is also a list of questions in Murray's handwriting about the Puck Fair, and a typed list of answers to the questions by one of her informants. Murray had sent her list of questions to a Mrs Perceval Maxwell who passed it on to the journalist Claude Cockburn, who in turn replied in detail to each question. These lists are very revealing about Murray's methods of obtaining information. Her questions were always loaded, and the answers did not always provide her with what she was looking for. On certain points in her published account of the fair, Murray followed her informants' answers even when they did not conform to her expectations (for example, Murray had clearly assumed at the outset of her enquiry that the Puck was a surviving example of the sacrifice of the Divine King, but her informants were emphatic that the goat was never killed). On other occasions, however, she simply ignored those informants' statements which did not suit her theories and either gave preference to others which did or pursued her own interpretation. In the revised edition of *The God of the Witches* (1952), Murray's account of the Puck Fair quite baldly contradicted some of Cockburn's answers, for example in her claim that a particular family originally had the privilege of providing the goat for the ceremony, but "in recent years this has not always been the case".[129] Mrs Perceval Maxwell had written that the event was predominantly a tinkers' fair but Claude Cockburn's wife had said that the presence of large numbers of tinkers had no special significance (MM/31.1, MM/31.2). Not surprisingly, Murray preferred Mrs Perceval Maxwell's view, especially as the latter had heard from her sister's "daily" that the fair was connected with a secret religion.

The materials on the Puck Fair also illustrate how Murray was so convinced of the ancient origins of the event that she read it into everything she heard or saw. Mrs Perceval Maxwell quoted Cockburn's description of the fair as a "complete orgy as regards drink" (MM/31.2); perhaps he knew of Murray's work and was making witty use of the term "orgy". But Murray converted this into: "The scenes, though now modified to drunkenness only, show that in early times this was one of those orgiastic festivals so common in primitive cults."[130]

The sixth bundle (MM/36–MM/40.4) relates to the Frensham Cauldron (Surrey), briefly mentioned in *The God of the Witches*, where it was said to have been "borrowed from the fairies and never returned".[131] This material, letters from informants detailing the legends about the cauldron, plus a photo of it, dates from the 1950s and a note from Bonser to Murray indicates that she intended to write it up as an article, but she never did.

The last bundle is an assortment of photographs, picture postcards

and book plates, including Gilles de Rais' castle at Machecoul, cave paintings of dancing figures, horned devils in murals and manuscript illuminations, a hobby horse in Athens, and so forth. Some of the illustrations appear in her publications, but the ones that do not would have happily found their place in her works on witchcraft. One little picture in particular, which she used in *The God of the Witches* (plate IV) is ironically amusing considering that her book was about a horned fertility god (see following illustration). No doubt the image was altered so as not to cause offence in a book intended for a general readership. Similarly censored illustrations of Greek art appear in other publications of the period and earlier, so Murray and her publishers were not doing anything particularly novel.[132] But why did she choose to use and doctor that specific illustration of Pan instead of one of the more modest ones available? Part of the answer must be that Pan is shown wearing a mask, a central element in her witch-cult theory. And perhaps she also chose it precisely because of its evident eroticism, barely masked by the blatant censorship. As such, it offers a revealing illustration of Murray's consistent interest in orgies without going all the way to licentiousness.

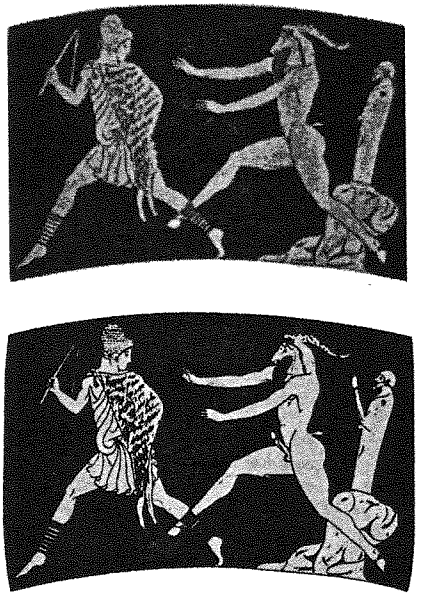

Illustration: The God Pan. Red-figure vase by the "Pan" painter, c.470 BC, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Above: Censored version in *The God of the Witches*, 1933, plate IV.
Below: MM/4P, Murray's uncensored photograph.

Folklore Society Archives, Murray Collection

Transcriptions of selected items

The following items from the Murray Collection have been transcribed with only minor changes of punctuation and paragraphing. Salutations have been omitted and addresses have been abridged. Wherever we have abridged the text we have signalled this with three dots.

MM/0.2 Letter from Murray to Professor Charles Thomas, 19 February 1955

Your article in the last number of *Folklore* is not only interesting in itself, but reminds me of an incident that occurred when, in the 1920's I was doing a small and unproductive dig at Stevenage. One of my workmen was an elderly man who came from the Hampshire border of Berkshire. He told me that before his time there had been excavations of the local barrows. I asked if anything had been found. "Nothing at all" he said "except a little old gun." This was so surprising that I cross-questioned him rather strictly. He had not seen it himself, but everybody in the place knew that there was nothing in the barrows but a little old gun. It took me quite a time to realise that what the excavators had told the villagers probably was that the barrows had been anciently rifled.

Stevenage used to be full of folklore. The Black Dog still ran between the churchyard and Whemeley Wood. It was described to me by a lady who as a girl had actually seen it as an immense curly-haired black retriever, almost as big as a calf. I doubt if any of the inhabitants of Stevenage would have gone alone at night along the avenue leading from the main road to the church. I never found out what haunted the place, but it was evidently terrifying. The six hills owe their origin to the Devil who for some evil purpose of his own was going to make seven. He had made six successfully and was coming along with his seventh wad of earth and stones when he met a [?] who made the sign of the cross and so prevented the finishing of the wicked scheme this so exasperated the Devil that he threw the whole wad away, knocking off the steeple of Graveley church five miles away. And to prove the truth of the story though there are only six hills, there are seven deep Holes.

Stevenage also had a pond fed by a spring, this was "wonnerful good for the eyes".

Stevenage in those days was almost as isolated as any moorland village. Cars passed through it in hundreds, but nobody stopped for more than lunch or tea. And the inhabitants were old stagers who had lived there all their lives. Now that it has become a satellite town a new kind of folklore will grow up and the old will be forgotten.

MM/1 **The Shaftesbury Bezant** Letter to Murray from W. Farley Rutter, Town Clerk's Office, Shaftesbury, 30 December 1931

Re Shaftesbury Byzant or Prize Besome.

...

The measurements of the Byzant are as follows:—
Height 55 inches
diameter of the Crown 19½ inches
Base 13 inches
The material of which it is made appears to be a plaster cast gilded over.

With regard to the date of the Byzant I am quite unable to say whether you are right in thinking it may be late Stuart. It is quite clear that the ceremony goes back very much further than that, but of course it does not follow that the Byzant now at the Town Hall was made all that length of time ago. There may have been an earlier one, replaced at some period. I have never heard that hobby horses were ever used in connection with the Byzant Ceremony and do not personally think it was at all likely. Is not your informant mixing up the Byzant Ceremony with the Hobby Horses used at Padstow, Cornwall, down to the present time?

I think it is quite possible that the Grosvenor Family have some documents or traditions relating to the Byzant Ceremony, but do not think your best course will be to write to the Duke of Westminster. The Stalbridge and Motcombe Estates of the Grosvenor Family became vested in Lord Stalbridge, one of the sons of the Marquess of Westminster and the Byzant was actually presented to the Shaftesbury Corporation by his sister the Lady Theodora Guest. Her daughter Miss Guest still lives at Inwood

Henstridge, Somerset and I think she would be the best person with whom to correspond. ...

With regard to the last paragraph of your letter, so far as I know I am not related to a family of Rutter that lived in Calcutta some years ago. My ancestors came to this Country from Normandy at the time of the Norman Conquest. The family then settled in Cheshire and remained in that district for many years, coming to Bristol in the 17th Century.

MM/3 **The Dorset Ooser** Letter from S.A. Ramsden, Beaminster, Dorset, 19 March 1935, in response to Murray's request for information

You will be interested to hear I have at last traced the "Dorset Oozer" to its last lair. After many a false clue and disappointment I found an old man in Crewkerne who had been coachman to a Dr Webber who succeeded Dr Cave in his practice in Crewkerne and lived in the same house. He says when Dr Cave left Crewkerne he left the mask behind him, and it hung there in the loft till it fell to pieces. This man, Lawrence, told me he had taken the mask down, some 35 years ago, and worn it in a procession to frighten people — and the hair was coming out in tufts then. About 2 years after, someone — he did not remember who — came to him asking about it, but it had fallen quite to pieces then, and finally when Dr Webber's house was pulled down and the new Post Office built on the site, every vestage of it disappeared. So here endeth the Ooser quest. R.I.P. There is a place called "Boozer's Pit" near Crewkerne. I wonder if it was a place where the old worship went on. Is this too far-fetched? ...

MM/3.1 **The Dorset Ooser** Typed extract from *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, vol.8, 1902–3, p.231

The Ooser. The following quotation taken from Besse's Sufferings of the Quakers, 1753, vol.1, p.165, Dorset, appears to illustrate the account of the Ooser which was printed in our pages in December 1891.

Anno. 1656. "At another time this (Thomas) Hurlston, wrapt up in a Bull's Hide, came among the Rabble to the Meeting-House Door (in Melcombe Regis) and threw in an Horn, with which he struck off part of the Preacher's Lip.

But the end of this profane Man was remarkable, who being shortly after at a Bull-baiting, the Bull struck his Horn through his Chin up into his head, so that his Tongue was torn out of his mouth, and he instantly died, having but a Quarter of an Hour before told some of his Companions, that he designed to be at Evershot again that Day, to make sport of the Quakers. This Man's Exit was remarked by many as a singular instance of the Divine Justice."

MM/4 **Fairies** "Obtained for me by Miss J.B. Crook ...[London] W14"

A farmer's wife in Co. Wicklow says her grandmother saw a fairy. She herself heard a fairy procession on Halloween night. She did not see them as all the girls were afraid to look out. The fairies were talking and laughing and there was a sound of horses' feet and large heavy carts. Then the sounds suddenly stopped and there was dead silence.

She says that those on horseback are dressed in red and look about average size. They are seen in the neighbourhood of "Forths" [?] and dance in the fairy rings in the fields. They change children. Always take fine healthy infants and leave puny and unhealthy ones in their places. Her mother told her that one night when she was an infant her father woke up and caught her as she was being drawn away by some invisible hand.

I went to see a place called a "Ratheen" which is fairy ground. A sort of field with a circle of trees. There is some dim tradition of sacredness attached to it — reminding one of the groves recorded in the Old Testament. No sticks may be gathered from it for burning, and it is never ploughed or dug as some harm would come to anyone who disturbed it.

A labourer named Carey told me he was cutting hay in a field. Just after he had left the field was full of fairies tossing the hay. They were about three feet in height — and all wore red caps but he was not near enough to see if they were dark or fair. Once he saw a banshee quite close. A little old woman with long white hair and dressed in white. Her cry was exactly like the cry of a dog. One of the O'Toole family died that night.

He knew a child that was changed. This child was always crying when the mother was in; but as soon as she went out he played the fiddle for a tailor who worked in the house. He asked the tailor not to tell on him, but the tailor told the supposed mother and they both threatened to put the changeling under the grate among the hot ashes, and then he disappeared and the woman's own child came back. The changelings are afraid of fire.

A farmer named Sutton [?] in Co. Wicklow told me that his grandfather was going to the Silver well for water when he saw three people like children standing round it. They had golden hair, long and curling at the ends. Were dressed in red and had red caps shaped like half an egg shell. He stared at them till his eyes were tired and when he "blinked" they disappeared. On another occasion he saw three people whom he took to be children from a neighbouring farm going along a field. They also had fair hair, but cut short and not curled and they were dressed in red. He followed them through another field and then along the road for a while. Then they suddenly disappeared.

He knew a man whose wife was in bed for 17 years and constantly screaming. The doctors could not find out what was wrong with her: but some old relative of her family said she was a fairy changeling. I asked him if there was anything peculiar about her four children, but he couldn't tell as he had not seen the family for 40 years.

He heard of many people who were reputed to be fairy changelings.

MM/7 **Phantom Wolf** Typed letter from J.P.J. Chapman, 3 September 1953, accompanying MM/7.1 and MM/7.2

Thank you for your very interesting letter. I do not know much about Dorset, actually I am on the border of Hants, and I do not get much chance to investigate into the country districts. In any case, an outsider would have no success. "'Ee be a furriner."

I am a Somerset man, and have had some very queer experiences. I enclose you a copy of a story I wrote for a West of England Newspaper, and which was duly published in The Wellington Weekly News on 29 December 1948. Astounding as it may seem, this REALLY did happen! For

your private information the place was Tremlett Hill, Wellington, Soms. in the village of Greenham. Years ago there was another house there called Ramsey Castle. It was pulled down a hundred and three years ago. The house which now stands there has been re-named Greenham Hall. So old is this property, it is mentioned in Doomsday Book. Now, if you take out a large scale Govt Map, you should trace the following:— The haunting starts at a place called Watery Lane, Kittisford, near the village of Bathealton, it continued along the disused canal to Cothay Abbey, where it crossed the river to Meadlands, thence across to Bishops Barton, and over some fields into the Green Walk, where the manifestation took place, here it descended the wood at the corner of the "second lawn" field, a junction wooded section between that and the Cleave, crossing the river again, it faded out at the last dammed section of the old Great Western Canal. This yarn is well known amongst the locals even today. But of course if an outsider came in, they would just shut up. I have just written at the request of an American Publication quite a lot about Witches, and I hope that they accept it.

I am sorry I cannot answer your story, but I am going to investigate it. I have some very good friends "round about". So later on, you will be having some more from me!

Do, please, if you, or any others in the Folk Lore Society receive pleas to break spells, send them on to me. Or at any of your meetings if ANY body knows of queer happenings, I shall be only too glad to be informed.

I only wish I had been in touch with you earlier.

Thank you very much for having written me. Your kindness is much appreciated. ...

P.S. If you want to keep the enclosed, please do so!

MM/7.1 **Phantom Wolf** Typescript (2 pp) by J.P.J. Chapman, 1952, attached to MM/7.2

The author of this amazing short story, has been a Private Psychic Investigator for many years, but has never sought publicity. This, is a selection of many, which will be incorporated in a book. It was first published as a Xmas story in the Wellington Weekly News 1948.

