

What Gardner Said

(Researched and organized by Season, 1998)

Wica

In dealing with native races one records their folklore, the stories and religious rites on which they base their beliefs and actions. So why not do the same with English witches?¹

After Dr. Murray's books appeared, some other people were bold enough to admit that there were some witches left, but said that they were only village fortune-tellers, impostors who knew nothing about the subject, and there never had been any organization, and anyone who thought otherwise was just being imaginative. I was of these opinions in 1939, when, here in Britain, I met some people who compelled me to alter them.

They were interested in curious things, reincarnation for one, and they were also interested in the fact that an ancestress of mine, Grizel Gairdner, had been burned as a witch. They kept saying that they had met me before. We went through everywhere we had been, and I could not ever have met them before in this life; but they claimed to have known me in previous lives. Although I believe in reincarnation, as many people do who have lived in the East, I do not remember my past lives clearly; I only wish I did. However, these people told me enough to make me think.

Then some of these new (Or old) friends said, "You belonged to us in the past. You are of the blood. Come back to where you belong. "I realized that I had stumbled on something interesting; ***but I was half-initiated before the work "Wica" which they used hit me like a thunderbolt, and I knew where I was, and that the Old Religion still existed.*** And so I found myself in the Circle, and there ***took the usual oath of secrecy***, which bound me not to reveal certain things. In this way I made the discovery that the witch cult, that people thought to have been persecuted out of existence, still lived. I found, too, what it was that made so many of our ancestors dare imprisonment, torture and death rather than give up the worship of the Old Gods and the love of the old ways.²

There are very few real witches left, and those keep themselves very much to themselves. There are generally the descendants of witch families, and have inherited a tradition which has been preserved for generations. This is, indeed, the traditional way in which witchcraft was spread and preserved; the children of witch families were taught by their parents and initiated at an early age.³

What are they then? They are the people who call themselves the Wica, the "wise people", who practice the age-old rites and who have, along with much superstition and herbal knowledge, preserved and occult teaching and working processes which they themselves think to be magic or witchcraft. They are the type of people who were burned alive for possessing this knowledge, often giving their lives to turn suspicion away from others. At Castletown we have a memorial to the nine million people who died by torture in one way or another for witchcraft.

The Wica generally work for good purposes and help those in trouble to the best of their ability. Of course whatever you do in this world you tread on someone's toes; if a witch raised a good crop of corn in the old days, people complained she was deflating the prices. I think it unwise to lay down the law without knowing the subject.⁴

Witchcraft is simply the remains of the old pagan religion of Western Europe, dating back to the Stone Age, and that the reason for the Church's persecution of it was that it was a dangerous rival.⁵ Witchcraft is a system involving both magic and religion. This, in itself, is an indication of great age, because in primitive times magic and religion were closely inter-related.⁶ In England and elsewhere today; the oldest families are the hereditary "witches" or "wise folk", although unfortunately they had not preserved records of their family trees⁷.

Most of them were born into the cult, but sometimes outsiders were recruited from those wishing to gain occult powers, from those who came from curiosity, and I think mainly from those who fell in love with a member. Membership of the cult meant torture and death if discovered, but it promised certain times of happiness, a partial release from the everyday round of toil and boredom, and rest and comradeship with rebirth for those who still loved this world--in fact a chance of good things in this world, and a saving from purgatory and Hell in the next.

They firmly believed in this and therefore risked initiating their children. If these betrayed you, it meant torture and death for you. If they kept faith, someone else might yet betray them, with like result. But some of them thought more of the future life and the promise: "If steadfast you go to the pyre, drugs will reach you, you will feel naught, you will but go to death and what lies beyond, the ecstasy of the goddess."⁸

The new terror brought great changes, and, as you could only trust your own children or near relations, the cult became practically a family secret society cut off from all other covens. They held the rites indoors; much had to be curtailed because of the lack of members and many of the rites were forgotten. It was probably about this time that the practice of witches keeping records became common as the regular priesthood no longer existed and the rites were only occasionally preformed.

In all the witch writings there is this warning, usually on the first page:

Keep a book in your own hand of write. Let brothers and sisters copy what they will but never let this book out of your hand, and never keep the writings of another, for if it be found in their hand of write they will be taken and tortured. Each should guard his own writings and destroy them whenever danger threatens. Learn as much as you may by heart and when danger is past rewrite your book. For this reason if any die, destroy their book if they have not been able to do so, for if it be found, 'tis clear proof against them. "Ye may not be a witch alone," so all their friends be in danger of the torture, so destroy everything unnecessary. If your book be found on you, it is clear proof against you; you may be tortured.

Keep all thoughts of the cult from your mind. Say you had bad dreams, that a devil caused you to write this without your knowledge. Think to yourself, "I know nothing; I remember nothing; I have forgotten all." Drive this into your mind. If the torture be too great to bear, say: "I will confess. I cannot bear this torment. What do you want me to say? Tell me and I will say it." If they try to make you tell of the Brotherhood, do not, but if they try to make you speak of impossibilities, such as flying through the air, consorting with the Devil, sacrificing children or eating man's flesh, say: "I had evil dreams, I was not myself, I was crazed."

Not all magistrates are bad. If there be an excuse they may show mercy. If you have confessed aught, deny it afterwards; say you babbled under the torture, you knew not what you did or said. If you be condemned, fear not, the Brotherhood is powerful, they may help you to escape if you are steadfast. If you betray aught--THERE IS NO HELP FOR YOU IN THIS LIFE, OR IN THAT WHICH IS TO COME. If you go steadfast to the pyre, DRUGS WILL REACH YOU and you will feel naught, but will go to death and what lies beyond, the Ecstasy of the Goddess.

The same with the working tools. Let them be as ordinary things that anyone may have in their homes. Let the Pentacles be of wax that they may be melted or broken at once. Have no sword unless your rank allows you one. Have no names or signs on anything, write the names and signs on in ink before consecrating them and wash it off immediately after. Never boast, never threaten, never say you wish ill to anyone. If any speak of the craft, say: "Speak not to me of such, it frightens me, 'tis evil luck to speak of it."

This tells a great deal. It may date from the time of the fierce persecutions on the Continent, and may have been roughly translated into English. The trouble with dealing with these documents is the witch law: everyone must copy what they will from another, but no old writings may be kept. As everyone is apt to alter things slightly, modernizing the language and making other changes, it is impossible to fix the date when it became current. Clearly it was not written in England. Though bishops may have burnt witches at times, hanging was the only legal death sentence here. It might have been written in Scotland, but the Scots would have worded it more clearly I think.⁹

Initiation

Being initiated into the witch cult does not give a witch supernatural powers but instructions are given, in rather veiled terms, in processes which develop various clairvoyant and other powers, in those who naturally possess them slightly. If they have none they can create none. Some of these powers are akin to magnetism, mesmerism and suggestion, and depend on the possibility of forming a sort of human battery, as it were, of combined human wills working together to influence persons or events at a distance.

They have instructions in how to learn to do this by practice. It would take many people a long time, if I understand the directions aright. If these arts were more generally practised nowadays, we should call most of them spiritualism, mesmerism, suggestion, E.S.P.,

Yoga or perhaps Christian Science; to a witch it is all MAGIC, and magic is the art of getting results. To do this certain processes are necessary and the rites are such that these processes may be used. In other words, they condition you. This is the secret of the cult.¹⁰

Gomme, in *Folklore as a Historical Science* (p. 201 et seq), stresses the importance of the act of initiation as applied to the witch cult. "It emphasizes the existence of a cast apart from the general populace. The existence of this caste long before, where they did practise their powers, carrying back this act of initiation age after age. It is clear that the people who were from time to time introduced into the witch caste carried on the practices and assumed the functions of the caste even though they came into it as novices and strangers. We thus arrive at what might be termed as an artificial means of descent into a peculiar group of superstitions.

This was influenced in the Middle Ages by beliefs of the carrying on of traditional practices by certain families and groups of people *who could only acquire such practices by initiation and family teaching.*" This is, of course, exactly what happened. It is a family group, if you like; *but not all of the family belongs to it, only those who are initiated,* and people of non-witch families are at times introduced and initiated. While it is unusual for members of the cult today to think of themselves as a "caste", they certainly regard themselves as a kind of "family" apart. At a witch meeting, where I was present, a visit to a nudist club was discussed, and a woman said, "I wouldn't like that". I said, "Why not?" And the reply was, "I don't care here, of course; but I wouldn't go before other people." The exact "caste" feeling.¹¹

The Cult, whether in England or elsewhere, starts with several advantages. First, it usually obtains recruits very young and slowly trains them so that they come to have the sense of mystery and wonder, the knowledge that they have an age-old tradition behind them. They have probably seen things happen and know they can happen again; instead of mere curiosity and a pious belief that "something may happen", inhibited by an unacknowledged but firm belief that "it will never happen to me".

The witches tell me: "The law has always been that power must be passed from man to woman or from woman to man, the only exception being when a mother initiates her daughter or a father his son, because they are part of themselves." (The reason is that great love is apt to occur between people who go through the rites together.)

They go on to say: "The Templars broke this age-old rule and passed the power from man to man: this led to sin and in so doing brought about their downfall." If this story was not merely invented to explain the fall of the Order, it would seem that the Templars may have known and used some of the old magic. Is it possible that the heads or skulls they were said to worship may simply have been images representing Death and what lies beyond?

The main ground for this theory is that witches think they recognize indications that the Templars conditioned their bodies in the way they themselves do to produce magic; how they do so, however, I am forbidden to mention.¹²

Before an initiation a charge is read beginning:

Listen to the words of the Great Mother, who of old was called among men Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite and by many other names. At mine altars the youth of Lacedaemon made due sacrifice. Once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full, meet in some secret place and adore me, who am queen of all the magics...

For I am a gracious goddess, I give joy on earth, certainty, not faith, while in life; and upon death, peace unutterable, rest and the ecstasy of the goddess. Nor do I demand aught in sacrifice...

I am forbidden to give any more; but if you accept her rule you are promised various benefits and admitted into the circle, introduced to the Mighty Dead and to the cult members. There is also a small "frightening", an "ordeal" and an "oath"; you are shown certain things and receive some instruction. It is all very simple and direct.¹³

What it comes to then is this: certain people were born with clairvoyant powers. They discovered that certain rites and processes increased these powers, thus they became useful to the community. They performed these rites, and obtained benefits, and being lucky and successful were looked at with envy and dislike by others, and so they began to perform their rites in secret. Power which can be used for good can be used for evil, and they were tempted perhaps to use this power against their opponents, and thus become more unpopular. As a result calamities would be laid at their doors, and people would be tortured till they confessed to causing them. That, in brief, is the truth about witchcraft.¹⁴

From an early date recruits were admitted only from people who were of the blood; that is, from a witch family. The various rituals of worship, secrets of herbal lore, and the Great Secret of what they call magic, have been handed down to what has become more or less a family secret society.¹⁵

At first sight it seems curious to some that the Church did not object to ceremonial magic, while they persecuted the witch. I think the only answer is that the Church practised this kind of magic itself, and it knew that ***witchcraft practised a different form of magic*** because it was a separate religion, and that it involved the carrying on of a tradition of practices by certain families and groups of people ***who could only obtain knowledge of these practices by secret initiations or family teachings***; and the Church hated and dreaded these traditions as belonging to a deadly rival.¹⁶

There is no work in French exactly corresponding to our "witch", which in the original Anglo-Saxon possessed two forms, "wicca", (masculine), and "wicce", (feminine). The French used the work "sorcier" for both sorcerer and witch, the feminine form being "sorciere". "Sorcellerie" can be usually translated as "witchcraft". The ladies who went on horseback as stated above presumably came long distances. Being forced to write their names, I take simply to mean that they were told, "If you want to come again, you must be one of us, that is, be initiated, and then you will be a fairy". Now in France, as in

Scotland, a large number of people spoke of "fairies" when they obviously meant witches. It was a more polite term, and in Scotland any communication with "fairies" was taken as an admission of dealing with witches, that is, with the "heathen", the People of the Heaths, who practised the Old Religion and worked magical rites.¹⁷

Oaths

If I were permitted to disclose all their rituals, I think it would be easy to prove that witches are not diabolists; but *the oaths are solemn* and the witches are my friends. I would not hurt their feelings. *They have secrets which to them are sacred.* They have good reason for this secrecy.¹⁸

The Gods

Especially noteworthy was an article which "Diana" wrote in protest against being labelled a follower of an evil cult. "The witches worship the old gods of the land of Britain, whose tradition is rooted deep in British soil. The old gods are not dead, as I know by experience."¹⁹

That which has influenced the Group-soul of this country once can do so again. I have already told of the *belief of the Wica in the Ancient Gods of these islands*. This not mere superstition or a figure of speech. Initiates will understand me when I say that *the Gods are real*, not as persons, but as vehicles of power. Much food for thought upon this point will be found in such books as *The Mystical Qabalah*, by Dion Fortune. And *The Art of Creation*, by Edward Carpenter, by those who care to seek.

Briefly, it may be explained that the personification of a particular type of cosmic power in the form of a God or Goddess, carried out by believers and worshippers over many centuries, builds that God-form or Magical Image into a potent reality on the Inner Planes, and makes it a means by which that type of cosmic power may be contacted. Nor is the worshippers' belief in vain; for though they may themselves have built the Magical Image, the Power which ensouls it is real and objective, if the building has been done in the right way.

Of course, the Craft of the Wica is not the only group which seeks to contact the Gods. There are other occult groups which use a similar technique, and their aims are the same, namely to bring through the Divine power to help, guide and uplift mankind at this dangerous and exciting turning-point in human history.

But, so far as I know, these groups generally work with the Egyptian and Greek Gods and Goddesses, and I cannot think that these contacts are as powerful here as they would be upon their native soil; whereas *the divinities of the Craft of the Wica are the Ancient Ones of Britain*, part of the land itself. (For a country exists not merely upon the physical plane, and man does not live by bread alone.)

Nor is the veneration of the Wica for the old sacred places such as Stonehenge and

Glastonbury mere sentiment. Those who are sensitive to atmosphere will know that these places possess a life of their own, and, from what we have been told by seers, these too exist not only upon the material plane. They are focusing points for influence and the power from the Inner Planes, places where the Veil is thinner than elsewhere; and the "superstition" that it is dangerous to remove or injure the Old Stones is founded on fact.

I am quite aware that much of what I have written above, about "Magical Images", "Inner Planes", "The Group-soul of a nation", etc., etc., will sound like rabid nonsense to many. This consideration troubles me not at all, as in this chapter I have not written for the many but for the few who will understand. For remember, there are still many who believe in, practise and love the "Craft of the Wica".²⁰

I must not, however give the impression that the people of Ancient Britain worshipped only one God and only one Goddess, who were exactly the same in all parts of the country. In early early times the country was split up into many different tribes, which, of course, lived in localities differing from each other as to the type of country they were.