It is not possible to give the exact locality, but it relates

to a small village in Somerset England near the borders of Devon. The place in question was a large belt of trees which surrounded a castle like building by nearly two thirds. The facts were related to the Author who was then a boy by one of the villagers. It was first taken to be a joke. Assurances were given that it was not so. The writer although of seeming "tender years" was well versed in Magic and decided to tackle it. The events took place in 1913. Exhaustive inquiries were made as to the reason of this Haunting, but no satisfactory solution could be found. There is no doubt that this particular manifestation had taken place over very many years — perhaps hundreds. There have been no wolves in Great Britain for about 300 years.

Many nights were spent in this wood at other times, particularly at full moon with a clear sky. June and July seemed to be the most eerie. That the atmosphere was psychically explosive is to put it mildly.

To American readers, let it be said, that Witches still live in England. In the backwoods of the country, there are still wise women. Carts are propped up and the wheels turned backward with suitable curses. Stock is "overlooked", people are sent to a sick bed. Others are cursed.

The Author, of whom it has been said is a natural born magician, used to undo these Bad deeds, and seemed immune to the curses of the evil ones.

MM/7.2 **Phantom Wolf.** A Tale of the Backwoods in Somerset by J.P.J. Chapman, 1952 (four-page short story)

The West Country is still a hot-bed of Witches, Black Magic and strange happenings. The hamlet is about five miles from the nearest town, within distant earshot of the railway, a partially filled in canal, and next door to another village which boasts of stranger things still.

Years ago, this was my home, and not being a "furriner" I had the confidence of the country folk. The story of the phantom wolf was whispered from one crony to another; certainly not a subject to dwell on an eerie night!

The apparition was supposed to lope across many miles of country, through valleys, woods and glens. From whence it hailed or where it vanished nobody knew. Those who saw it, shrank aside with a muttered prayer, so evil was its

reputation, and this was added to by the fact that it could "cross water" treading on the surface at that!

Wolf, Phantom, or Devil, I decided with the help of a friend of mine to challenge it. We had definite information that the Elemental usually passed a certain spot. At this particular place in the wood was a large summer house, so we two decided to spend the night there. One sultry night in July, which seemed to have a suitable atmosphere, camp was set up. We stayed yarning until about 11.30 when we turned in on our camp beds, and then strange as it may seem, we actually fell asleep.

EERIE EVENTS

It might have been about 2 a.m. when I suddenly awoke, feeling restless with that well-known sense of impending doom. It was evident that something was approaching, a thing not heard, but subtly felt. I was conscious that the Elemental knew that we were there, also that a deadly battle would be the result.

The night was black as ink. Where we were in the center of the wood, one could grimly feel it. Suddenly without warning or sound there appeared from the undergrowth the shape of a huge timber-wolf, all luminous with a strange light. It had brilliant slits of eyes and its jaws salivered a phosphorescent drip. My friend as if spellbound, lay asleep. Getting out of bed, but keeping my eyes on it all the time, I advanced a pace or two beyond the hut. I knew that this was a most dangerous thing to do, for, if I failed, it meant death. The brute was quite capable of reading my thoughts I was aware, so I must be wary. With deep concern for my friend, I hoped he would be protected. That the wolf would attack me there was no doubt, I having planted myself in its allotted run.

It began to advance; I pronounced a Mantra, Instantly there was a change, the monstrosity became a huge ape. Here was a situation indeed, an Elemental capable of metamorphosis was something to contend with.

Only two more moves remained to each of us. I, having called in the Elementals of the Air, there remained Water and Fire. The second was useless as it could cross water. So I chose fire.

The Secret Words had hardly left my lips, when a roaring ring of fire surrounded this dread phantom. Slowly it closed in. The heat was terrific, this, and the mental effort caused perspiration to come from me in tricklets. Finally the creeping fire met. The Phantom let off a dismal howl — the first sound it had made. Everything went up in a vast sheet of flame and smoke. Leaves shrivelled in the intense heat, twigs snapped. There was an all pervading smell of burning wood, flesh, and baked earth. Then the fire died down.

NO TRACE

Suddenly my friend woke up from his seeming trance, asking what was the matter. Switching on his torch, he was amazed to see me standing as if bewitched.

Trembling from head to foot, I was in a bath of perspiration. I told him what had happened. Finally we decided to investigate. It was a beautiful summer night, the moss and grass under our feet was damp and soft. The leaves gently rustled in the warm night air. An owl hooted nearby. Of fire there was not a trace.

We decided to keep our information to ourselves. Does the wolf still roam? Some say yes, others no. The fact remains no one has ever come forward to attest to having seen it. END[133]

MM/9 **Witches and Fairies** Letter from A.E.Attlee ... Oxford, 19 November 1952

I have just been reading "The God of the Witches" and wonder if you will be interested to hear about a survival of belief in witches I met with in 1929. My husband was Vicar of Chieveley, North of Newbury from 1910 to 1929. The next village is Peasemore further on the Berkshire Downs, rather isolated. I understand that it was settled by a Belgic tribe, the surrounding villages by people from another part of Europe.

In Chieveley I used to visit a Mrs Mark Taylor, widow of a farm labourer. She was a native of Peasemore and after about 18 years acquaintance she told me this story. When eight years old she was in their cottage in Peasemore with her mother Mrs Bolton the baby was on the floor. A woman came to the door and frightened the baby, who screamed; she scowled, and after saying he was making a horrid noise,

she left. From that day he seemed ill and wasted away, the doctor could not do anything so Mrs Bolton went to the wise woman (name and situation of cottage supplied). She advised Mrs Bolton to keep a long darning needle handy and if ever the woman returned she was to run it into her arm without saying a word. Some time after the woman came again and Mrs Bolton rushed at her and plunged the needle into her arm above the wrist, drawing blood, the woman shrieked and ran away. From that minute the boy began to get better and in 1929 was still well and strong.

Mrs Taylor also believed in the Little People and told me that if I would stand quite still in a field at Peasemore which she pointed out, after 20 minutes I should see them. They brewed, baked and wove, and were just like humans except smaller I asked if she had ever seen them but though she had often tried, she had not done so "perhaps she did not keep still enough". She died in the early 1930s.

MM/10 **Witch Legends** Three-page letter from C.J. Norris, Manea, 8 November 1933

I am told you are writing a book on witches and on witchcraft — hence this letter. It contains information contributed by Mrs Gerald Sears of ... Manea from her own personal experiences. Perhaps you may find it of some use.

The question as to why you are taking up with witchcraft is one entirely for you and your medical adviser, and I am content to leave the question of your mental state to him. In the meantime — before he certifies you — it can do no harm if I contribute to the satisfaction of your distressing malady. It is quite nice, in fact, occasionally to help on an illness instead of trying to arrest it; this is the result not of witchcraft but of original sin, about which the Professor of Theology will instruct you. Possibly your own aberration is due to the same cause and not to a defective mentality — at any rate, let us hope so. They can no longer burn you for the one but they can still put you in an asylum for the other.

Having now, as you will agree, indulged in sufficient frivolity, let us get on with the job in hand.

1) At Michaelmas 1931 Mrs Sears and her husband, who is a farmer of an old Manea family, were at a farm in the

outskirts of Ely interviewing a candidate for the position of yard man at The Park House Farm. Mrs Sears states that he was of an extraordinary aspect — his mouth was wide and his face was about as broad as it was long, with a wife to match and a large family. He was obviously unsuitable for the job but was very anxious to leave where he was, and when asked why he was so anxious to get away, he said:

"Well, Missus, I'll tell you the real truth, we're overlooked."

Mrs Sears: "Overlooked! Why, there isn't a house for miles!"

The man: "Oh, you don't understand what overlooking is."

Mrs S. "Yes I do — houses close together..."

The man: "Oh, you don't understand, Ma'am, I've been touched by the Evil Eye. Since we've been here we've had no luck: my wife's been ill and all my children have been ill."

Mrs S. "Well, it's because you don't keep them clean."

The man, in a rage, "Well, the cows haven't given their milk properly."

Mrs S. "You won't be much good as a yard man if you can't milk cows properly."

The man "It's nothing to do with me. I've proved it's the witch."

When asked how he had proved this, he said: "I got a bull frog, blew it up with a bicycle pump, put it on a shovel and put it up the chimney, closed all the doors and put paper in all the holes round the place (window-cracks, etc.) and then I got a handful of "horse-stumps" that had been used in a mare which had had her first foal, threw them into the fire, and waited. Presently I heard awful shrieks coming from the outside of my house and a woman's voice begging me not to let the frog burst. I went out and I found this woman I had suspected for some time. I brought her in and before I took the frog from the chimney I made her go down on her knees and remove the spell, which she did. I then took the frog from the chimney. When she went out she turned into something like a donkey and went off on all fours towards her own house. After that my wife and children and everything seemed to go on all right."

The man also said that this bullfrog method was the surest way of bringing a witch — before it burst they are bound to appear.

"Horse stumps" are apparently old horseshoe nails.

The above is the most recent one and the only Fen one.

2) In 1913 in the mountains close to Killarney, a doctor newly qualified was doing a locum in Killarney and having a case of a girl of 22–3 with an aortic disease sent for Mrs Sears, a professional nurse, to nurse her. Mrs Sears arrived about midnight to find the girl practically unconscious. When Mrs S. went in they knew nothing about her arrival so she was seized on by the father, who refused to believe that she was a nurse. He was sure she was "The Evil-Giver". He said that he did not believe in the doctor and that he was going to have his own cure and that if it worked out, he would know whether Mrs S. was the witch (sic) or whether she had anything to do with the doctor. If it worked out that she was the witch he said he would kill her. He got nine horse shoes and a mule shoe, put them all in a huge fire of turf, and said that if the mule shoe split in the fire he would know that Mrs S. was the witch. Mrs S. in the meantime asked them to send for Dr. O'Connor who was 16 miles away, to identify her — she had come from a hospital at his request — but they refused. Mrs S. was kept standing against the wall while this was going on, and then suddenly thought of the priest and asked them to send for him, which they did. He reassured them. They released her but refused to let her touch the patient and the latter died. Mrs S. left with the priest. When she said it was a terrible thing that the people should believe in witchcraft he said: "These simple people down here have their own way of dealing with things". Mrs S. of course was in uniform and this being unknown in those mountains probably led to her identification as a witch. It was a blue uniform.

3) When Mrs S. was a girl in Ireland, her father's cows failed to give their proper milk. Her father spoke to the yard man about it and one night seeing a light in the cowshed went to investigate. He found the yard man with a prayer-book (? Anglican ? the local priest's missal) and a brazier which contained a charcoal fire. He was wearing his clothes reversed, but so far as Mrs S. remembers, not turned inside out. In the fire he had all the old iron he could find,

horseshoes, nails, etc. On the fire was a tripod pot in which a vile-smelling liquid was boiling. He was cutting hair off the shoulders of the cows leaving the form of a cross, and cruciform pieces off the cows' hooves and horns. He was putting the hair and horn and hoof parings into the pot on the fire and was then walking round the fire reading passages from the book. The direction of the movement and the passages are unknown. On Mrs S.'s father breaking in on this incantation, the man seized him for the witch he was trying, apparently, to evoke. Mrs S.'s father stopped the procedure but ascertained that the spell was designed to evoke the witch (who had bewitched the cattle) before the pot boiled over.

4) The same yard man always strongly objected to anyone taking fire from the hearth while he was churning.

5) The same yard man always held that witches were about on May morning and therefore sat up all the previous night, so that he could be the first on his land, and when he went round it he took up the dew in his hands at the same time saying something Mrs Sears cannot remember. This old chap flourished about thirty years ago.

You have now authentic information which I have written down as she told it to me from a lady personally concerned, concerning a Fen and an Irish method of evoking a witch, and an Irish methods of safeguarding land from witches. (4) presumably was designed to avoid the butter being bewitched but I cannot understand its significance — probably you can.

I hope I have now atoned for my second paragraph. ...

P.S. Lethbridge told me about your book.

MM/11 **King Lear, Black Anna, St John** Letter from Peter Rudkin, Lincoln, 5 October 1933

It was a surprise to get your letter this morning — a very nice one! I have been busy since we were at Leicester gathering up threads of Folk-lore, and then I was going to write you <u>all</u> about it — but now that you have written I cannot wait for any more, but must tell you how far I have got so far — it is <u>most</u> thrilling — but I shall doubtless be long-winded and express myself badly, so be prepared.

Shall we begin with King Lear?

The river Soar was formerly the Leire, and a village at the head-waters still retains the name of Leire (Legre in D.B). Former name of Leicester was Caer-Leire, then A-S Lerie- (or Legre)-ceaster. King Llyr, or Lear, is said to have lived and been buried in Leicester (I believe Geoffrey of Monmouth is responsible for this. I have ordered his Chronicle, but it hasn't come yet so I can't say for certain yet.) There is a tradition that King Lear hid from his enemies in a cave outside the town (Was this the Dane Hills??) Geoffrey of Monmouth may be responsible for the idea of King Lear building a temple to Janus, but I think it is Camden or Stukely, and that the Cattle-bones that are found in such amazing numbers all round the Old Jewry Wall and St Nicholas' Church. The surrounding land is called "Holy Bones" — and it is labelled in large letters on the railings, etc. — but the bones are those of cattle, and not human ones, although the Church yard is very small. St Nicholas' Church is built with some of the material from the ruined "Jewry" (whatever that building may have been). Personally I don't hold with the idea of King Lear being buried in St Nicholas Church, although it has Saxon work in it and may stand on a Roman Temple (or may not!). Anyway, there is a boulder in the Church yard, but that's nothing much to go on.

Now for Black Anna — she is really great! She had a Bower (a cave) in the Dane Hills to the West of Leicester. She had a blue face and one eye in the centre of her forehead; and talons, not fingers, with which she scratched out her cave, or bower, from the solid rock. Over her Bower was an Oak tree, in which she used to climb and hide, then pounce down on people. Mothers used to attribute loss of children to her, and shepherds the loss of lambs. She is known as Black Anna, Black Annie, or Cat Anna. (The hill now known as Bawdon Castle was formerly known as Cateirn Hill). On Easter Monday the Mayor and Corporation in full dress used to go to Black Anna's Bower Close and "see the diversion of hunting ..." or rather the trailing of a cat, prepared with aniseed water, at the tail of a horse, in a zig-zag fashion, in and out of the streets, followed by huntsmen and hounds, finally ending at the door of the Mayor's house where a banquet was then held. There seems to be some muddle in the idea here, as to whether it was a

cat or a hare, as hare pie was the dish to be eaten, and at Hallaton, on the eastern side of the county, they still take a sack full of hare pies and tumble them down Hare-Pie Bank, and the crowd scramble for them.