For instance, the sea-faring people would conceive their God as a God of the Sea; those who depended upon agriculture would pay most reverence to that aspect of Divinity which manifested as the green and growing things of Nature returning each year, or the fertility of cattle; and the hunters would have a Hunting God. Also, these tribes had different dialects, and even different languages, and so the names of the gods would vary from one part of the country to another. Nor are the Great Ancient Ones mere concepts lingering in the leaves of old books and the minds of old scholars. The people remember, nay the very land itself remembers.²¹

It must be understood clearly that witchcraft is a religion. Its patron god is the Horned God of hunting, death and magic, who, rather like Osiris of Egypt, rules over the After-World, his own Paradise, situated in a hollow hill, or at least in a place which is only approached through a cave, where he welcomes the dead and assigns them their places; where they are prepared, according to their merits and wisdom, for rebirth into a new body on this earth, for which they will be made ready by the love and power of the Goddess, the Great Mother, who is also the Eternal Virgin and the Primordial Enchantress, who gives rebirth and transmutation, and love on this earth, and in whose honour and by means of ritual the necessary power is raised to enable this to be done.

My witches speak of him [the tribal god] as god of "Death and what lies beyond": by this they not only mean the life in the next world but resurrection (or reincarnation). He rules a sort of happy hunting ground, where ordinary folk go and foregather with like-minded people; it may be pleasant or unpleasant according to your nature.

According to your merits you may be reincarnated in time, and take your chance where and among whom this takes place; but the god has a special paradise for his worshippers, who have conditioned their bodies and natures on earth, who enjoy special advantages and are prepared more swiftly for reincarnation which is done by the power of the goddess in such circumstances as to insure that you will be born into your own tribe

again. This is taken nowadays to mean into witch circles. It would seem to involve an unending series of reincarnations; but I am told that in time you may become one of the mighty ones, who are also called the mighty dead. I can learn nothing about them, but they seem to be like demigods -- or one might call them saints.²²

They think that the God and the Goddess assist them in making their magic, as they assist the God and the Goddess in their turn by raising power from them by their dances and by other methods. In fact, they seem to consider the gods as being more like powerful friends than deities to be worshipped. To them the concept of an All-powerful God, one who could simply say, "Let there be peace. Let there be no sickness or misery", and all wars, sickness and misery would cease, and who for his own reasons will not say that word, and keeps men in fear and misery and want, is not fit to receive worship.

They quite realise that there must be some great "Prime Mover", some Supreme Deity; but they think that if It gives them no means of knowing It, it is because It does not want to be known; also possibly, at our present stage of evolution we are incapable of understanding It. So It has appointed what might be called various Under-Gods, who manifest as the tribal gods of different peoples; as the Elohim of the Jews, Isis, Osiris and Horus of the Egyptians, and the Horned God and the Goddess of the witches. They can see no reason why each people should not worship their national gods, or why anyone should strive to prevent them from doing so.²³

In answer to other questions, one told me this, and I think that this belief must have come down from four or five hundred years past at least:

"In the Christian belief you have a good God, or one who is good to you, whom you say is all-powerful and who greatly desires worshippers. Yet you must not ask *Him* directly for what you want, but pray to some saint, who is a dead man, as we understand it, though one whom we would call the mighty dead, and you must give money before you can hope to receive favour.

But why should an all-powerful God, or your Mighty ones, be eternally in need of money? *Our* gods are not all-powerful, they *need* our aid. They desire good to us, fertility for man, beast and crops, but they need our help to bring it about; and by our dances and other means they get that help.

"When we die we go to the god's domain, where having rested a while in their lovely country we are prepared to be born again on this earth; and if we perform the rites correctly, by the grace of the Great Mother we will be reborn among those we loved, and will remember, know and love them again, while those who do evil will have a stern schooling in the god's domain before they are fit to be reborn again, and then it will be among strangers.

Being reborn again we ever progress, but to progress we must learn, and to learn ever means suffering. What we endure here in this life fits us for better in the next, and so we are heartened to endure all the trials and troubles here, for we know that they but help us

to higher things. Thus the gods teach us to look forward to the time when we be not men any more, when we become one of the Mighty Ones.

"Ours is a religion of love, pleasure and excitement. Frail human nature needs a little warmth and comfort, to relieve us from the hardness and misery of life and from the cold austerity of the Church's preaching - comfort on earth, not in some far-distant paradise beyond the grave.

"We worship the divine spirit of Creation, which is the Life-Spring of the world and without which the world would perish. To us it is the most sacred and holy mystery, proof that God is within us whose command is: 'Go forth and multiply.' Such rites are done in a holy and reverent way."²⁴

The dual nature of the Old God will be noticed. He is the giver of fertility, both of the ground and of humans and animals; but he is also Lord of the Gates of Death. This dual nature has caused some students of comparative religion to equate his with Janus, who was in very ancient times the consort of Diana, and who was depicted with two faces. The witches explain this duality by a ritual in which they invoke the Old God: "Thou art the Opener of the Doorway of the Womb; and yet, because all things that are born must also die, that they may be renewed, therefore art thou Lord of the Gates of Death."²⁵

Death and the Afterlife

I do not think that primitive people were as afraid of death as many people are today. Living closer to nature, their psychic powers were more active, and they were used to the idea of communicating with their dead relatives and friends. They looked upon it as quite a natural thing. Hence the witches, among whom this ancient creed is still preserved in a fragmentary form, do not regard the Horned God in his form as lord of the Gates of Death as a terrifying being, nor have they any conception of a burning "Hell" such as some Christians envisage.

Their idea of the After-Life is rather that of a place of rest and refreshment, where people await their turn to be born again on this earth. This, of course, is the concept of reincarnation, which is widely held among primitive people of all kinds. To them, the most logical place for the souls of new-born babies to have come from is the Land of the Dead, where there are plenty of souls awaiting another body. Hence the Lord of the Gates of Death is also the phallic deity of fertility, the Opener of the Door of Life.

This is why the witches' god was incorporated into the Roman pantheon as Janus, the two-faced god who was Guardian of the Gates. He and his consort Diana are two of the oldest deities of Western Europe, and Diana is named in the Canon Episcopi of the early tenth century as being the goddess of the witches.²⁶

Authentic witchcraft is certainly not black magic, because witches do not even believe in the devil, let alone invoke him. The Old Horned God of the witches is not the Satan of Christianity, and no amount of theological argument will make him so. He is, in fact, the

oldest deity known to man, and is depicted in the oldest representation of a divinity which has yet been found, namely the Stone Age painting in the innermost recess of the Caverne des Trois Freres at Ariège. He is the old phallic god of fertility who has come forth from the morning of the world, and who was already of immeasurable antiquity before Egypt and Babylon, let alone before the Christian era. Nor did he perish at the cry that Great Pan was dead.

Secretly through the centuries, hidden deeper and deeper as time went on, his worship and that of the naked Moon Goddess, his bride, the Lady of Mystery and Magic and the forbidden joys, continued sometimes among the great ones of the land, sometimes in humble cottages, or on lonely heaths and in the depths of darkling woods, on summer nights when the moon rode high. It does so still.²⁷

"Dame Habonde" was Abundia, the Goddess of Fertility, and "Bensozia" was "Bona Socia", The Good Neighbour". All these terms are titles of the Witch Goddess, and euphemisms for her real name, even as her followers, the witches, are referred to as "les bonnes dames". Other terms for the Goddess were "La Reine Pedauque", the Queen with the Goose-Foot (the "goose-foot" being itself a euphemism for her sigh, the Pentagram); and "Frau Hilde" or "Holda" in Teutonic countries.

Dr. W., Wagner's Asgard and the Gods: the Tales and Traditions of our Northern Ancestors says of Holda "...that those who were crippled in any way were restored to full strength and power by bathing in her Quickborn (fountain of life) and that old men found their vanished youth there once more."