Round her waist Black Anna wore a girdle of human skins.

In Murston [?] a supernatural being called Ann was honoured on St. John's Eve, the villagers carried straw torches round a certain mound and then waved these torches over cattle and lands to ensure fertility. Somewhere, I read, this same Ann was said to be "queen of the little sun" or winter, and that gave me an idea that 27 December was her day and Christianised in St.John the Evangelist's Day (as well as St. John Baptist) which brings us to all this "John" business!

St.John Stone, in a field near the Abbey — banked round on three sides. The farmer has had to forbid people going to it, as so many went and the children were such a nuisance because they would dance round it. But on St.John's Eve they must not dance after sunset or the fairies will get them. (But I don't know which St.John's Eve yet).

There is the highest hill in Charnwood Forest, in Bradgate Park, called Old John. I have enquired all I could about that, and now a man has written that he thinks it is called Old John "either from a mill that was there or from a man getting burnt to death there in a birthday bonfire about 150 years ago" — (what do you think of that?? More than he does, no doubt)

Then, reading an extract from *The Gentleman's Magazine* about the pulling down of the old gaol in Leicester, I suddenly sat up, for it disclosed the remains of the old Church of St.John the Evangelist, and the stone had all been quarried in the Dane Hills (This may have no significance, of course, but Black Anna's Bower was in the Dane Hills.)

Now I am wondering this: if Robin Hood took unto himself the attributes of the Tree God, why shouldn't Little John be mixed up with all this "John" business here? The St.John Stone is sometimes called "The Little John Stone".

Also, if King Lear said to have built a temple to Janus because of all this talk of "John" — is that how Janus has come in? Rather far-fetched, but I've heard worse.

The Humber-Stone is also known as the Host or Holy Stone.

It is noticeable when you look at the map that there are a number of villages ending in "-stone" — Rempstone, Atherstone, Humberstone, Shakerstone, Hellstone (is this Hel(a)stone?). Then there are other stones — the Hanging Stones which someone suggests is really the same as Stonehenge (?). The Altar Stone, an upright stone that used to stand on a prehistoric trackway; and at Syston, the Moody Bush Stone. A court used to be held here, and I thought it was perhaps Mooty Bush — but the old records show that the court was held in Mowde Bush Close, and the court was known as the Mowde Bush Court — so that isn't right. (The Black Dog is also known as Moddy Dhoo, isn't it? Any Connection?)

I looked up Ana and found that she was the wife of Llyr — and one of the tribe of Dannan or Dann — is this the Dane in the Dane Hills? (This isn't my own suggestion).

This will do for the time being, I think — or I may get it on the brain and be calling her the Old Wife, etc...I've written my letters and bothered folks about this rather a lot — but no one seems to connect all this up in any way — and of course it was St.John the Evangelist that gave me the key here. But perhaps you will see it all in quite another light and prove my conclusions as wrong as can be.

I should love to know what you make of it all! But the place is stiff with traditions, and there is a lot to be gathered yet, I feel sure.

I hope you can read this — I have been so thrilled writing it down that I couldn't keep pace with my pen.

MM/19 **The White Cavalry** Handwritten note, n.d., signed H.J Cossar[134]

(Taken down from the spoken account given by Capt. Wightwick Haywood, British Staff Intelligence Officer, France 1918, by the writer).

In 1918 having broken the Russian armies Germany had troops and guns to send to the W. Front. The Portuguese troops, raw and untried were sent to fill a sector near Bethune. Capt. H. captured two spies but not before they had released carrier pigeons. An ominous quiet preceded the massing of heavy artillery on the portuguese who were just wiped out by the most terrible assault ever known.

The Germans advanced under cover of immense shell and machine gun fire and Bethune was evacuated. They came on in massed parade ground formation. A few men were posted in shell holes to keep up incessant machine-gun fire to check and delay the Germans, but they advanced irresistibly and there was nothing to stop them going right through to Paris.

Then, suddenly, they shelled the empty ridge behind Bethune, intensely and hailed machine-gun bullets on it! Why? After a while the firing ceased, all was quiet, and some of our men were sent to reconnoitre. Presently they waved their helmets and cheered — the Germans were retreating in disorder. Men were sent out and captured many German prisoners. Capt H. interrogated two officers looking scared, who said, as they were advancing triumphant they saw the ridge covered with white cavalry and at their head a hero on a great white charger, the sun shining on his golden hair. None of their fire had the slightest effect, but on they came, till at last the Germans broke and ran, robbed of their triumph at the crucial point of the war.

This was corroborated years after by a Tommy who heard all the German prisoners talking of this exactly — and a nurse of an advanced dressing station who heard the prisoner patients all talking of this with awe and fear.

MM/20 **Fairies** Letter to Murray from Marcia Penrose, Stornoway, 14 June 1952

When I saw you in February you asked my to try and find out one or two items during our holiday in the Hebrides. On the whole I have been most unsuccessful as the people refuse to give themselves away — for fear of being laughed at I suppose. When I asked if people ever sees the fairies they said "Och — the whiskey is not as good as it used to be". We did find that at Tarbert a mysterious and very brilliant light is often seen on dark nights. It accompanies a man as he either walks or bicycles about the road but he himself cannot see it. Sometimes a house appears to be on fire but there is no fire nor smell of burning.

Most of the ancient churches are completely ruined and I saw no carvings excepting at St. Clement's, Rodel. The date of the church is said to be 14th century. It has a very tall tower which can be seen from all sides from the sea.

North side of tower a bull's or calf's head (sketch enclosed) [missing from collection].

West side of Tower. Figure of a bishop above and below him on either side 2 male figures (one in Highland dress the other almost nude) inserted at an angle with the vertical.

South side of the tower. Female figure (sketch enclosed) [missing from collection]. She is nursing something which does not look like a child.

East side of tower. A ship above and an animal (sheep?) below.

At the SE and NE corners are animal heads projecting like gargoyles.

Today we have been to see the Standing Stones of Callandish. A most impressive monument standing on the top of a promontory jutting into the sea loch. The central circle (from which arms radiate N.S.E & W) contains 13 stones with a very tall central obelisk standing at the head of what appears to be a burial chamber which has lost its capstone.

We noticed that the stones on the main avenue are alternately "male" and "female" as at Avebury and at Stanton Drew. An inhabitant of the village remarked on what a pity it was that no one knew what the stones had been used for. We asked what people thought about them he said "Well they do say that people used to be hanged there, but I don't believe it." We have had a most delightful holiday in these fascinating islands and shall be sorry to leave them tomorrow — tho' always glad to get home again!

I do hope you will enjoy going to Ireland [see MM/31–MM/36 below] and will see many of the wonderful antiquities of the country. There will, of course, be many more ancient churches than there are in this Protestant part of the world. ...

MM/21 **Witches and Fairies** Letter from R.B. Graham ... Bradford, 8 February 1953

Three things have come my way lately that may be of interest to you, one concerning the relation of fairies to witchcraft, the other two pointing to the survival of ancient and probably pre-Celtic peoples. [The "Keltic" items come from printed sources, but the item on the link between

fairies and witchcraft is transcribed here.] The "Fairy Belle" At Uxbridge, Mx, there is an inn of this name, the sign — which depicts "a very unbeautiful old lady riding on a broomstick" ([collected] from Mrs Kirk ... Carshalton, Surrey, 3 February, 1953). ... The Uxbridge inn-sign was noticed by an observant daughter of mine, who might be able to call and enquire whether the sign in known to be traditional. She was passing in a bus at the time and could not go in.

MM/22 **Spell for Summoning a Person** Letter to Murray from an unidentified correspondent ... London NW3, 30 March 1924

In case I do not see you at the Anthrop: here is a good piece of magic spell I have just picked up from a friend who got it, of all places in the world from South Kensington from the cockney caretaker of a house. This woman confided it to my informant as a most valuable thing, to be used only in great emergencies and with due respect. The caretaker had learnt it from "another woman".

When you greatly wish to summon a person to you must cut out a heart of red flannel, and thoroughly soak it with your blood. Stick a needle through it. At the stroke of midnight you must throw it into the fire saying:

"It is not this heart I wish to burn
But the heart of (—) I wish to turn.
May he (she) neither eat not drink nor sleep
Until with me he/she come to speak."[135]

Then walk backwards towards the bed and within 24 hours the person summoned should appear. The spell has completely succeeded in two cases. The caretaker was formerly employed at an office. Some money was missed and she was wrongfully accused of stealing it. She begged to speak with the head of the house and was refused and was given to understand that she would be brought before the police early in the next week. In desperation on Sunday night she resolved to have recourse ... [remainder of letter not in collection].

MM/23 **The "Skippings" at Bartlow (Cambridgeshire)** Letter from Isabel Ogilvy ... London, W1, 24 July 1940, in response to Murray's query

... My husband C.N. Brocklebank closed, or perhaps I should say stopped all access to the Hills, as they were being used as a sort of picnic or sports ground by the public in general. People used to slide down there and the grass on one was nearly quite worn away and on all of them there were gullies for climbing up. He had all these filled in and everywhere re-grassed and all made tidy and kept in order.

The Fair usually held on Good Friday was most distasteful to him from a religious point of view. There used to be small booths of sweets and the usual "fairings" and an old fashioned "roundabout" and a lot of running about on the Hills and a great deal of noise. I don't remember ever hearing of the "Skippings". The Fair went on all day. I think there was more ill-feeling about their being closed outside the village, i.e. from people who used to come over to Bartlow on Good Friday for a "day out". My husband's law suit was to close the footpath which practically encircled the Hills and it was proved that there was no "right of way" over part of the path. The right of way and real footpath went straight on over the footbridge across the railway, to the large field towards Waltons Park. ...

MM/24.3 **Witches and Fairies in the Fenlands** Page in Miss Baker's hand, n.d.

Tales of Quy

Quy Hall has a haunted walk through the shrubbery. Lady Gains, a former owner walks there on moonlight nights and was seen last about 1900. I do not know of any more recent visitation.

Witchcraft was believed in both in Quy and Lode. A witch both young and handsome lived at an Inn in Lode. I believe the Plough Inn. She had a lover at Quy, Bill Howard by name. In 1885 (or later) he fell out of favour for some reason and one night had to turn somersaults all the way from Lode to Quy, some two miles.

The old lady telling me this tale in 1936 told me her eight months old baby cried suddenly one morning, and on stripping him she found him covered with lice, which she

proceeded to throw in the fire, whereupon they vanished, all of them. Bill Howard had called in her house that morning for a glass of ale, and she was certain he had bewitched the child. Also she told me there was a devil which leapt about the housetops and hid behind chimneys. Her husband (a gamekeeper) tried to shoot it, but his arm remained rigid and fixed round the gun barrel, so said she, we knew it was nothing human.

Toads were, and still are in Quy, believed to be witches. Quy church foundations were laid in a field the opposite end of the village to the present site (still to be seen) but the fairies moved the stones every night to its present position where at last they, the people, built the church. It's unlucky to thwart the fairies.

MM/24.4 Fenland Witch Legends Three pages in Miss Baker's hand, n.d.

"Tales of Little Downham. Heard in my Childhood."
From my earliest childhood I was familiar with local stories of ghosts, hobgoblins, witches, all of which were sincerely believed in by the elder generation, and really many amongst the younger ones were half afraid that they might be true (although as they remarked they had never seen anything themselves but they knew a man or woman who had).

The first thing I remember is being told that I must not be out after dark, prowling fields and lanes, as Bob Shucky would get me, and sometimes I was afraid that he might. He was a fearsome creature, black like a dog but huge, very hairy, very fierce with glaring eyes and long teeth, and he walked on his hind legs. My grandmother had seen him once, and she never really got over the fright, and a shepherd, Burkett Smith, used to tell me of a witch who rode across West Fen on a hurdle. His father had seen her often, she used to talk to it, and it neighed and whinnied like a horse, whereupon he fled, being afraid of dealings with the devil.

There was a witch in every fenny parish, and they could change themselves into will-of-the-wisps, so that nobody could see them, only the light and they would drown you. Or they would change into toads and swim the dykes and be quite dry and clothed on the other side. There was a tree at the end of Cannon Street, where they met and they had a fire there, and used to sing round it but I never could find

out their song. People were afraid of them. They seemed to be all old women. No young ones or men. They always met in May and in November and people stayed at home.

[A hand-drawn map of Little Downham shows the "meeting place" of the witches at the crossroads of Cannon Street and Ely Road.]

In my grandmother's youth, 1850 or so, a witch was offended with her and when she went to lift a pail of new milk in the dairy for weeks it would go solid from top to bottom, and another witch always disappeared by a certain field but a hare ran across the field. This same field was a great place for hauntings. A very tall old man was seen there on moonlight nights, and along the road running by it. A man [ran?] down hill at a furious pace and broke his neck at the bottom of the hill and was buried where he fell. Certainly in my childhood there was a large grassy mound there. A child haunted the lane on the other side of the field.

In my mother's youth a witch lived in the house beside School Lane. She could curse you till your limbs withered and put the evil eye on you. She had a son, Highbonnet by name. He could tell any farmer where his men were in the fen. He went and tapped a certain tree first, close by the witches' meeting place. Could crack a stone in his teeth and bend a poker on his arm. When this old lady died they burned her wretched cat and kittens in her brick oven because, so they said, she had been seen to suckle them. ...

MM/24.7 **Fenland Witches and Goblins** Typescript (6 pp), by Miss Baker, n.d.

The Lore of the Fens

Fifty years ago, the Fens were black and dreary places to the stranger, wild and eerie, and the natives uncouth, and clannish, a folk that kept to themselves. The Fens were an almost treeless waste, except for a few willow and poplar trees. Just rough droves and endless waterways. Houses here and there, miles apart. ...

In the rainy weather ... That was the time to gather round the fire and hear the tales of the old folks; besides, it was dangerous for children to go out in the dark, Bob Shucky lay in wait in the dykes. Fearsome was Bob Shucky, as big as a donkey, with glaring eyes, big teeth and shaggy coat.

Or the will-o-wisp would lure one into the boggy marsh and a long arm would drag one down and down to drown. There were ghosts too in certain places, sometimes an owl would hoot, return and hoot again and yet again, and we knew that someone's soul was passing out in the night; or the dog would howl and could not be quietened, and surely in the morning we would hear the tolling bell. Or someone would tell us of the witches, which were still believed in when my mother was little.

There was a witch, Betty Bounce they called her. She put a spell on my grandmother, the new milk went solid in the pail, or even if it could be skimmed, there would be no butter in the churn. The cow dropped calf, and nobody dared go near the witch, for she had the evil eye, and would bewitch you. This would be about 1866 or 7.

There was also another witch. The shepherd told me that he had often seen her ride across West Fen on a hurdle. She was known to have imps and suckle them, but she was good at curing folk. Her son was a wizard too, and if you wished to know what was going on at a distance, he could and did tell you correctly, but first he went to a certain tree, where his familiar lived, and tapped the tree, and some had heard a voice reply. He was a very powerful man, and could break a nail with his teeth, and bend a poker on an arm. They called him "High Bonnet". I believe he died before his mother, at any rate at her decease her cat and kittens were burnt in the brick oven as imps. This would be about 1870.

But a witch could not cross cold iron laid directly in her path or a piece of elder-twig. Elder trees were, and perhaps still are, grown by cottage doors to keep witches away. Even in 1898 an old lady I knew was a reputed witch. Villagers were afraid of her. I have heard her muttering in her garden and talking to someone unseen, sitting on her kitchen table burning holes in it with a red hot poker. Poor old senile creature. The shepherd could cure warts and corns with a piece of elder-wood. It was, he said, sovereign against witchcraft, but before you cut a branch, permission must be asked of the tree. If you asked [the] shepherd to cure your corns and warts, he took his elder-stick and cut as many notches in it as needed, muttered an incantation of which he would never tell the words or the spell would be broken, twisted it round his head and flung it far away. He

always carried a pointed piece of elder in his pocket; no witch could put a spell on you if you had elder-wood on you. If she tried, and you scratched her with the point of the elder, she would screech, explode and vanish. He also firmly believed that if you laid a child suffering from whooping cough in the form where a sheep had lain all night, the child would be cured.

There was also a wych ash in the village. If a child suffering from epilepsy or skin disease were passed through it, it would be cured.

As a small child I saw a village midwife squeezing the secretion from a newly born baby boy's nipples, because if she didn't he would grow up bewitched. A hare and a toad were both creatures into which a witch could transform herself at will. There was a story of a toad having boiling water poured on it and the old witch being found badly scalded in her cottage.

There was a chestnut tree near the crossroads, where witches from the surrounding fen were said to meet on May-Day eve at midnight and at Halloween, and a tunnel under the road which they entered in one form and came out in another, even as a donkey. But nobody was bold enough to go near enough to see what really happened. But they knew that they had a fire.

Another belief in the village was that if you cut or pierced yourself with knife or nail, these must be greased or the wound would take harm. A man I knew died from tetanus only a few years since, but, said his sister-in-law, he didn't grease the nail. If a gestating woman longed for anything and could not get it, her baby would be born licking its lips and would lick until it was given the thing his mother had longed for, and it would not thrive unless it had it. I have seen tiny three days old babies given stewed eels to lick or a piece of fat pork for this reason.

MM/24.8 Swaffham Witch Typescript (1 page), probably by Miss Baker, post 1949

I was told this story of Swaffham Prior on the 6th January 1949. Fifty five years ago a witch cast a spell on a family living there. They apparently knew all about spells, and that to reverse a spell you took the same ingredients that

the witch had used to cast it. This must be a hair and a fingernail of the person bewitched, some herbs which I could not identify, a piece of horse's hoof, and either iron filings or forge water from the blacksmith, put in a saucepan of water on the hob, lay a knife under the doormat. As soon as ingredients begin to boil, the spell begins to work and brings the witch to the door. Come she must, but she can't get in because she cannot cross the knife. She stands yammering outside the door and swelling and swelling. Nobody must speak or the spell would break. In the case told me, the saucepan boiled dry, and the witch instead of bursting was able to get away, leaving a foul pool of water, buckets of it, but her power was gone, she could work no more spells.

This was told me by a Swaffham man who declared he saw this happen.

MM/25 **Fairies** Letter from Mary Walton ... Birmingham, 7 November 1953

I am pleased to hear you believe in fairies. Yes I have seen them many years ago. On more than one occasion have watched them. But the ones I saw, and I did see them, were quite small in height. I could tell you a few interesting things about them. They are not thought forms as many folks think — but can change — disappear and appear at will. I would have enclosed two little poems I have written but for the minute I cannot lay hands on them — they are amongst others and Saturday is a busy day and if I don't write now — may never do so. I could take you to the very spot in Scotland where I saw the first one, at the age of about 4 years. I have seen many since. No, the fairies are not myth, but a real thing. It depends on the nature of the person. One must retain a lot of their "sweet childish nature" and a sort of awareness or as they say in Scotland you must be fay. ...

MM/25.1 **Fairies** Letter from Mary Walton ... Birmingham, 14 December 1953

Thank you for your letter. I have been too busy to write about my very strange experiences. There were two, one about the age of 7 years, the other, I know would interest

you a great deal more, at about 8 years old. I will be in London Thursday first on business and may call to talk about it. Should it not be convenient for you. I will have a nice quiet time for I go into hospital for an operation on the 29 Dec. So will take my pen and pad and write one of the strangest experiences yet. Everything has come to pass weird and wonderful even as I write can recall her words. If it would be convenient to see me Thursday afternoon, it would save me a great deal of writing. Afraid that's my weak point. Often wish [I] could meet some one who is really interested in reincarnation and occultism. Yet she said I would open doors and hearts with a pen, or pencil, when I had drank out of a cup of rainbow that was not made with human hands. I had puzzled that bit and forgot it till a few weeks ago. I found a very large mother of pearl shell. There was a tiny hole on the lip. I scrubbed it and polished it. When I filled it with water, the sun shone on the shell, it looked lovely. The water trickled like living rainbow. I filled it and drank. It was not made by human hands. I know when I was young, my mother often said I was pisky led. There are times even now I wonder—. I must close now, and if unable to see you Thursday afternoon about two or three o-clock will write you from hospital. ...

PS until I had drunk out of the shell, it never entered my head, about it being a cup. Like a flash the whole childhood's adventure came back.

MM/25.2 **Fairies** Note in Murray's hand, dated 17 December 1953, headed "Mrs Mary Walton. 7 years old (now 63)"

1) At Balruddie Farm for summer. Alone, sitting on swing. Saw a little woman, about two feet high, run in stooping position from house across grass to raspberry bushes. Flowing bluish dress. M.W. jumped up, ran after her, but could not find her. At place where woman appeared to issue from house, was humming noise like bee buzzing in flower.
2) 8 years old. Summer. Walking up hill, took off shoes and walked barefoot up to seat. Old woman already there. Said to child "hard clay must hurt feet, but you have harder road to travel". Went on to tell child her future, marry man of straw (child thought scarecrow) eldest child to make sensation in the medical world. Etc. Etc. Suddenly saw lot

of little people men and women about two feet high, all dressed in brown with brown caps, coming up from the water and passing diagonally past woman and child. They waved as if to call child, who was at once rising to run to them but woman put her hand firmly on child's to keep her down. Child called out "Look, Look" and turned to the woman who had vanished.

MM/27 **Witches and Fairies** Typed letter to Murray from Duncan Mackintosh ... Cambridge, 6 June 1954

I have just returned from a very enjoyable rural survey in Pembrokeshire. As fate would have it, it was on the eve of my departure that I heard a tale that deserved a little investigation and may interest you, if you have not already heard about it. The headmaster of the village school knew an old lady who died recently, aged about a hundred. Many years before, I suspect sometime around 1870, she had set about buying some pigs. She first refused the offer on one farmer, but later bought two pigs from a second. The first farmer then proceeded to curse those two pigs, and sometime later they fell into a steady decline and died. Now the family from which the first farmer had come had for sometime enjoyed the reputation of being in communion with the Devil and of practising witchcraft. What is even more interesting is that members of this family as recently as the early years of this century attended communion, oh yes, but had not eaten the bread. They took it out of the church and gave it to the first toad they found. All of this I found somewhat intriguing, and should like to have your views upon it. The notorious family still survives in the region, but I understand that they have lost their reputation and are rather reticent in discussing the habits of their ancestors!

The region in question, the Precelly [sic.] Hills has long been shrouded in mystery, and I am told is still known as the "Valhalla of the Gods" Some people there do not celebrate Christmas but the New Year instead as in Scotland. The celebration is known Hengalen and is dated by the old style calendar. That is to say that the birth of the New Year is celebrated on the twelfth of January. In order that as many people as possible may attend each other's parties, it is carried over two or three days, to the fourteenth.

If you want to follow this up, I can only refer you to my informant, Mr Lloyd Richards of Nevern School, Pembrokeshire.[136]

MM/29 **Alderbury Moat, Essex**, by Miss Annie Baker, n.d.

They dug the moat and then started to build the house. They worked all the first day and left a man on guard at night with his three spey bitches. In the night Satan came and said "Who is there?" and the man answered "God and myself and my three spey bitches" and the Devil went away. The next day they did another day's work, and they left the same man on guard again. And in the night Satan came again and said "Who is there?" and the man answered "God and myself and my three spey bitches" and the Devil went away. And on the third day they did another day's work, and left the man on guard again, and in the night Satan came and said "Who is there?" and the man answered "Myself and my three spey bitches and God". He had put it the wrong way round. So the Devil put out his hand and tore the heart out of the man's body. And he took a beam from the house and threw it up the hill, and said

"Where this beam shall fall
There shall ye build Barnhall."

The story is usually continued to the effect that the Devil claimed the man's soul "Whether he was buried in church or churchyard" and he was therefore buried in the church wall. The effigy in Tolleshunt Knights church, which is of a knight in armour with his heart in his hands, was formerly partly under an arch in the thickness of the wall. Both the effigy and the man in the story have been popularly identified for two centuries or more with a De Pateshull, a family that held Barnhall circa 1250–1350, but is in fact an Atte Lee, circa 1380.

We think that Alderbury Moat, locally known as The Devil's Wood or The Devil's Toolbox, is the site of a Manor House which became redundant when acquired by the De Pateshulls whose house stood only a mile away, in a healthier position.

Essex Review XIV, page 136 mentioned the wood as being a favorite place for "Satanic Revels" to explain the Devil's anxiety to eject trespassers on his property.

MM/30 **Fairies** Fragment of letter from unidentified author, n.d., on headed notepaper from "Henlle Hall, St. Martin's, Oswestry"

It may interest you to hear that my great-grandfather who was vicar of Amlwch always declared he saw the fairies dancing one night when riding to catch the Holyhead boat, that would be somewhere about 1850 or a little earlier. I once when about 8 years old heard my grandmother tell the story to a grown-up person. She did not think I was listening and was rather angry at my listening to grown-up conversations which were not intended for little girls to hear and quite justly as the tale had frightened me. My great-grandfather was extremely frightened apparently too, and rode on as quickly as possible with [remainder of letter not in collection].

MM/30.1 **Black Dog** Note in Murray's hand, n.d., on paper from Shaftesbury Hotel, Liverpool

Dolgelly Pass. Miss M.C.Jones.

Her paternal grandfather, middle 19th century.
Dolgelly pass was haunt of gang of robbers Grandfather then a young man, had to come through the Pass alone one dark night. Suddenly found a large black dog walking quietly beside him. It remained with him till he was past the danger spot and he was within the safe part, and then disappeared.

MM/31.1 **The Puck Fair, Killorglin** Letter to Murray from Magdalen Perceval Maxwell ... Co. Waterford, 8 September [1951]

I was so interested to get your letter (forwarded from the "Personal Letter Office") and of course will be delighted to give you any details that I can about Puck Fair, especially as I should feel this to be a small repayment of the enjoyment I had when reading your book "Witchcraft in Western Europe".

You do not say how soon you will need the information for the new edition of the "God of the Witches". Would a delay of a few weeks matter? I wouldn't like to send you inaccurate information — this I feel would be far worse than sending you none at all! — and though there are several

Kerrymen working here for my husband, they seem very vague about the details of Puck Fair. (In fact it is curious how little even educated people here seem to know about what must surely be a very rare and interesting survival from the dim past?) I hope to see a friend next week who might be able to tell me more about it, but what I would like to do would be to go to Killorglin when the holidays are over and my family dispatched back to boarding school, and make enquiries there on the spot. I feel that this would be the only satisfactory way of finding out about it, and it would be no trouble at all. In fact it would be a good excuse to go on a little holiday!

A woman here on the place told my husband that the whole Fair is run by a committee (pronounced Comitea!) of Killorglin townsmen, but what one would like to find out is whether the members of the Committee are chosen from any special families.

I could answer some of your questions now I think, but if it wouldn't inconvenience you to wait a few weeks, I would hope to be able to answer them more fully. So perhaps you would let me know about this. (Meanwhile I will keep the questions by me) [see below, MM/32]

I wish now that I had paid more attention to the actual ceremony. The crowd was terrific — literally thousands of people trampling and shoving round, and I was feeling rather dazed and tired by the time that the goat was actually crowned.

I was amused at the idea of the parish priest denying that there was any trace of paganism in it! I never saw anything so barbaric as the Pook goat (a magnificent animal) raised up on the platform.

Two points — in case I should forget to mention them later. The goat was acclaimed (by a man speaking through a loud speaker immediately after the goat was finally hoisted up onto the top platform. I will of course send you more details of this part of the ceremony) as "the Puck King of Ireland." (In print he is usually alluded to as the "Puck King of the Fair", but I remember that at the time the younger members of my family, who are staunch Northerners in sentiment! made fun of this saying "they have got a goat as a King down here!") — the other point is that it is to a great extent a tinkers' fair — they seem to have a kind of hereditary

right to park their caravans by the side of the road outside the town. A rather erudite clergyman who we know, claims that the tinkers (who I think are not Romanys?) are the descendants of the original Celts? I wonder if there is anything in this.

I was very interested in what you told me about the origin of the fadelha I had heard something of that kind but was not sure enough of it to mention it. I agree with you, to wear a fadelha in a high wind must be a penance indeed!

The black cloaks and hoods that attracted me so much I only saw here and in Bandon (West Cork) though I imagine that they were the usual wear of the country women in these parts formerly. I must try and find out more about them.

Do let me know how soon you will need the information about Puck Fair. My husband and I both hope that there will be time enough to allow us to do some "detective" work at Killorglin!