This is precisely the witches' Goddess of Rebirth and Resurrection; and it is the same tale which was told about the magical cauldron of the Ancient British Goddess, Cerridwen. The inner meaning in both cases is the same; the Goddess's gift is rebirth in a new body, reincarnation. "With sturdier limbs and brighter brain, the old soul takes the road again." Incidentally, this may be the inner meaning of the old British tale of Avalon, the Place of Apples. Every old Celtic tale speaks of the after-world as a place of apple-trees, but nobody seems to know just why.

If the reader cares to make the experiment of slicing an apple across, he will see the answer: the core forms the sign of the Pentagram, the symbol of the Goddess of Rebirth and Resurrection. "Avalon" was the place where souls went to rest between incarnation on earth. To this day, in the witch ritual, the Priestess first stands with her arms crossed on her breast and her feet together, to represent the God of Death, and then opens out her arms and stands with feet apart to represent the Goddess of Resurrection. In this position the human body resembles the figure of the Pentacle, or Pentagram. Because it was the place from which the old and weary soul was reborn in a young body, with its strength and courage renewed: Avalon was also called in the Celtic "Tir-nan-Og", the land of Youth.²⁸

The purpose of contacting the gods was to keep contact with the forces of life, and these were identical with the forces of magic and fertility.²⁹

"The divine itself is without needs, and the worship is paid for our own benefit. The providence of the Gods reaches everywhere, and needs only some congruity for its reception." (Compare with the witches' idea that man had to do something to "build a bridge", so to speak, between himself and the Gods).³⁰

Origins and Practices of Witchcraft

Nearly all primitive people had initiation ceremonies and some of these were initiation into priesthoods, into magic powers, secret societies and mysteries. They were usually regarded as necessary for the welfare of the tribe as well as for the individual. They usually included purification and some test of courage and fortitude - often severe and painful - terrorization, instruction in tribal lore, in sexual knowledge, in the making of charms, and in religious and magical matters generally, and often a ritual of death and resurrection.

Now I did not cause the primitive people to do these things; I simply hold that witches, being in many cases the descendants of primitive people, do in fact do many of them. So when people, for example, ask me: "Why do you say that witches work naked?" I can only say: "Because they do." The witches' own explanation is: "Because only in that way can we obtain power."³¹

The witches own traditions simply tell them that they existed from all time but that they came to where they are now from the Summer Land in the distant past. When you ask them where the Summer Land is they do not know; but it seems to have been a place of warmth and happiness, the Earthly Paradise of which all races of mankind have some tradition, and which so many adventurers have risked their lives seeking. (It may be noted in this connection that in Welsh legend, "Gwlad yr Hav", "the Land of Summer", is the Celtic Other World, and also the place where the ancestors of the Cymir came from.)

Witches also say that they came because man wanted magical rites for hunting; the proper rites to procure increase in flocks and herds, to assure good fishing, and to make women fruitful; then later, rites for good farming, etc., and whatever the clan needed, including help in time of war, to cure the sick, and to hold and regulate the greater and lesser festivals, to conduct the worship of the Goddess and the Horned God.

They considered it good that men should dance and be happy, and that this worship and initiation was necessary for obtaining a favourable place in the After-World, and a reincarnation into your own tribe again, among those whom you loved and who loved you, and that you would remember, know and love them again. They think that in the good old days all this was obvious to the whole tribe.

Witches were supported by the community, and they gave their services freely to all who asked their help. It is partly because of this that there is a strong witch tradition that they ***may never take money for practising their art***; that is, they may not work for hire. As they worked for the good of the tribe, they were inclined to favour a strong chief or king, someone who would see that the laws were observed, that everyone had their fair share,

and that everyone did their work properly. For this reason, too, they were inclined to dislike politics; anything that made the tribe fight among themselves they considered bad.

They think that they were not Druids, but representatives of an older faith; that the Druids were a good and strong male priesthood who worshipped the sun in the daytime, and were inclined to mix in politics, while the witches worshipped the moon by night. It is almost as if the Druids were the bishops, etc., who attended the House of Lords and made the laws, and had a magical religion, while the witches were the parish priests, who kept out of politics, and possessed a form of religion and magic of their own.³²

Witchcraft was, and on a very small scale still is, that remnant of the old pagan religion which survived the coming of Christianity, and although its adherents might be of any class of society, they were mostly drawn from the peasant population of outlying districts. These people lived close to the earth and their livelihood depended on the fertility of animals and crops. Hence they continued to do what they had been doing from time immemorial - namely, to follow a religion of nature and the fertility thereof, and to hold regular festivals at which the concept of cosmic fertility was worshipped, and the attempt was made to induce it by ritual to manifest upon earth.

The Priests and Priestesses who directed these festivals were called the Wica, meaning 'The Wise Ones', and they also fulfilled the function of surgeons, doctors, midwives and psychiatrists. It was these people and their followers who came to be called 'Witches'. The church found their influence a dangerous rival to its own, and commenced a campaign of extermination against them, the barbarities of which are not pleasant to dwell upon. Its result was to drive the Wica underground where the Cult survived as a secret 'mystery-religion'. In a fragmentary form it survives to this day, and I have been initiated into a British witch coven.³³

If witchcraft was not casting evil spells and worshipping the devil, what was it? This was the next question which exercised the minds of the popular press. Looked at carefully, this attitude shows that a crack of light is developing in the monolithic thinking of the presshound. Talking to Gardner, who told them that it brings ecstasy, a feeling of nearness to divinity, they were hard put to absorb these facts. To the student of ecstatic religion, of course, the mystical experience was no different from that reported by any other sect practising direct communion with a supernatural power.³⁴

Meetings

Witch meetings today may take place anywhere that it is convenient, and **only people who have been initiated into the cult are allowed to be present.**³⁵

One of the first questions I had asked witches as soon as I had got "inside" was, "What about the Black Mass?" They all said, "We don't know how to perform it, and if we did, what would be the point of doing so?" They also said, "You know what happens at our meetings. There is the little religious ceremony, the greeting of the Old Gods; then any business which has to be talked over, or perhaps someone wants to do a rite for some

purpose; next there is a little feast and a dance; then you have to hurry for the last bus home! There is no time or place for any nonsense of "Black Masses," and anyhow, why should we want to do one.³⁶

I have attended many of these cult rites. There may be a fertility dance, but the other rites are simple, and with a purpose, and in no way resemble those of the Roman Catholic or any other Church that I know. Sometimes there is a short ceremony when cakes and wine are blessed and eaten. (They tell me that in the old days mead or ale was often used.) The ceremony is simply intended as a short repast, though it is definitely religious. The priestess usually presides. Candles are used, one to read the book by and others set round the circle. Incense is used, but this has a practical purpose.³⁷

High Priestess

As might be expected from a moon cult, the leading part in the ceremonies is played by the High Priestess, or Maiden. She has the position of authority, and may choose any man of sufficient rank in the cult to be her High Priest. In France the Maiden was sometimes called La Reine du Sabbat; in Scotland she seems to have been called the Queen of Elphame (i.e. Faery), and one old witch trial has it that "she makes any man King whom she pleases".

There is another connection between "fairies" and the witches. In the popular mind, after the advent of Christianity, the old Celtic Paradise to which the souls of pagans went when they died became the "Realm of Faerie", and the God and Goddess who were the rulers of the After-World became the deities of the witches, who held to the Old Religion, and also were considered as the King and Queen of Faery. Hence the High Priestess of a witch coven, who is considered as the Goddess's living representative, would naturally be called "the Queen of Elphame".³⁸

Matriarchy seems to have been very prevalent in early days, and it is probable that, as with witches today, the god-representative, or high priest, was the choice, and often the husband, of the goddess-representative or high priestess.³⁹

High Priest

Now the god is represented by the high priest (if there is one) and it is he who was called the Devil in the old days. I was very curious about him and asked at once when I was "inside", by which they mean a member of the cult: "Who and what is called the Devil?" Though members of the cult never use and, indeed, dislike term, they knew what I meant and said: "You know him, the leader. He is the high priest, the high priestess's husband."