MM/31.2 **Puck Fair** Letter from Magdalen Perceval Maxwell ... Co. Waterford, 18 September [1951], enclosing Murray's list of questions about the Puck Fair [**MM/32**] and Claude Cockburn's list of answers [**MM/32.1**]

I went to Youghal today to see a Mr Cockburn who is a writer and journalist (he was at one time the New York correspondent of the "Times") and who wrote an article for the now defunct "Leader" about Puck Fair. He was there during the whole three days and made extensive enquiries, and he has kindly answered your questions for me. I enclose the questions and his answers, and I do hope they will be some use to you. He says that he doesn't think I would be able to find out any more by going to Killorglin "out of season". Apparently (according to Mr Cockburn) though the ceremony of the goat being crowned etc. obviously goes back to pagan times, various theories have been put forward at different periods to account for it, ie that a herd of goats warned the people of a Danish invasion. Oddly enough I have just had a line from my sister, in which she says that her Irish "daily", who comes from West Cork, tells her that "the goat warned when the Black and Tan were coming by a special noise it made up in the hills" and that this

"started another new religion for them." The "daily" had already said that "several religions are connected with it, one secret" so she and her husband had always heard tell." This may be all very much beside the point. But you asked for any details and this one may perhaps be of interest. The goat is evidently credited with magical powers!

I can't imagine that the priests would approve of the "several religions, one secret". But perhaps this is concealed from them? Mrs Cockburn (Mr Cockburn's wife) told me that a Bishop (Protestant I imagine) said that there were two pagan ceremonies left in Ireland: Puck Fair and the Baal (hope I have spelt this right!) fires when the people leap over the fires on St John's Eve. (This still takes place in this neighbourhood).

She knows a good deal about the tinkers, she has bought horses from them. She thinks they are the descendants of the native Irish who were driven out by the English settlers. They usually have ordinary Irish names, McCarthy, Flynn, etc, speak a kind of "patois" Gaelic, and are nominally R.C. (not more than nominally so!), the piebald and skewbald horses that they have are the descendants of the original native breed. She doesn't think that their connection with Puck Fair has any particular significance.

Do let me know if there is anything more I could do to help you. I suppose you have never contemplated a visit to Ireland? I am sure you would find a good deal to interest you here. The old beliefs and customs linger on in this country which is still to a great extent untouched by industrialization.

If any of the information I have sent you should be worth including, please don't feel that you need to make any acknowledgement to me, as it has been great fun finding out about it, and I have really done nothing except pick Mr Cockburn's brains! If you cared to make an acknowledgement to him, I am sure he would be gratified — but I don't think he particularly expects it!

He says the affair is a complete orgy as regards drink. People lie down to sleep on the railway line and get shoved off by slightly less inebriated friends before the train comes along.

MM/32 **The Puck Fair** List of 11 questions in Murray's hand [September 1951?]

1. Who catches the goat? Can anybody do it, or is it the right or privilege of one family or village?
2. Is the fair always held on the same day of the week or of the month?
3. Is the Puck kept tied all the days of the Fair?
4. What do the boys in green do besides riding in the lorry with the Puck? Have they any special duties towards the animal?
5. The green boys and the girl-queen suggest a fairy element. Are there any other facts which point in that direction?
6. Who is actually in charge of the goat; to see that he is fed? Is this a hereditary job?
7. I understand that the goat is turned loose on the hills after the Fair is over, and is never allowed to be caught again. Is this a fact? Who looses him? with ceremony?
8. In the pictures I have seen the goat always has wreaths of flowers round his neck. Is this always the case?
9. In your [i.e. Mrs Perceval Maxwell's] account the goat is "roped into a kind of little platform," is this a cage with a floor?
10. Then he is "hoisted 35 feet on to the top platform". Would you please let me have full details of this part of the performance. Is it a scaffolding? Is anyone at the top to secure the cage or "platform"? In fact any and every detail that you can think of.
11. Is the goat ever killed?

Please forgive my troubling you with all these questions, but this is one of the very few instances of the Divine King and the substitute animal, and the ceremony ought not to die out without some exact record.

MM/32.1 **Puck Fair** Typescript (3 pp) from Claude Cockburn, Youghal, [September 1951], answering Murray's questions

1. The catching of the goat is, and has been for the last four or five years, in the hands of a particular family, but there is no special mystique about this. It is not a right or privilege — just a habit, or even, perhaps, a racket, in the sense that

the family concerned has snaffled the goat-catching business. There really doesn't seem to be more to it than that, although at one time there probably was.

2. Yes. Because the real date is Lammas Tide, and since the real date of Lammas is no longer kept, there is no reason why it shouldn't, now, be on the same day every year. Also, because nowadays it is partly a tourist business, they want to fit it in between Dublin Horse Show and Tramore Races.

[Annotation by Mrs Perceval Maxwell:] (August 11th is Gathering Day. It was held on 12th, a Sunday this year so that early Mass would not be interfered with, I imagine. M.P.M.)

3. Yes — but continuously fed with goat-goodies sent up to him on a trolley.

4. Nothing.

5. Only in the sense that the whole affair is obviously both pre-Christian and pre-Druid. Almost everything connected with it suggests a fairy origin. In the sense that it is possible to trace a pre-Druid cause for the simple little effects achieved today.

6. See answer to question 1.

7. The goat is turned loose but it is not true that it is not allowed to be caught again. On the contrary, it is caught over and over again, and there seems to be some local pride in the fact that a particular goat has been the Puck several years running.

I do not know whether there is any ceremony concerned with the release of the goat. I did not see it myself. It may or may not be so.

8. I believe yes. The wreaths are put around the goat's neck at first in the lorry which brings him into town, but then, more ceremonially, by a little girl who both puts the wreath around and crowns him.

9. No, it is a floor with no cage. Just a platform, like an open-sided lift.

10. There is a team of people supposed to be expert at lifting the goat. The lifting is really quite simple — imagine a rather heavily laden food-lift from one level of a house to the dining room, That is what it is like. At the top is a kind of

scaffolding, and a man usually — I am not sure whether always — climbs it and sees that the goat lift is securely in position. I think, I am not quite sure, that a man always climbs onto the light — very light — scaffolding around the little (say 8 foot by 2) goat platform, to see that all is in order.

11. I think certainly not on purpose — though whether there is a tabu against his being ever killed I do not know. There is, so far as I know, certainly not any killing the goat ceremony.

MM/33 **Puck Fair** Notes made by Olga Tufnell during the Puck Fair, [1952]

1. Sides of the open truck or lorry were covered with paper in the national colours, green, white and yellow. Poles at each corner were garlanded with ivy, which was also strewn on the truck floor. I say at least two bashful young men say something to a boy in green, who then handed him a sprig of ivy from the floor.

Someone, perhaps Miss Baker?, remembered afterwards that in some country districts the wearing of a sprig of ivy signified that the young man was in search of a sweetheart.

2. Pipe and Drum Band. My impression was that the uniform was in two shades of brown or buff. The bonnets and plaids a darker colour than the kilts, but I cannot be sure. There was only one feather in each cap.

3. The Stand. It was painted in stripes of blue and white with flags at each topmost corner. Two Eire National flags, one old Ireland flag with the harp on dark green ground, and one Stars and Stripes. Stand built in three tiers, each platform about 12 ft square, rising in all to roof level of surrounding houses. Goat and shrine hauled up by pulley and winch through central hole, the tackle being removed once the goat was in position.

4. The "Queen" was dressed in a white silk robe under a moss green velvet cloak. She wore a gold paper crown over a red cap. I thought I heard the M.C. say: "The Queen of the Fairies calling (or crowning) the goat" but the local press gave it as "The Queen of the Fair". The goat's crown was of silver paper, fixed on round the horns.

5. The goat is lowered on the evening of Scattering Day.

Local memory does not appear to retain much recollection of the significance. I heard one man say: "Why should it be a goat and not some other animal?"

MM/33.1 Puck Fair at Killorglin Notes (4 leaves) in Miss Baker's handwriting [1952]

This fair always takes place on the 11th August every year, Sunday or weekday and is very interesting. Its origin is lost in the mists of Antiquity but is still performed according to its ancient ritual. Large crowds attend the ceremony, which is solemn during the crowning but afterwards descends into quite a drunken orgy. Large numbers of the tinker class attend the fair and their caravans extend quite a mile alongside the road.

The Puck

The Puck is a goat who whilst belonging to a Farmer lives wild in the Hills and must be hunted. He is kept captive and well fed some days before the Fair. On the 11th day of the month he is placed and tied to a small wooden Platform, at a bridge near the approach to the town, where he is met by a Lorry.

In the Market Place a scaffold is erected with three stages, about thirty feet high; its upright posts are painted with blue and white stripes. From the top float the three flags of Ireland, one of emerald green with a Harp displayed in yellow, one also of emerald with a yellow square on which is a green shamrock; the other flag is squares of green, white and gold and from one post floats the American Stars and Stripes. All afternoon on the lower stage of scaffold there is dancing by small girls several in white.

The Queen of the Fairies also stands there dressed in white soft satin, her crown of gold with red centre already in place. Beside the scaffold waits a lorry, with a raised central dais, on either side are three small boys dressed in green lined with yellow. The upright posts of lorry are blue and white and were draped with ivy. The small boys gave ivy sprigs to young men several times. At six o'clock the lorry moved off to the bridge where it met the goat. He was then placed in a little shrine painted blue, blue canopy and upright (rather an unusual blue; on enquiry I found it to be an ancient royal Irish blue). The shrine is just large

enough to cover the goat. He could not lie down. His legs and head are lashed to the sides of shrine. His long horns are decorated with small bells.

Then a procession begins through the town preceded by a pipe and drum band. The Pipers have a green tunic and a folded green plaid over shoulders and fastened with a Tara brooch (cardboard perhaps), green Tamoshanters with purple side feathers, brown short kilts. They play old Irish airs. Thus heralded the goat is perambulated round the town in view of all. They halt at the scaffold, where the canopy is removed from the shrine which with goat in place is then hauled on to lower stages of scaffold and received by Master of Ceremonies, who calls for silence whilst the goat is crowned and the band plays solemn music. But press camera men so surround the platform that the public cannot see the actual crowning. The Queen of the Fairies places a gilt crown on the head of Puck and proclaims him

"Puck. King of Ireland."

There is a roar of acclaim from the crowd. The goat is then hoisted up to the top staging of scaffold and lashed again securely. His canopy is replaced and he is left up on high alone for three days and nights, except that he is well fed. On the third evening he is lowered down from scaffold. His bells removed, also crown. He is taken still in his shrine to the bridge by lorry which again parades through the town on the way to the bridge. He is then delivered to his owner who releases him and allows him to return to the hills.

(His coat is white and purple, not in stripes but like a mottled goat might be).

MM/36 **Frensham Cauldron** Note to Murray from Wilfrid Bonser, University College London, 8 July 1954

I do not know (naturally, in my case!) if the Frensham Cauldron has been written up. I can see nothing on Surrey folklore in the library. I do wish our index to "Folklore" existed, as it would help in this case. But if you have new material, assume there is nothing, and give us the benefit!

MM/37 **Old Mother Ludlam and the Frensham Cauldron**
Letter to T.C. Lethbridge from J.L. Barr, Honorary Secretary, Friern Barnet Parish Council, 24 June 1954, with note on verso addressed to Murray

Coirean Daghda?
Thank you for yours of May 26. I seem to have been long in reply — but I have been trying to get a sketch or picture postcard of Mother Ludlam's Cauldron. Nothing seems available in Farnham shops. I then wrote to the Headmaster of Frensham Village School and this morning he has replied. I enclose his letter [Not in the collection]. It may help reveal something of the Frensham Church Cauldron. ...

For Mr M. Murray: — Mother Ludlam, used to lend her cauldron locally for feasts. Folk desiring to use it had to knock on the cave and leave their request. On returning the following morning, the cauldron would be found ready. Strict rules governed its return. Once, however, it was not returned to time, and the "witch" refused to help anyone again, and has not since been seen. How the cauldron was found in a church porch, six miles away, is unknown. Mother Ludlam's dog also disappeared. "Twas a lazy creature — so lazy that it had to lean its head against the wall of the cave when it wanted to bark". I hope I have not intruded too much on your time — but you have set several things rumbling round inside.

MM/37.1 **The Frensham Cauldron** Letter to Murray from J.L. Barr, Friern Barnet, 8 July 1954, enclosing **MM/37.2**

Thank you for yours of this morning. When a boy I spent hours roaming round Waverley — hence picked up many stories. The Cave, the Cauldron, and the water are real — Moor Park is slowly giving way to modern "improvement". The stories remain. You'll have noticed that Farn-ham and Frens-ham are really the same = Home of Ferns — or Fernlands. You may find enclosed of use.

MM/37.2 **The Frensham Cauldron** Handwritten account (3 pp) by J.L. Barr, Friern Barnet, July 1954

? Mother Ludlam's Cauldron?

"Tales we have heard which we pass on to those who are yet to come."

Down the years many stories have been wound round Mother Ludlam's Cave. Many streams flow "from under the Surrey Downs". One such would seem to show itself under St Martha's at Guildford and reappear in Moor Park, Farnham. "Legend" says this is proved by the story of ducks being put in the stream at Guildford, coming out in Farnham minus feathers. According to the annals of Waverley Abbey (nearby) the cavern (entrance) was enlarged for the purpose of collecting the several adjacent springs of water for the use of the monastery a quarter of a mile distant. Waverley was the first Cistercian Abbey (?Convent) in England (circa 1120). Its ivy mantled ruins present to this day the most interesting spectacle of antiquity in Surrey. Iron gates now prevent entrance to the cave and one can only sit on the seat opposite and ruminate. A little way in, modern brickwork is seen — which may be diversion or conservation. The entrance is about 12' x 12' and the cave thirty feet inside needs crawling to investigate. The stream is clear cool water. Moor Park House is now Moor Park College — a CofE teaching post. It was the home of Sir W. Temple — and Dean Swift. Stella Cottage is not far. Mother Ludlam's Cave is in the sandstone bank on the left just before the House is reached.

Mother Ludlam — a white witch???

The old lady neither killed hogs, rode broomsticks nor made children vomit nails and crooked pins. When properly invoked, she kindly assisted her poor neighbours in their necessities by lending them such articles — household utensils — as they wanted, for particular occasions. The business was thus transacted — the petitioner went to the cave at midnight, turned round three times, then repeated aloud, thrice, "Pray Good Mother Ludlam, lend me —and I will return it within two days". He or she then retired and coming again then next morning, found at the cave entrance the requested article. This intercourse continued a long time, till once, a person not returning a large cauldron

at the proper time, M.L. was so cross at the want of punctuality that she refused to take it back when left at the cavern. From then till now she has not accommodated anyone with the most trifling loan, and — she has never since been seen.