This, though true, was not the exact answer. It really should be: "He is whoever the high priestess appoints to take this position." In practice, she always appoints her husband if he has sufficient rank; but she may appoint anyone who is eligible, including herself; she

belts on a sword and acts as a man. In the old days it was often a distinguished visitor who was appointed.⁴⁰

The High Priest of a witch coven is, as we have seen, chosen by the Priestess.... It is evident from early pictures and descriptions (the earliest being the famous cave paintings found at Ariège in the Caverne des Trois Frères, done by men of the Stone Age), that the High Priest who was the god's representative sometimes wore a ritual disguise, consisting of a hat-dress bearing the horns of a stag or a bull, and a kind of robe of animal skins; sometimes, too a mask which concealed his features.

This custom seems to have been more particularly followed at the big Sabbats, when many people gathered outside the circle who were not actual initiates of the witches' mysteries, but came "for luck" (i.e. for the blessing of the Old Gods) or simply to enjoy themselves. It made the proceedings more impressive, and at the same time safer, if the god's representative was masked and disguised, so that he could not be recognised. The horned figure, seen dimly by moonlight or by the light of torches, would have seemed to the outsiders to be a supernatural being, and the initiates would not have been deceived. When only initiates were present, there was less need for the ritual disguise, so the custom of wearing it has tended to fade out.⁴¹

It was soon found that the uninitiated congregation of farmers, fishermen and such-like has such awe of the great unknown that the cult became more powerful, and that then, even when the old tribal chief played the part, he too was masked and unknown. The Church called him the "devil" and he became known as such.

"If this mysterious man turned up," I asked, "how would you recognize him?" and I found that they had joked about this. They wouldn't know if he were genuine or not! It had never happened to their knowledge; but there was always the possibility of someone from another coven turning up and claiming this right.

Actually, the high priestess said: "I'd talk to him and if I found he really had great knowledge and I liked him and found him interesting, I'd treat him as a distinguished visitor and appoint him for the day. Another high priestess might think otherwise." She went on to say: "I wish one of the old sort, a great protector, would turn up, who had a great big house and grounds to lend us for meetings. If he really were of us, I wouldn't bother too much about his vast learning; I'd appoint him and teach him the job." So here's a chance for anyone who wants to play the Devil!⁴²

The Circle

The witches' circle is not cast to keep the demons out, because no demons are evoked; it is cast to keep the "power" in.⁴³

I am also permitted to tell for the first time in print the true reason why the important thing in all their ceremonies is "Casting the Circle". They are taught that the circle is "between the worlds", that is, between this world and the next, the dominions of the gods. The only circle that matters is the one drawn before every ceremony with either a duly

consecrated Magic Sword or a Knife, the latter being the Witches' Athame or Black-Hilted Knife, with magic signs on the hilt, and this is most generally used.

The circle is usually nine feet in diameter, unless made for some very special purpose. There are two outer circles, each six inches apart, so the third circle has a diameter of eleven feet. When drawn, this circle is carefully purified, as also are all who celebrate the rites. Witches attach great importance to this, for within the circle is the gods' domain. The Witches' Circle is to keep in the power which they believe they can raise from their own bodies and to prevent it from being dissipated before they can mould it to their own will. They can and do step in and out if they wish to, but this involves some loss of power, so they avoid doing so as much as possible.⁴⁴

For one reason or another they keep the names of their god and goddess secret. To them the cult has existed unchanged from the beginning of time, though there is also a vague notion that the old people came from the East. Witches start in the east when forming the circle, and the representative of the god or goddess usually stands in the East. The main invocations are towards the North. They hold that the Northern Lights are the lights of their paradise, though this is usually thought of as being underground, or in a hollow hill.⁴⁵

The Coven

I think I must make this clear: that the word *coven* is used in two senses. First, it is a band which may be of any number of initiated people who have a common leader, who holds meetings and celebrate the rites. The leader may be a man or a woman, but a high priestess (whom they may borrow from another coven, if they have not got one of their own available) must be present to celebrate the rites.

In the old days there were numbers of people who would come to the meetings who were of the faith but were uninitiated (not received into the circle, or taught the secrets). I think in the old days there was no real secrecy about what the initiation consisted of; anyone could see and hear it much as one may see a baptism or marriage. But unless you undergo the marriage or baptismal rites you are not married or baptized; neither does knowing how a marriage is performed give you power to marry someone else.

Second, a coven can also mean the people who celebrate the rites in the circle. Traditionally, this consists of six perfect couples and a leader; preferably the couples are husbands and wives, or at least betrothed. That is, they should be lovers, in sympathy with each other, as this gives the best results. They can give me no reason for this number of thirteen, except custom and that "more would make the rite too long, as each has to do certain things in turn".

Also six couples and leader is the most that can work in a nine-foot circle--and you do not become giddy so easily in a larger one. These dances are intoxicating, and this intoxication is the condition for producing what they call magic. The only time I have seen a larger circle used was when we tried to work on Hitler's mind, and that was a

totally different operation: "Sending Forth", performed in an entirely different way, needing as many people as we could get together and plenty of room to work in.

In these degenerate days six perfect couples are not always available, so others are taken in to make up the numbers. These are all "purified" as soon as they enter the circle; other initiates present, and children, would sit outside and watch the proceedings. Later these would probably be purified and taken into the circle to receive the sacred meal. When the rites in the circle were finished, all would join in the feast and dance.

If there were, say, twenty initiates present with two qualified priestesses and there was enough room, they tell me they might form two covens and have two circles, with one common leader to keep them in time, and that in the old days at large meetings in the open air they might have many such circles; but I have never seen more than one. Nowadays members are so few that practically everyone comes into the circle, though I have seen a man sit outside, refusing to come in because his girl was not there that night.

They tell me that in the old days they often used to choose the prettiest young girl suitable to represent the goddess at large meetings. She was known as the Maiden. She was made a sort of acting high priestess and treated with the greatest honour and would often act as sort of hostess to distinguished visitors (i.e. the Devil if he turned up), but the real power remained in the hands of the true priestess, who usually work all the magic.

Often the Maiden was the high priestess's daughter and would take the place of her mother in time and there was sometimes some mystification over this; seeing the resemblance at a distance ignorant visitors believed that the high priestess became young again at the meetings.⁴⁶

They say that in the old days there were rules that there must not be more than one large coven in a certain area, so as to prevent arguments as to who should belong to whom; but they are uncertain about these rules now. It is certain that long ago there was some sort of central authority, exercised by a common leader, whom the Church called the Devil, but they know nothing of this nowadays and would not know how to recognize him if he turned up.⁴⁷

I think I must make it clear that, as far as my experience goes, while the coven should traditionally have six couples and a leader in the circle, nowadays it may often have less. At a meeting, if there are more than thirteen initiated people present they would sit outside with any uninitiated and watch the religious rite.

If for certain reasons they were required in the circle, others would step outside to make room, and those without would then be purified and taken inside. When the rites were finished and the circle closed, all took part in the dance and feast. If there were, say, twenty initiated and enough room, they would probably form two covens, each in their own circle, with one leader or timekeeper. If there were still more, they would form three circles. Nowadays, no uninitiated persons are ever present and the ceremonies are usually indoors, where there is seldom room for more than one circle.

Also, although the witch ideal is to form perfect couples of people ideally suited to each other and so in perfect sympathy, and to cause people to be suited to each other, nowadays this is not always possible; the right couples go together, the others go singly and make do as they can. Witchcraft today is largely a case of "make do".⁴⁸

They have no regular system of passwords, that I could discover, to recognize each other by. But at initiations there were certain words required to pass you into the circle, and there are certain catchphrases that could be used as such; of course a knowledge of the mysteries would prove that you were initiated. Actually, they all know each other, or are introduced, so they do not need passwords.

In Italy witches are said to say "six and seven" as a password, because it would be dangerous to say thirteen; these numbers of course add up to thirteen. In England I could understand their saying five and eight for the same reason, but actually they mostly know each other in the coven and so do not need passwords; they very often do not know of the existence of other covens.⁴⁹

Skull and Crossbones

They tell me that in the old days sometimes, when the High Priest was not present, a skull and crossbones was used to represent the god, death and resurrection (or reincarnation). Nowadays the High Priestess stands in a position representing the skull and crossbones, or death, and moves to another position, a pentacle, representing resurrection during the rites.⁵⁰

Jaffet, a knight from the south of France, deposed that his reception he was shown a head or idol and told: "You must adore this as your saviour and the saviour of the Order of the Temple," and he was made to worship this head by kissing its feet and saying: "Blessed be he who shall save my soul." Cettus, a knight received at Rome, gave a very similar account. A Templar of Florence said he was told: "Adore this head; this head is your god and your Mahomet," and said that he worshipped it by kissing its feet.

There seems to be no questions asked as to how you can kiss a skull's feet. Can it perhaps be explained by some rite resembling the following witch practice: in the old days it was said that "when the god was not present, he was represented by a skull and crossbones" ("Death and what lies beyond", or "paradise and regeneration").

Nowadays this symbolized by the High Priestess, standing with her arms crossed to represent the skull and crossbones. The worshipper kisses her feet, saying a sort of prayer beginning, "Blessed be..." and the intention following is that indicated by Jaffet and the others, the words not being exactly the same, as it is very unlikely that they would be: probably he spoke in French, which was then translated into monkish Latin and retranslated into English many years afterward: doubtless the witch-words have also changed. I remember a German witch saying to me on his first introduction to the English rites: "But this is pure poetry!" Now none of it rhymes, but it is beautiful, though very

unequal, which I think proves that someone poetically inclined rewrote much in the last two hundred years.

During this prayer to the High Priestess she opens out her arms to the pentacle position. She then represents the goddess, or regeneration, signifying that the prayer is granted. "Thus she has been both god and goddess, male and female, death and regeneration, one might say bisexual."⁵¹

Tradition in Circle and the Cone of Power

"Witchcraft ceremonies include "One: Men and women dancing in the nude. Two: Praying to a horned god. Three: Stimulation through wine, music and drumming"⁵²

It is a tradition that fire in some form, generally a candle, must be present on the altar, which is placed in the middle of the circle, and candles are also placed about the circle itself. This circle is drawn with the idea of "containing" the "power" which is raised within it, of bringing it to a focus, so to speak, so that some end may be accomplished by raising it. This focusing of force is called "The Cone of Power." Incense is also used, and I have read in Spiritualist literature that "power" is thought by some mediums to be given off by naked flames, by a bowl of water, and by incense. All these are present on the witches' altar.⁵³

They say that witches by constant practice can train their wills to blend this nerve force, or whatever it is, and that their united wills can project this as a beam of force, or that they can use it in other ways to gain clairvoyance, or even to release the astral body. These practices include increasing and quickening the blood supply, or in other cases slowing it down, as well as the use of will-power.⁵⁴

The great reservoir of "power", according to the witches, is the human body. The witches' belief that "the power" resides within themselves, and that their rites serve to bring it out, is the great difference between them and the practitioners of "ceremonial magic", black or white. The latter proceed by the invocation or evocation of spirits, sometimes of demons, whom they seek to compel to serve them. This is not the witches' way, though they believe that helpful spirits, human or otherwise, come of their own accord to assist in their rites, and that those present who have developed "the Sight" (i.e. clairvoyance) may see such spirits.⁵⁵

There is the witch practice of raising the power to the utmost and then clearly stating what is required, ending with a formula of which I may give the last two lines. It "says itself", ending like hammer blows with "As I will, so mote it be, chant the spell and Be it Done!"⁵⁶

He noted certain connections between Voodoo and witchcraft, "though the method of raising power differs, they use it in the same way".⁵⁷

Witches are also taught that in some mysterious way "inside the circle they are between the worlds" (this world and the next), and "that which happens between the worlds does not concern this world". To form this battery of wills, male and female intelligences are necessary in couples. In practice these are usually husband and wife, but there are younger people who often form attachments which usually end in marriage. There are also, of course, some unattached people, or some whose respective spouses are for some reason or other not members of the cult.⁵⁸

His own [Gardner's] psychic feelings ("hunches" and the like) come to him through a strange yet certain feeling in the solar plexus. This phenomenon became so well-established that his wife was in the habit of asking him to refer problems to what his tummy might have to say about it". The association of intuition with ecstasy he discovered to be very close. He could induce it by Witch methods, but only when he could get the right people to help him. This, of course, involves a belief in some substantial reality of the supposed "force" which produces or promotes the psychic contact.

Does this intuition occur whenever heeded? Nor for everyone; and one can lose it. Practise and belief are the requisites, with the witches, just as with the other ecstatic religions of long ago.

The disturbance of consciousness which has been observed in yogis is a step towards the development of intuition and of ecstasy; but only partially produced by chemical means. Gardner notices that the restraint of breath, which causes the lungs to contain an unusual amount of carbon dioxide gas, is one of the most important factors. Under the physical heading, the sitting for long periods in cramped or unnatural postures would affect the circulation and hence the blood-breathing apparatus. These, in turn, have their influence upon the brain: and trance might well be a result, especially if helped by the meditation and contemplation which was aimed at throwing the practitioner into trance.⁵⁹

I showed a picture of these frescoes [in the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii] to an English witch, who looked at it very attentively before saying: "So they knew the secret in those days."⁶⁰

Now the witch rites and ceremonial are of a nature to fix your mind on the object of the work. Personally, I also believe that they have a great effect in loosing inhibitions and putting you into a favourable state of mind. I think, indeed, that there is something even more than this to be obtained from these methods, but of course that all depends on what you wish to achieve.

Witches were taught that magic is contagious, that what you did to a material object which had formed part of a man's body, or had been in close contact with it, and had absorbed its aura, could have some effect on that person, even at a distance; "forming the link", they called it.

They also believe it is possible to form a mental link without having any material object; but, as Kipling says, that is another story.

Drawing Down

It is believed by witches that by acting a part you really take on the nature of the thing you imitate. This is really the basis of the cave-man's magic. By making the clay image of the animal you wish to kill, and by knowing its name, you establish a link between them, so that when he stuck spears into it it gave power to kill it when he hunted it.

That these beliefs may seem rather like children's games to some does not alter the fact that primitive men do behave like this, and so do witches. By acting the part of the goddess the priestess is thought to be in communion with her; so the priest, acting as the god, becomes at one with him in his aspect of Death, the Consoler, the Comforter, the bringer of happy after-life and regeneration. The initiate in undergoing the god's experiences becomes a witch.

Witches quite realize that this communion does not occur every time one assumes the goddess position, but they very soon realize that by doing so they begin to receive thrills which are apt to grow more and more intense when the trance comes on. They KNOW! It is no use saying: "This is only suggestion, or the subconscious mind." They reply: "We quite agree; suggestion or the subconscious mind are simply some of the tools which we use to help open the Door."