The cauldron was carried to the monks at Waverley and after the dissolution deposited in the church at Frensham. Another story says that the wicked borrower was pursued by the witch when attempting to return goods too late. In fear she was chased across country (5–6 miles) and took refuge in an old church porch — where the witch could not go.

MM/38.1 The Frensham Cauldron
Clipping from *The Farnham Herald* [?], n.d., sent to Murray by M. Haliday ... Frensham, Surrey, 12 July 1854

In the porch of Frensham Church it is related that the cauldron of beaten copper, measuring 8ft. 8ins. in circumference and 1 ft. 2ins. in depth, "not having been returned by a borrower at the appointed time, was refused by Mother Ludlam, and pursued the discomforted borrower to her home." It is possible that the cauldron once belonged to Waverley Abbey and was used for village feasts, or it may have been used by the churchwardens for brewing church ale which was sold to defray church expenses. Writing in 1736, one, Salmon said: "The cauldron has been in the vestry beyond the memory of man."

Folklore Society Archives: Merrifield Papers

Folder marked "Witchcraft — Bellarmines": letter from Murray to Ralph Merrifield, 30 July 1953

I am very interested in your letter, though I am sorry that I cannot add to the information you have already collected. The point which interests me most is the date at which the practice appears to have begun. Is it possible that the practice was introduced from Holland? Dutch influence was strong in East Anglia under Charles II as the domestic architecture shows, and as far as I remember the draining of the fens was carried out by Dutch engineers and Dutch labourers. I think it might be worth your while to look up the Dutch

records. I am sending your letter to Dr Bonser, the Librarian of the Folklore Society, asking him to communicate direct with you if he has any further information or can suggest appropriate books.

I wonder if you would care to give a paper to the Folklore Society on your subject one evening during the coming winter?[137] ...

University College London Library, MS ADD 155: Margaret Murray Correspondence

(48880) **Letter from Sir James George Frazer**, St Keyne's, Cambridge, 1 January 1909

Thank you for your interesting letter. But I fear I cannot help you. The only cult of the drowned which I remember is that of the Greek Hylas, about which somebody has written a dissertation, on which I cannot lay hands at the moment.

Of course there are cases of human sacrifice to water spirits. I have referred to a few examples in my Lectures on the History of the Kingship, p.192. And again there is the superstition, perhaps a relic of such sacrifices, that the spirit of a river requires a victim on a certain day of the year. I have collected some evidence in The Golden Bough (2) III, pp.318sq. At Duke Town (Calabar) a girl, dressed in her best, used to be drowned every year as a sacrifice to the river-spirit (H. Goldie, Calabar and its Mission, ed. 1901, p.43). But what you want is the worship of the drowned rather than sacrifices by drowning, and, with the possible exception of Hylas, I do not remember any.

Still it is conceivable that the victims sacrificed by drowning to water spirits might in time be themselves worshipped, perhaps as embodiments of the water-spirit.

I am sorry I cannot help.

(46843) **Letter from Sir John Rhys**, 4 July 1915 (addressed "Dear Sir" but no doubt to M.A. Murray, as she always signed herself)

I am sorry to say that I do not think I can render you any assistance:—

Question 1. I do not feel competent to decide between Chilk and Chalice: you ought to appeal to somebody who is well up in English philology.

Question 2. It was Gwyn son of Nûð the chief of the Elves or demons who had his court on the Tor: there is a story how St. Collen went up there one day provided with holy water which he sprinkled over the court with the instantaneous effect of making Gwyn and all his surroundings disappear: see my "Arthurian Legend" pp.338–341 — the previous pages are about Glastonbury in a chapter headed "Glastonbury and Gower".

Question 3. I can offer no help as to the Fairs.

" 4. I do not remember anything as to the cow as a druidic emblem.

Question 5. I have no knowledge of any Celtic word like Joseph, and Allermoor does not look promising.

Question 6. Lambrook I fear is equally so.

I am sorry to be so negative but I cannot help it. With some of these names you should as I have already suggested consult some authorities on English philology.

(46833) **Letter from Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould,** Lew Trenchard, N. Devon, 5 March 1916 (also addressed "Dear Sir")

I am afraid I can not help you much. Here the witches used to assemble on Mass Moor in the parish of German's Creek[?]. I think, but can not be sure, on Midsummer Eve.

In the district of Tavistock they gathered as I can remember as a boy on Whit Tor, a curious trap eruption with a curious projection of trap split it was supposed by lightning. Whit Tor was a prehistoric fortress, and has been thoroughly explored by me. There were on it huge cairns of stone, used as projectiles, as I searched them thereabout and they can have been used for no other purpose.

I can ascertain nothing about any formula of initiation. I have some old prints of witches' Sabbaths. One by Teniers, the Depart for the Sabbath, one by Bruegel, Divus Jacobus Diabolicis praestigiis ante magum sistitur, 1686.* I had one or two more but I lent them to the late Mr Elworthy and I fancy were never returned, as I cannot find them in my portfolio. I have got several old volumes on witchcraft as

Del Rio etc. If these are any use to you I could lend them, but my experience in lending books and plates is that they are never returned.

If you want the plan of Whit Tor it is in my Book on Dartmoor. At one time I collected old prints of Witch Sabbaths and the like, but alas! lending, lending, lending — has resulted in my being reduced to very few. There is another by H.B Grün, a reproduction.

...

* This is a departure for the Sabbath, witches going up the chimney and issuing from the top

P.S. The only Witches' Sabbath I know of now is at Combe Trenchard where on Wednesday evening a number of witches assemble to sew shirts and sandbags for the Red Cross. And the only black being who appears in their midst is my curate — a very harmless devil.

University College London Library, MS ADD 387, Margaret Murray, Lecture Notes

6. Miscellaneous Lecture Notes on Religion, n.d.

(Devonshire Superstitions)

A Magic Handkerchief

Told me by Mrs Mary Jane Annis, born at Cheriton Bishop N. Devon, maiden name Gosse.

The handkerchief is of silk and was sent from foreign parts to Mrs Annis's great-grandfather and was his wedding handkerchief.

You must look through it at the rising harvest-moon; as many moons as you see through the meshes, so many years will elapse before you are married. If however you see a cross, you will die unmarried.

The handkerchief has been lent for this purpose many times by Mrs Annis, and is said to have never failed.

The moons are seen in this shape, each circle or part of a circle counting as one. [Drawing of overlapping circles.]

Divination on Midsummer Day

(This can only be done on a sunny day).

As the clock strikes twelve on Midsummer day put some

water in a wine-glass and stand it in the full sun for two or three minutes till the water is slightly warm. Break a new-laid egg, separate the yolk from the white, and pour the white into the water. Again, let it stand in the sun till the white sets. The white will set in a shape emblematic of the trade or profession of your future husband (e.g. a ship betokens a sailor). If it should set in the form of a coffin, you will die within a year.

Told me by Mrs Annis.

Schedule of the Murray Collection

MM/0 Original list of Murray Papers, by Wilfrid Bonser.

MM/0.1 Note from Murray to Wilfrid Bonser, 20 June 1960, re: the donation of papers to the Folklore Society.

MM/0.2 Letter to Murray from Professor Charles Thomas, 19 February 1955.

Bundle 1, marked "Not dealt with at all 1960". MM/1–MM/7.2

MM/1 Letter from W. Farley Rutter, Town Clerk's Office, Shaftesbury, 30 December 1931, about the Shaftesbury Byzant or Prize Besome.

MM/1.1 Typescript (2 pp) by W. Farley Rutter, of article from *Sporting Magazine*, 1803, on the Shaftesbury Bezant. Murray used this material in *The God of the Witches* in 1933 (94–5, 112–13).

MM/2 Clipping from *The Sunday Times*, 4 July 1948, of letter about Free Bench customs.

MM/3 Letter from S.A. Ramsden, Beaminster, Dorset, 19 March 1935, re: the Dorset Ooser.

MM/3.1 Typed extract from *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, vol.8, 1902–3, p.231.

MM/4 *Fairies* (4 pp), handwritten account by unidentified author, n.d., annotated "obtained for me by J.B. Crook ... [London] W14".

MM/5 Note to Murray from A. Norman Walker, Assistant Editor, *Daily Graphic*, 20 August 1951, enclosing a reader's letter (**MM/5.1**) following a report of Murray's address to the British Association.

MM/5.1 Letter to Murray from *Daily Graphic* reader asking for help in curing her bewitchment.

MM/6 Typed note from Mrs Richard Aldrich, Barrytown, New York, 14 July 1955, on "perfidious Albion". Murray has written "suggestion" at the top.

MM/7 Letter to Murray from J.P.J. Chapman, "Private Psychic Investigator," 3 September 1953, appended to **MM/7.1** and **MM/7.2**.

MM/7.1 Typescript (2 pp) by J.P.J. Chapman, 1952, prefacing **MM/7.2**.

MM/7.2 Typescript (4 pp) "The Phantom Wolf", short story by J.P.J. Chapman, 1952.

Bundle 2, marked "Witches. Miscellaneous". MM/8–MM/15

MM/8 Typed letter from C.J.P. Cave, Petersfield, 17 February 1936, in response to Murray's queries about a supposed sheela-na-gig in St Mary's, Beverley, and a church in Ludlow.

MM/8.1 Photograph, probably from C.J.P. Cave, of the supposed sheela-na-gig in the nave at St Mary's, Beverley.

MM/8.2 Photograph of a twelfth-century capital in Canterbury depicting a "mistress of the beasts" figure with ass's ears; inscribed on verso in same hand as **MM/8.1**, probably C.J.P.Cave.

MM/8.3 Cutting from *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, *c.*1935, of a note by R. Graham-Campbell about a case of polythelia [supernumerary nipples], with plate.

MM/9 Letter from A.E.Attlee, a vicar's wife, Oxford, 19 November 1952, re: a witchcraft incident and fairy sighting at Peasemore.

MM/10 Typed letter (3 pp) from C.J. Norris, Manea, 8 November 1933, relating five items of Irish and Fenland

folklore collected from a woman of Manea "from her own personal experience".

MM/11 Letter (6 pp) from Peter Rudkin, Willoughdon, Lincoln, 5 October 1933; folklore relating to King Lear, Black Anna, St John. Writer indicates that much of this is copied from various publications.

MM/12 Typed letter from Cal Robbins, Middletown, Connecticut, 29 April 1952, answering Murray's request for information on Salem witch trials.

MM/12.1 Typed letter (5 leaves) from Cal Robbins, Middletown, Connecticut, supplying extracts from a nineteenth-century copy of Salem witch trial records.

MM/13 Lists in Murray's handwriting (4 pp), n.d.: "Devil's Names"; "Witches' Names"; "Familiars". (See *The Witch-Cult*, 249–70, for lists of names of witches.)

MM/13.1 Notes (3 pp) by unidentified hand, n.d.: "Names of the Devil"; "Butterfly Offering, 1329, Carcassonne," source given as Lea, III, 657; "Black Hen, 1335, Carcassonne."

MM/14 Typed extract, n.d., from *Chronique d'Etienne de Cruseau (1588–1605)*, Société des Bibliophiles de Guyenne (Bordeaux, 1879), vol.I, p.85: description of the witches' sabbath from the confession of a witch from Salaignac (Limousin).

MM/15 Photograph of brooch or bucket handle representing a horned figure flanked by two beasts.

Bundle 3, MM/16–MM/23.1

MM/16 Letter from Sir Ifor Evans, Provost of University College London, 14 December 1959, enquiring about Murray's health.

MM/17 Note, in [?] Miss Baker's writing, n.d., taken from Robert Hunt's, *Romances and Drolls and Superstitions of the West of England* (1894), p.196, re: St Michael's Mount.

MM/18 Note in Murray's writing, n.d., from W.Bright, *Chapters of Early English Church History* (1897), p.73.

MM/18.1 Murray's handwritten copy, n.d., of a letter of Henry VIII,

31 August 1539; Murray has written at the bottom "1659. Peter Cook. Cardmaker".

MM/19 Handwritten note by H.J. Cossar, n.d., describing "The White Cavalry", 1918.

MM/20 Letter to Murray from Marcia Penrose, Stornoway, 14 June 1952; notes made during a holiday in the Hebrides, in response to Murray's queries.

MM/21 Letter (3 pp) to Murray from R.B. Graham ... Bradford, 8 February 1953: three small items (on inn signs, fairies, witchcraft) collected from family or acquaintances.

MM/22 Typed letter (first page only) to Murray from unidentified author ... [London] NW3, 30 March 1924; incomplete spell for summoning a person.

MM/23 Letter from Isabel Ogilvy ... [London] W1, 24 July 1940, in response to Murray's query about the "Skippings" at Bartlow (Cambridgeshire).

MM/23.1 Incomplete letter from Isabel Ogilvy, West Bergholt, Essex, n.d., in response to a communication from Murray.

Bundle 4, MM/24 – MM/30. Fenland Legends

MM/24 Letter to Murray from Annie Baker, Cambridge, 24 June 1943, re: Fenland folklore and her enclosed transcripts of tales (MM/24.3–MM/24.5).

MM/24.1 Fragment of letter (p.4 only) from Annie Baker, n.d., re: Saxon amber beads at Ely.

MM/24.2 Note in Miss Baker's hand, n.d., "St John's Farm Ely".

MM/24.3 Page in Miss Baker's hand, n.d., "Tales of Quy".

MM/24.4 Three pages in Miss Baker's hand, n.d., "Tales of Little Downham. Heard in my Childhood".

MM/24.5 Page in Miss Baker's hand, n.d., "St Guthlac".

MM/24.6 Hand-drawn map by Annie Baker, n.d., Little Downham, Isle of Ely.

MM/24.7 Typescript (6 pp), by Miss Baker, n.d. (post 1949), "The Lore of the Fens".

MM/25 Letter to Murray from Mary Walter, Birmingham, 7 November 1953, re: sightings of fairies.

MM/25.1 Letter (2 leaves) to Murray from Mary Walter, Birmingham, 14 December 1953, describing her sightings of fairies as a child.

MM/25.2 Murray's note, 17 December 1953, detailing the fairy visions seen by Mary Walter, "7 years old (now 63)".

MM/26 Clipping from *Cambridge Daily News*, 8 July 1954, "Witches in Eastern Counties".

MM/26.1 Clippings from *The Literary Repository*, no.2, 1957, re: a sixteenth-century narrative of the murder of the Hartgills by Lord Stourton.

MM/27 Typed letter to Murray from Duncan Mackintosh, Cambridge, 6 June 1954, re: Pembrokeshire witches and fairies.

MM/28 Clipping from *Country Life*, n.d., the Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, "Mystery of the Dancing Lights".

MM/29 Typescript (1p), probably by Miss Baker, n.d., "Alderbury Moat, Essex", re: Devil legends associated with Barnhall and Tolleshunt.

MM/29.1 Map in Miss Baker's hand, of Devil's Wood, Barnhall and Tolleshunt area.

MM/30 Fragment of letter from unidentified author, n.d., on headed notepaper from "Henlle Hall, St. Martin's, Oswestry", re: a sighting of fairies by author's great-grandfather, Vicar of Amlwch, *c.*1850.

MM/30.1 Note in Murray's hand, n.d., headed "Dolgelly Pass. Miss M.C.Jones", re: mid nineteenth-century apparition of a black dog.

Bundle 5, MM/31–MM/36. The Puck Fair, Killorglin, Co. Kerry

MM/31 Note in Murray's hand headed "Puck Fair", n.d.; at the bottom she has written "King-Hall. Personal Letter. No.20. Aug.31.1951. pp.158–160".

MM/31.1 Letter to Murray from Magdalen Perceval Maxwell, Tallow, Co. Waterford, 8 September [1951], with

information about the Puck Fair, in response to a letter from Murray forwarded by the "Personal Letter" Office.

MM/31.2 Letter from Magdalen Perceval Maxwell, Tallow, Co. Waterford, 18 September [1951], enclosing Murray's list of questions about the Puck Fair [MM/32] and Claude Cockburn's list of answers [MM/32.1].

MM/32 List of eleven questions about the Puck Fair, in Murray's hand, n.d.

MM/32.1 Typescript (3 pp) from Claude Cockburn, Youghal, [September 1951]: answers to Murray's questions about Puck Fair, with additional annotations by Magdalen Perceval Maxwell.

MM/33 Notes (1 p.) written by Olga Tufnell during the Puck Fair [1952].

MM/33.1 Notes (4 leaves) in Miss Baker's handwriting, headed "Puck Fair at Killorglin" [1952].

MM/34 Black and white picture postcard of the Puck Fair, Killorglin, showing the goat on his platform above the crowds.

MM/34.1 Watercolour of the Puck on his platform [1952], by Murray herself, who claimed to travel everywhere with her paints (*My First Hundred Years*, 99).

MM/34.2 Bill addressed to Murray from The Windermere Hotel, Belfast, September 1952.

MM/35 Notes (3 leaves) in Murray's handwriting, re: the Puck Fair; at the top she has written "Put at end of chap.I." [i.e. in the second edition of *The God of the Witches*.]

MM/35.1 Typescript (8 leaves), n.d., preliminary draft of Murray's article on the Puck Fair (*Folklore*, 64, 1953, 351–4), including three pages of interpretations (unpublished).

Bundle 6, MM/36–MM/40.4. The Frensham Cauldron

MM/36 Note to Murray from Wilfrid Bonser, University College London, 8 July 1954, re: the Frensham Cauldron.

MM/37 Letter to T.C. Lethbridge from J.L. Barr, Honorary Secretary, Friern Barnet Parish Council, 24 June 1954,

with note on verso addressed to Murray, re: Mother Ludlam's Cauldron.

MM/37.1 Letter to Murray from J.L. Barr, Friern Barnet, 8 July 1954, enclosing the legend of Mother Ludlam's Cauldron (MM/37.2)

MM/37.2 Handwritten account (3 pp) by J.L. Barr of Mother Ludlam's Cauldron.

MM/38 Letter to Murray from Maurice L. Haliday, School House, Frensham, Surrey, 12 July 1954, re: Mother Ludlam's Cauldron, enclosing MM/38.1.

MM/38.1 Clipping from *The Farnham Herald*, n.d., re: Mother Ludlam's Cauldron.

MM/39 Letter to Murray from A.E. Jimpson, Farnham, Surrey, 3 August 1954, requesting information about the Frensham Cauldron.

MM/40 Note to Murray from Maurice Haliday, Frensham, 1 September 1954, enclosing photographs of Frensham Cauldron (MM/40.1-MM/40.4).

MM/40.1-MM/40.4
Three black and white prints plus one negative of the Frensham Cauldron.

Bundle 7, MM/41–MM/43, MM/P1–MM/P16. Illustrations.
Envelope labelled "Folklore Illustrations. Illustrations.Various. Gilles de Rais, etc. ex. Dr Margaret Murray".

MM/41 Letter to Murray from Isabel Crozier, Belfast, 24 June [1953], enclosing letter and photographs from Alex Johnston (MM/42.1-MM/42.7).

MM/42 Letter to Isabel Crozier from Alex Johnston, Londonderry, 22 June 1953, enclosing photographs of stone at Belmont Park.

MM/42.1-MM/42.7 Six black and white prints, taken by Alex Johnston, 21 June 1954, showing "footprints" on stone at Belmont Park.

MM/43 Envelope addressed to Isabel Crozier, postmarked 3 September 1952; Murray has written on the envelope:

1) Coronation Stone, Warrenpoint, Co. Down (in lane);
2) Sheelanagig Cashel
3) " White Island
4) " " "
5) " Armagh Library

The envelope contains only three negatives, one of the Coronation Stone, and two of the White Island figures, which are all male but Murray thought some were female.

MM/P1–MM/P1.1
Two black and white photographs of small wooden crosses tied with string.

MM/P2 Black and white book illustration mounted on card, labelled in Murray's hand "The Three Kings of Cologne. Note the effect of cloven feet".

MM/P3–MM/P3.2
Three black and white postcards of a hermaphrodite statuette, crowned with sunburst.

MM/P4 Book-plate of Pan on Athenian red-figure vase by the "Pan Painter" (*c.*470 BC) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; (see *The God of the Witches*, pl.IV).

MM/P5 Postcard, Arms of Innerleithen (*cf.* M.M. Banks, *British Calendar Customs: Scotland*, vol.3 (London, 1941), pp.39–40).

MM/P6 Strip of three negatives of book illustrations depicting devils.

MM/P7 Black and white postcard labelled on verso in Murray's hand as "'Boy's Grave' venerated by gypsies. Cross roads on Newmarket-Bury St Edmunds Road".

MM/P8 Postcard of wall painting at Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Chaldon, Surrey, depicting "Ladder of Salvation of the Human Soul".

MM/P9 Fragment of book-plate depicting a satyr.

MM/P10 Fragment of a book-plate of Cogul rock paintings of dancing or leaping figures (see *The God of the Witches*, pl.IX).

MM/P11 Photograph of illustration from Olaus Magnus *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555), III.10 ("On the Sister

Fates and the Nymphs"), depicting man outside fairy hill. (See *The God of the Witches*, pl.VIII).

MM/P12 Black and white photograph of hobby horse, Athens.

MM/P13 Postcard, O'Neill state chair, Belfast.

MM/P14 Black and white print (marked Guernsey on verso), of figures carved on a stone lintel.

MM/P14.1 Black and white print (stamped on verso "B.Egglestone, Market Square, Kirkby Stephen"), of horned figure (bound Loki?) carved on stone base of a cross.

MM/P15–MM/P15.3 Four black and white postcards of Gilles de Rais' castle at Machecoul.

MM/P16 Seven plates and one illustrated page from a book on Gilles de Rais.

Notes

1. *Folklore*, 105, 1994, 89–96.
2. Wilfrid Bonser, "A Bibliography of the Writings of Dr Murray", *Folklore*, 72, 1961, 560–6.
3. On Murray's life and professional career, see her autobiography, *My First Hundred Years* (1963); Mary Williams, "Ninety-Eight Years Young", *Folklore*, 72, 1961, 433–7; E.O. James, [Obituary], "Dr Margaret Murray", *Folklore*, 74, 1963, 568–9; and Obituary in *Antiquity*, 38, 1964; *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1961–70, Oxford, 1981, pp.777–9. On Murray's career at University College, see Rosalind Janssen, *The First Hundred Years: Archaeology at University College London, 1892–1992*, London, 1992, and R. and J.J. Janssen, *Getting Old in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1996, 143–50. On attitudes towards Murray, see Hilda Ellis Davidson, "Changes in the Folklore Society, 1949–86", *Folklore*, 98, 1987, 123–4; for the influence of her witchcraft works, see Jacqueline Simpson, "Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her And Why?", *Folklore*, 105, 1994, 89–96.
4. Janssen, *The First Hundred Years*, 10. The Royal Anthropological Institute Archive holds a questionnaire which Murray filled in for the Census of British Anthropologists of 1940 (RAI, A 71/264); under the heading "Degrees, with Dates", she wrote "Can't remember". We are grateful to Mrs Beverley Emery, Archivist of the Royal Anthropological Institute, for her help.
5. Letter from Murray to the Provost of University College, 1933, cited by Janssen, *The First Hundred Years*, 30.
6. Janssen, *Getting Old in Ancient Egypt*, 143–50.
7. The Folklore Society Council Minutes for 19 November 1952 indicate that Prof. John Mavrogordato had declined the invitation to stand as President; the minutes for 21 January 1953 record Murray's acceptance of the nomination for the post, and she was immediately co-opted to the Council. At the February meeting in 1953, Murray agreed to join E.O. James and Peter Opie on a panel to participate in a discussion of folklore to be televised by the BBC. The Minutes for November 1953 show that the matter of a broadcast was still under discussion, but there is no further information indicating whether it ever took place. Murray did, however, appear on television in 1960 (see Williams, "Ninety-Eight Years Young", 437).

8. Murray gave a talk on "The Horned God" to the Folklore Society in May 1932. In May 1940, she gave a talk entitled "Some Biblical Folklore", poorly attended because of the war, and in December 1942 she contributed a paper on the "Folklore of War", read in her absence (due to ill-health) by the President, J.H.Hutton (see *Folklore*, 51, 1940, 81; Folklore Society Archives, Lecture Attendance Book 1913–53; and *Folklore*, 54, 1943, 225); neither of these two talks seems to have been published. She gave a lecture on "The Coven of Thirteen" in May 1952, which was very well attended (Folklore Society Archives, Lecture Attendance Book 1913–1953). Murray's book reviews in *Folklore* include those of C. L'Estrange Ewen's *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (1933), in *Folklore*, 45, 1934, 95 (Murray then donated the book to the Folklore Society Library); V.C.C. Collum's *The Tressé Iron-Age Megalithic Monument*, in *Folklore* 46, 1935, 394–5; G.A. Wainwright's *The Sky Religion in Egypt*, in *Folklore*, 49, 1938, 403–4. The minutes printed in several volumes of *Folklore* indicate that Murray regularly took part in discussions following lectures at Society meetings: eg. *Folklore*, 61, 1950, after talks delivered by Margaret Toynbee and Alfons Barb on 16 November 1949 (Gerald Gardner also joined in the discussion), and by Sona Rosa Burstein in January 1950 (*Folklore*, 61, 1950, 57). She represented the Society at the British Association meeting in 1950 (*Folklore*, 62, 1951, 225–6), as well as in 1953–5 while she was President, and again in 1957 in Dublin, accompanied by E.O. James and Peter Opie (*Folklore*, 69, 1958, 132).

9. Bonser, "Bibliography", *Folklore*, 72, 1961, 560–6.

10. See her article "Female Fertility Figures", in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 64, 1934, 93–100, plus plates VIII–XII, which spawned five more notes on sheela-na-gigs by other authors in *Man*, 35, 1935 (articles 64, 65, 70, 206, 208).

11. Simpson, "Margaret Murray", 89. On encyclopedia entries under "witchcraft" (including Murray's), see W. Behringer, "Witchcraft Studies in Austria, Germany and Switzerland", *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ed. J. Barry, M.Hester and G.Roberts, Cambridge, 1996, 64–95, at 66–7.

12. *Folklore*, 28, 1917, 228–58.

13. Simpson, "Margaret Murray", 94; Rossell Hope Robbins, "The Imposture of Witchcraft", *Folklore*, 74, 1963, 545–64.

14. Murray's other pieces on witchcraft in *Folklore* were "Witches and the number thirteen", *Folklore*, 31,1920, 204–9, and "A male

witch and his familiar", *Folklore*, 63, 1952, 227. Her contributions to the publications of the Royal Anthropological Institute include: "Child-sacrifice among European witches", *Man*, 18, 1918, 60–2; "Divination by witches' familiars", *Man*, 18, 1918, 81–4; "Witches' familiars in England", *Man*, 18–1918, 101–4; "The Devil's mark", *Man*, 18, 1918, 148–53; "Witches' transformations into animals", *Man*, 18, 1918; "Witches' fertility rites", *Man*, 19, 1919, 55–8; "The Devil's officers and the witches' covens", *Man*, 19, 1919, 137–40; "The witch-cult in Palaeolithic times", *Man*, 22, 1922, 3; "The Sheela-na-gig at Oaksey", *Man*, 23, 1923, 140–1; "Fertility figures", *Man*, 29, 1929, 133–4; "Female fertility figures", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 64, 1934, 93–100 and plates; "A Sheela-na-gig figure at South Tawton", *Man*, 36, 1936, 184; "A witch-glove from Wiltshire", *Man*, 38, 1938, 97; "The meaning of the cowrie shell", *Man*, 39, 1939, 167, and 40, 1940, 15 and 176; "The cowrie shell in Formosa", *Man*, 40, 1940, 160; "Cowries representing eyes", *Man*, 42, 1942, 144.

15. A.R. Wright, "The Folklore of the Past and Present", *Folklore*, 38, 1927, 13–39, at 24.

16. E.O. James, "Some Editorial Reminiscences and Experiences", *Folklore*, 70, 1959, 382–93, at 387. On E.O. James, see J.R. Porter, "Two Presidents of the Folklore Society: S.H. Hooke and E.O. James", *Folklore* 88, 1977, 131–45.

17. We would like to express our thanks to Mr Peter Foden, Archivist, Oxford University Press, for permission to read and quote from correspondence relating to Murray.

18. Oxford University Press Archives, Murray correspondence.

19. Simpson, "Margaret Murray", 89–98.

20. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 156, 196.

21. "Fertility figures At Hexham", *Man*, 29 (1929) 133–4; "The Sheela na gig at Oaksey", *Man*, 23 (1923) 140–1; "The Sheela na gig figure at South Tawton", *Man*, 36 (1936) 184. See also note 13 above.

22. Royal Anthropological Institute, A/25/2/155.1. Murray's article appeared in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 64, 1934, 93–100 and plates.