And once you have known the goddess, does anything else really matter? To attain this state there are many roads, and dancing is perhaps the easiest; the calls and the chants help, the attitude of the other members is of the greatest assistance--but the true secret is within oneself, and also to some extent in one's partner or assistant in the art, and it is not a thing that can be forced. A quiet knowledge that you will do it, and a steady and regular performance of the rites, are all that is really necessary, although other things help. Short cuts are useful, but you must use them carefully as they are apt to lead you astray and to involve more work in the end.

You must first believe it is possible; then, use the method, or preferably a combination of the various methods that may be used together. When you have once attained the ecstasy you know that it exists and may be attained again. You must banish all feelings of *can't*, fix in your mind: "*I can and will.*"

There are a number of spiritual powers which many people do not recognize as such, e.g. the various forms of inspiration, music and poetry, clairvoyance and magical awareness; but the greatest of all these is love. All these aids should be employed under instruction, as there are difficulties and dangers in their indiscriminating use.⁶¹

The Rites

Other rites I am forbidden to give because they are definitely magical, though they are no more harmful than this. But they do not wish it to be known how they raise power. The dances that follow are more like children's games than modern dances - they might be called boisterous and noisy, with much laughter. In fact, they are more or less children's games performed by grown-ups, and like children's games they have a story, or are done for a certain definite purpose other than mere enjoyment.⁶²

...These ideas and procedures, while ancient enough (the magical works of Solomon are mentioned by Josephus) are as things of yesterday compared with the ideas behind witch practices, which, as I have been trying to show, date from the Stone Age. Though the basic idea of "the magic of the name" may be primitive, and though similar techniques - though, of course, using different God-Names - were known to the Ancient Egyptians, the ceremonial magic which has come down to us from the Middle Ages is a highly sophisticated tradition, which requires a certain amount of education in order to work it. It also needs elaborate preparations and paraphernalia; and it is definitely Judeo-Christian in language and outlook. The witch tradition, on the other hand is not Christian or Jewish; it could be worked and was, by people who could neither read nor write; and its paraphernalia are of the simplest.⁶³

Note from Gardner's introduction to *High Magic's Aid: The Magical Rituals* are authentic, partly from the *Key of Solomon* (MacGregor Mather's Translation and partly from *Magical MMS*, in my possession.)⁶⁴

Witchcraft is a moon cult, and there are thirteen moons in a year and thirteen weeks in every quarter, each quarter of the year having its Sabbat. The four great Sabbats are Candlemass, May Eve, Lammas, and Halloween; the equinoxes and solstices are celebrated also, thus making the Eight Ritual Occasions, as the Witches call them. On the great Sabbats all the covens that could forgather together would do so; but apart from these great sabbats, minor meetings called Esbats are held. Traditionally, the Esbat is the meeting of the local coven for local matters, or simply for fun, and it is, or should be, held at or near the full moon.⁶⁵

As Gardner himself has made clear so many times, while the religious observances of witchcraft are celebrated regularly, magical processes are not carried out except when they are considered necessary, and then only when they are to be of beneficial effect upon people, without harming anyone.⁶⁶

It is, I think, fairly well known that witches observed four great festivals: May eve, August eve, November eve (Hallowe'en) and February eve. These seem to correspond to the divisions of the ancient Gaelic year by the four fire festivals of Samhain or Samhuin (November 1), Brigid (February 1), Bealteine or Beltene (May 1) and Lughnasadh (August 1). The festivals corresponding to midwinter and midsummer were both said to have been founded in honour of female deities: Brigid is a very ancient goddess of home-crafts and the hearth, Lughnasadh was founded by Lugaidh in honour of his "nurse" Taillte.

Of the witch festivals, on the other hand, the two summer festivals were in honour of the goddess, wherein she takes precedence, and the two winter ones were those wherein the god takes precedence. In practice it appears to me that in summer the goddess takes precedence, riding on a broom (or other) stick before the god if he is present; but in winter he is not superior but merely her equal; they both ride side by side. It is true, of course, that in summer the main prayers are to the goddess, while in winter it is chiefly the god who is prayed to.⁶⁷

I have been told of a witch cult in Southern Ireland practicing nowadays, but I have not been able to contact it. The members are said to hold their meeting in a disused quarry where they can work without being disturbed. They wear long black cloaks for protection until they reach the meeting place, where they remove them to reveal a type of kilt made of two pieces of leather thonged at the sides.

They are said to sacrifice animals to the moon, or at least to hold ceremonies in honour of the full, with dances regulated by a moon dial. I am told that they have one very beautiful dance, the Dance of the Four Winds, which is usually held round a standing stone or something which has four sides; but I can obtain no details.

It is said that part of the initiation ceremony of the man is called Diana's hunt, when all the single and unattached girls chase the initiate and whoever catches him beats him and then takes him under her guidance, it having usually been arranged beforehand who should catch him. I was told that blood was sometimes used in the rites and curses were put on people, but my informant knew nothing of the rites, or of their leader, except there was a high priestess called Diana and that they use "whiskey".⁶⁸

Yule

Present day witches secretly conduct a rite at the Winter Solstice. The priestess, or female leader of the coven, stands behind a cauldron in which a fire is ignited, while the rest dance round her sunwise, with burning torches. They call it the Dance of the Wheel, or Yule, and its purpose is "to cause the sun to be reborn". The cauldron here represents the same idea as the "gate"; the Great Mother. The fire in it is the Sun-child in her womb.⁶⁹

I have seen one interesting ceremony: the Cauldron of Regeneration and the Dance of the Wheel, or Yule, to cause the sun to be reborn, or summer to return. This in theory should be on December 22, but nowadays it is held on the nearest day to that date that is convenient for the members. The ceremony starts in the usual way. The circle is cast and purified, the celebrants also being purified in the usual manner, and the ordinary business of the cult is done. Then the small ceremony is performed (sometimes called "Drawing down the Moon") so that the High Priestess is regarded as the incarnation of the goddess. The cakes and wine ceremony follows.

Then a cauldron (or something to represent one) is placed in the middle of the circle, spirit is put in and ignited. Various leaves, etc. are cast in. Then the Priestess stands by it in the pentacle (goddess) position. The High Priest stands on the opposite side of the

cauldron, leading the chant. The others stand round in a circle with torches. They are lighted at the burning cauldron and they dance round in the "sunwise" direction, i.e. clockwise. The chant I heard was as follows, but others are sometimes used:

Queen of the Moon, Queen of the Sun,
Queen of the Heavens, Queen of the Stars,
Queen of the Waters, Queen of the Earth
Bring to us the Child of Promise! (The sun, thought of as being reborn)

It is the great mother who giveth birth to him,
It is the Lord of Life who is born again
Darkness and tears are set aside
When the Sun shall come up early.

Golden Sun of the Mountains, Illumine the Land,
Light up the World, Illumine the Seas and the Rivers,
Sorrows be laid, Joy to the World.
Blessed be the Great Goddess,
Without beginning, without end, Everlasting to eternity.
I.O. EVO.HE Blessed Be.

"They dance round furiously, crying:
"I.O. EVO.HE Blessed Be.
I.O. EVO.HE. Blessed Be.