23. J.W. Brodie Innes, "The Cult of the Witch", *Occult Review*, 35, 1922, 150–63.

24. Leo Louis Martello *Witchcraft: the Old Religion*, Secaucus, 1973, 59. We also have heard from two informal sources that Murray

herself had claimed to be a witch, but this seems unlikely in view of her attitude towards the occult.

25. Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: a Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy*, Cambridge, 1947, Appendix.

26. See Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, London, 1995.

27. Ronald Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, Oxford, 1996, 422–5; see also 242 (green man) and 270 (Robin Hood, coven); Hutton, *Pagan Religions of the British Isles*, Oxford, 1991, 310 (sheela-na-gig), and 316 (green man).

28. Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 301–6. C.G. Leland, *Aradia, or Gospel of the Witches*, London, 1899. On Leland, see R. Guiley, *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, New York, 1989, 200, and Martello, *Witchcraft*, 34–58.

29. Jules Michelet (1798–1874), *La Sorcière* (1862), published in English as *Satanism and Witchcraft*, New York, 1958, 80, 99, 109. On Michelet, see Roland Barthes, *Michelet par lui-même*, Paris, 1954.

30. Leland, *Aradia*, 102.

31. Karl Pearson, "Woman as witch: Evidences of mother-right in the customs of mediaeval witchcraft", an essay based on a lecture delivered at the Somerville Club in 1891, and published in Pearson's, *The Chances of Death and Other studies in Evolution*, 2 vols, London, 1897, vol.2, 1–50, at 6.

32. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 104.

33. Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca: The Old Religion in the New Age*, Wellingborough, 1989, 199; Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 301–8, 331–2; for a modern explication of Wicca by an anthropologist and a historian, see Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft*, Oxford, 1989, and Hutton, *Pagan Religions*.

34. In addition to her pieces in *Folklore* and *Man* from 1917 to 1921 (see note 13 above), she published an article entitled "The God of the Witches" in *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society*, 1916–1917, 49–65.

35. Lewis Spence, *The Mysteries of Britain, or the Secret Rites and Ancient Traditions of Britain Restored*, London, 1930.

36. David MacRitchie, *Fians, Fairies and Picts*, London, 1893, and by the same author, *The Testimony of Tradition*, London, 1890.

37. David Burnett, *Dawning of the Pagan Moon: An Investigation into*

the Rise of Western Paganism, Eastbourne, 1991, 70–3; and Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca: the Old Religion in the New Age*, 1989, 45–6.

38. "The Dying God", *Ancient Egypt*, N, 1928, 8–11; "The Egyptian elements in the Grail Romance", *Ancient Egypt*, C, 1916, 1–14, 54–69; "Evidence for Killing the King in Egypt", *Man*, 14, 1914, 17–23; "Priesthoods of Women in Egypt", (abstract), *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions*, 2 vols, Oxford, 1908, I:220–4; *The God of the Witches* (2nd ed), notes to chapter 7, 207. Her lecture notes in University College London Manuscripts also indicate her debt to Frazer's ideas about dying gods, sympathetic magic and fertility (UCL Library, MS ADD 387, Miscellaneous lecture notes, Lecture 6).
39. Murray papers, Oxford University Press archive.
40. Rosalind Janssen, *The First Hundred Years: Egyptology at UCL, 1892–1992*, London, 1992, 19–25, on Petrie and Murray.
41. Murray, *Divine King in England*, London, 1954, 12.
42. Murray, "Organisations of Witches in Great Britain", 237.
43. H.J. Fleure, *Human Geography in Western Europe*, London, 1918, 91.
44. Harold Peake, "Santiago", *Folklore*, 30, 1919, 208–26.
45. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 198.
46. *Folklore*, 67, 1956, 124; *Folklore*, 74, 1963, 568–9.
47. Roy Porter gave a lucid explication and appraisal of James's ideas in *Folklore*, 89, 1978, 131–45.
48. Janssen, *The First Hundred Years*, 22.
49. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 104.
50. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 204.
51. Karl Pearson, "Woman as Witch", in Pearson, *Chances of Death*, I:1–50.
52. University College London Library, MS ADD 155, Margaret Murray Correspondence, 46843 (from Sir John Rhys) and 46833 (from Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould). We are grateful to Gillian Furlong and other staff of University College Library for their help.
53. Many writers of this period saw ancient Egypt as the cradle of civilization. For the diffusionist theory about the Egyptian origins of Bronze Age megalithic cultures in Europe, see G. Elliot Smith, *The Ancient Egyptians and their Influence on the Civilization of Europe*, London, 1911 (repr.1923), and by the same author, *Migrations of*

Early Culture, Manchester, 1911 (repr.1930); Elworthy included much on Egyptian magic in his *The Evil Eye*, London, 1895.

54. Murray, "Child sacrifice", 61.

55. "The Dorset Ooser", *Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries*, 1891, 289–90 and plate. See also MM/3.1, and H.S.L. Dewar, *The Dorset Ooser*, Dorchester, 1968 (Dorset Monograph Series, 2).

56. Murray, "Organisations", 236.

57. Elworthy, *Horns of Honour*, 122–3, 139–44.

58. Murray, *God of the Witches*, 31.

59. Pearson, "Woman as Witch"; Murray mentions him specifically both in her 1917 article and in *The Witch Cult*, 13.

60. Pearson, "Woman as Witch", 12

61. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 105.

62. J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (3rd edn) 2, *The Magic Art*, vol.2, London, 1911, 190–1.

63. P. Merivale, *Pan the Goat God*, Cambridge, Mass., 1969; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, 424; see also Elworthy, *Horns of Honour*, 122–3.

64. John Boardman, *The Great God Pan: the Survival of an Image*, London, 1997.

65. See S. Sanderson's obituary of Mary Williams in *Folklore*, 89, 1978, 104–5. On secret tradition theories, see Juliette Wood, "The Celtic Tarot and the Secret Tradition: A Study in Modern Legend-Making", *Folklore*, 109, 1998.

66. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 175.

67. Ronald Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 331–3, and Hutton, "The Roots of Modern Paganism", *Paganism Today*, ed. C. Hardman and G. Harvey, London, 1996, 3–15, at 12.

68. Simpson, "Margaret Murray," 94; Janssen, *Getting Old in Ancient Egypt*, 149.

69. Katharine Briggs, *Anatomy of Puck*, London, 1962, 8.

70. Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, 43.

71. Martello, *Witchcraft*, 25.

72. Martello, *Witchcraft*, 61.

73. Murray, *Witch-Cult*, 13.

74. University College London, MS ADD 387, Margaret Murray,

Miscellaneous Lecture notes on Religion, Lecture 1, Primitive Religion, 27–8.

75. Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca: the Old Religion in the New Age*, Wellingborough, 1989; revised and updated, London, 1996.

76. Murray, "Witch-Cult in Palaeolithic Times", 236.

77. Crowley, *Wicca*, 1989, 183ff.

78. Crowley, *Wicca*, 1989, 33, 55, 196; and in the revised edition, 1996, 39, 164.

79. Leland E. Estes, "Incarnations of Evil: changing perspectives on the European Witch Craze", *Clio*, 13, 1984, 133–47.

80. Simpson, "Margaret Murray", 90; Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 301–6.

81. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, St Albans, 1976, 103–6; see also Hutton, "Roots of Modern Paganism", 11, on Mone, Jarcke and Michelet.

82. Estes, "Incarnations of Evil", 139–40.

83. Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, London, 1995; Martello, *Witchcraft*, 14–20.

84. See, for example, several of the essays in Hardman and Harvey (eds), *Paganism Today*, notably: Kenneth Rees, "The Tangled Skein" (17–31, esp.20); Philip Shallcrass, "Druidry Today" (65–80, esp.75–7); and Adrian Harris, "Sacred Ecology" (149–56).

85. Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-century Representations*, London, 1996 offers a persuasive and critical perspective on feminist uses of the witch figure.

86. Murray, *God of the Witches*, 1933, 61.

87. Murray included a whole chapter on the Suffrage movement in *My First Hundred Years* and she was one of many academics of her day who supported the cause of women's emancipation.

88. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*, New York, 1973.

89. Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, Oxford, 1985, 48.

90. W.R. Halliday, in *Folklore*, 33, 1922, 224–30; see also Simpson, "Margaret Murray", on this and other negative reviews of Murray.

91. G.L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, 1929, 565, concerning Mather's remarks about witches forming groups in

the manner of the Congregational Church: "Miss Murray takes all this sort of thing seriously".

92. See Murray's autobiography *My First Hundred Years*, 104: *The Witch-Cult* "received a hostile reception from many strictly Christian sects and reviewers, but made its way in spite of opposition".

93. Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, *Some Witchcraft Criticisms: A Plea for the Blue Pencil*, Privately printed, 1938; Murray had reviewed Ewen's *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials* (London, 1929) in *Folklore*, 43, 1932, 114–5, and his *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933) in *Folklore*, 35, 1934, 95–6, and in *Man*, 34, 1934, 63.

94. R.U. Sayce, [Review of] *The God of the Witches*, *Man*, 35, 1935, 159. In the previous volume of *Man*, (34, 1934, 183), J.H. Hutton had reviewed Montague Summers' *The Werewolf* (1933), and criticized the author for failing to make any reference to "Dr Margaret Murray's important volume on the witch cult of Western Europe".

95. H. Coote Lake, [Review of] *The God of the Witches*, *Folklore*, 45, 1934, 277–8.

96. Williams, "Ninety-Eight Years Young", 433.

97. E.O. James, [Obituary] "Dr Margaret Murray", *Folklore*, 74, 1963, 568–9. In his *Concept of Deity*, 1950, 126, James also wrote that Murray had "overstated her case" for the witch-cult and that it was "difficult to believe that an organized secret society of the kind she describes ever existed".

98. Arno Runeberg, *Witches Demons and Fertility Magic*, Helsinki, 1947; Pennethorne Hughes, *Witchcraft*, London, 1952.

99. G.B. Harrison (ed.), *The Trial of the Lancaster Witches*, London, 1929; Thomas R. Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch*, New Haven, 1966, 113.

100. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, 1971, 515n; Christina Larner, *Enemies of God*, Oxford, 1981, 34; Geoffrey Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African* (1958), London, 1963, 106.

101. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 108.

102. G.B. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (with preface by Margaret Murray), London, 1954; see also Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, 43–4; and Simpson, "Margaret Murray", 94.

103. Christina Hole, *A Mirror of Witchcraft*, London, 1957, 75.

104. Katharine Briggs, *Anatomy of Puck*, London, 1962, 2–7. Interestingly, several years before Carlo Ginzburg wrote about the *benandanti* of the Friuli, Briggs had drawn attention to the prominence of trances and dreams in popular beliefs about witches in the early modern period; see Briggs, *Anatomy of Puck*, 5, and Ginzburg, *I benandanti*, Turin, 1966, first published in English as *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London, 1983.

105. Briggs, *Anatomy of Puck*, 7–8.

106. Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*, New York, 1959, and "Imposture of Witchcraft", 545–62.

107. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze* (1967), Harmondsworth, 1969, 41; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 515–16.

108. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, 1972, 36–7.

109. Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African*, 107.

110. Elliot Rose, *A Razor for a Goat: a Discussion of Certain Problems in the History of Witchcraft and Diabolism*, Toronto, 1963, and review by K.M. Briggs, *Folklore*, 74, 1963, 420–1.

111. Simpson, "Margaret Murray", 96.

112. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 110–15.

113. See also Simpson, "Margaret Murray", 94, for other examples.

114. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 47–8.

115. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: the Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, London, 1996, 37–8.

116. James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, London, 1996, 8.

117. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford, 1997, 25.

118. Ginzburg, *I benandanti*; Ginzburg's approach received support from Mircea Eliade, "Some Observations on European Witchcraft", *History of Religions*, 14, 1975, 149–72; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Jasmin's Witch*, Aldershot, 1987; Gustav Henningsen, "The Ladies from Outside", *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, ed. B.Ankarloo and G. Henningsen, Oxford, 1990, 191–215; Gabor Klaniczay, "Shamanistic Elements in European Witchcraft", in

Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, Cambridge, 1990, 129–50.

119. Ginzburg, *Night Battles*, preface, and *Storia notturna* (1989), translated as *Ecstasies*, London, 1990, introduction.

120. Purkiss, *Witch in History*, 34, makes the same point; on recent neo-pagan syncretism, see Leslie Jones, "The Emergence of the Druid as Celtic Shaman", *Folklore in Use*, 2, 1994, 131–42; and see C. Matthews, *Singing the Soul Back Home*, Shaftesbury, 1995, for evidence of Ginzburg's impact.

121. Many thanks to Dr Gwen Awbery of Cardiff University for help with this material.

122. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 175.

123. "FLS to the Rose Queen's Rescue", *FLS News*, No.9, 1989, 11–12.

124. Murray described the "Skippings" briefly in her Presidential Address, "England as a Field for Folklore Research", *Folklore*, 65, 1954, 1–9, at 4–5.

125. Briggs, *Anatomy of Puck*, 7.

126. See Murray's letter to Prof. Charles Thomas (MM/0.2), and Janssen, *The First Hundred Years*, 30–31, 79, for some Murray anecdotes.

127. Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, 99.

128. Murray, "The Puck Fair of Killorglin," *Folklore*, 64, 1953, 351–4.

129. Murray, *God of the Witches*, London, 1952, 43–5.

130. Murray, *God of the Witches*, 1952, 44.

131. Murray, *God of the Witches*, 59.

132. For example the English edition of Maxime de Collignon's *Manual of Mythology in Relation to Greek Art*, trans. J.E. Harrison, London 1890, 104 and plate 258.

133. Cf. Elliott O'Donnell's *Werwolves* (1912), rev. edn 1972, 93–109, for descriptions in the same vein of encounters with phantom "werewolves".

134. In her 1955 Presidential Address to the Folklore Society Murray referred briefly to this legend, and others like it both from Belgium in the Great War and from the Balkans in the late 19th century: "Folklore in History", *Folklore*, 66, 1955, 257–66, at 263–4.

135. Murray referred to this charm in "England as a Field for Folklore Research", 6; F.T. Elworthy, *The Evil Eye*, London, 1895, 432,

cited a fuller version which had been published in *Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries*, 1894.

136. The "Valhalla of the gods" sounds suspiciously like something out of a travel brochure rather the than a Welsh phrase although "hengalen", old New Year's Day did indeed dominate the seasonal festivities in many parts of Wales: see Trefor Owen, *Welsh Folk Customs*, Cardiff, 1968, 46–8.

137. Merrifield duly delivered a paper on witch bottles on 19 May 1954, published in *Folklore*, 66, 1955. He joined the Folklore Society in November 1954, as did Geoffrey Parrinder.

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