"Sometimes couples join hands and jump over the blazing cauldron, as I have seen for myself. When the fire has burnt itself out the Priestess led the usual dances. This was followed by a feast.⁷⁰

Cakes and Wine

The taking of wine during the rites is part of the ceremony; it consists usually of two glasses at the most. Witches say their rite of the "Cakes and Wine" (a ritual meal in which cakes and wine are consecrated and partaken of) is much older than the Christian ceremony, and that in fact it is the Christians who have copied the rites of older religions. In the old days, they tell me, ale or mead might be used instead of wine, any drink in fact that had " a kick" in it, because this represented "life".⁷¹

It is noteworthy that the witches' "sacred meal", "Cakes and Wine", consists of cakes (any sort) and wine, which are blessed and then eaten and drunk out of the "working tools", and this blessing has at least a phallic or fertility significance. "I have borne the sacred vessel" may be something similar to the witch custom that everyone should have one of the working tools, usually the Athame, in their hands all the time when the hands are otherwise unoccupied.⁷²

The Cup

Another Templar "hallow" was the Chalice, the Cup. As I have said, the witch also reveres the Cup, which seems to date back to the old fertility cults.⁷³

Another matter I must explain. At first I was puzzled by the absence of the Cup from the witches' working tools and the inclusion of the unimportant pentacle, said to be used to command spirits; also that the witches admittedly used a form of spiritualism, asking departed spirits to return or communicate, they did not generally evoke--that is, command--either spirits or Elementals to appear, and then, by commands, bribes or sacrifices, cause them to do services. The more so because, through their connection with sorcerers, they knew of these practices.

Also, in the explanation of the working tools, mention is made of such matters. The answer I get is: In the burning times this was done deliberately. Any mention of the Cup led to an orgy of torture, their persecutors saying that it was a parody of the Mass; also the riding or dancing pole ("broomstick") was cut out. Censer and pentacle were substituted and explanations made to fit what their persecutors expected. If all told more or less the same story of what they were taught--because it was actually true and it agreed with the story of others--why bother to continue the torture?

The witch was convicted, and if she did not escape or die in prison, she was quickly burnt and her troubles were over. It was the poor wretch who was not an initiated witch who was tortured and tortured again and again, because she did not know what to say and could not invent a story that would pass muster. This explanation is I think plausible.

Naturally, at times, individual witches may have attempted to work with elementals, but the general feeling is: "These are usually evil, it is unlucky to have dealings with them, and the goddess is sweet and kind and would not like it. It is wrong to go against her teachings." Of course, I am only speaking of the witches belonging to the cult. The village wise-woman fortune-telling type may have done anything.⁷⁴

Blood

Witches do not use the blood of sacrificed animals, birds, or any other living things in their rites. Blood was sometimes used in ceremonial magic, but this is a different thing from witch rites. The ceremonial magician was generally a man who worked alone or with one or two assistants. If he wanted to raise power quickly, and was not too scrupulous as to how he did it, this might be one of his methods; on the other hand, witch rites are worked by a number of persons, who especially if they are of witch families, may have inherited psychic or mediumistic faculties, and the power they generate is like that of a spiritualist circle. The methods they use do not need such rites as blood sacrifices, even if they were willing to use them.⁷⁵

The people I know are taught never to use blood or to make sacrifices; but the Irish coven seemingly use them and they are used in Voodoo. Knowing how the rites in England

work, these practices would be useless in any I know, so presumably there are totally different rites of which my friends know nothing.⁷⁶

Their writings forbid them to use blood or anything that can cause pain or fright, while admitting that freshly shed blood can give power, the actual words being: "Power flashes forth from newly shed blood, but the use of an animal, for instance, is hateful and cruel."

But a witch friend suggests to me that the use of blood drawn from your own body might be permitted. The late Aleister Crowley used occasionally to perform a ceremony, gashing his breast and using his blood, and it is quite possible some witches do this. All I can say is, I have no knowledge of its being done.⁷⁷

Beliefs

There are certain secrets of the witch cult that I cannot by reason of my pledged word reveal; but many people write to me saying, "You said in your book, *Witchcraft Today* that all the ancient Mysteries were basically the same; so as well all know what these ancient Mysteries were, we know exactly what the witches' secrets are. So why don't you write another book telling everything?"

"Now, while the ancient authors who were initiated into a number of the mysteries agree that they were all the same basically, and there is a certain amount of agreement among modern authors about what their secrets were, I doubt very much if any of them realises the reason behind them, "what made them work," in fact; and what makes things work is the witches' secret. I think that this was probably the practical secret of the ancient Mysteries also.⁷⁸

My great trouble in discovering what their beliefs were is that they have forgotten practically all about their god; all I can get is from the rites and prayers addressed to him.

The witches do not know the origin of their cult. In this connection it should be noted that there are certain rites where a man must be the leader, but if a man of requisite rank is not available, a chief priestess belts a sword on and is thought of as a man for the occasion. But although woman can on occasion take man's place, man can never take woman's place.⁷⁹

The faith of the cult is summed up in a witch's book I possess which states that they believe in gods who are not all-powerful. They wished men well, they desired fertility for man and beast and crops, but to attain this end they needed man's help. Dances and other rites gave this help. These rites were based on sympathetic magic, the idea that like attracts like, and also that "what gave pleasure to man, gave pleasure to the gods". Possibly they thought that the gods could feel man's pleasure. There was also the idea that the gods loved man and were pleased when he was happy, as opposed to the idea that god is an angry god who hates man to be happy. In this book are the following verses, but no indication of who wrote them:

The Witch Remembers her Last Incarnation

I remember, O fire,
How thy flames once enkindled my flesh
Among writhing witches caught close in thy flame,
Now tortured for having beheld what is secret.
But to those who saw what we had seen
Yea, the fire was naught.
Ah well I remember the buildings ablaze
With the light that our bodies had lit.
And we smiled, to behold the flames wind about us,
The faithful, among the faithless and blind.
To the chanting of prayers
In the frenzy of flame
We sang hosannas to Thee, our Gods,
Midst the strength-giving fire,
Pledge our love to Thee from the Pyre.

I think this shows what they believed. ⁸⁰

Now what is this Power? If you ask them they say it is Magic; if you ask them what they mean by Magic, they say they don't know but it is something that works. ⁸¹

Witchcraft has become one of the secret religions, wherein people can express their greatest longings and aspirations without being mocked at; those archetypal reverences which, arising from deep levels of the unconscious, so strangely stir the soul. These things I think are a true form of religion because they are natural; though constant bludgeoning and conditioning of the mind may blunt perception, and cause people to shut their intuitions away in the inmost recesses of their being.

With this Old Religion comes the knowledge of a type of magic, difficult at all times to learn, and more so in these days, when everything is against you in this respect; but which exists all the same as a closely guarded secret. Magic is in itself neither black nor white. Bad nor good; it is how it is used, the intent or the knowledge behind it, that matters. Magic has been classed as a trick closely guarded by the primitive magician. Perhaps so; it is the trick of doing something so that something else will occur. The airmen who drop a bomb could not make the bomb itself; they make intelligent use of a certain force which they do not wholly understand; and that is what magic is. If they misuse that force, and detonate the bomb in their plane, they may destroy themselves. This also occurs in magic; you must know how to keep the effects away from yourself. ⁸²

The real thing is deeper hidden than this. People, especially country people, are reluctant to talk about it; but no one, I think, can study folklore in this country for long without becoming convinced of the amazing vitality and tenacity of old beliefs. The countryman and countrywoman preserved a belief through the centuries because they think it is some use to them, or because they derive some satisfaction from it. Of course, the benefit they derive from the belief may not always seem to us to be highly ethical. Nevertheless, no

one but a maniac would deliberately cultivate evil for its own sake.

The great question which people ask is: "How do you know the cult is old?" This would be easier to answer if I were permitted to print the rites in full. But I am familiar with most forms of ritual including Kabbalistic magic, and they all have certain things in common and work by calling up a spirit or intelligence and commanding it to do their will. All the members stand in a circle for protection and are warned that if they leave the circle before the spirit is dismissed they may be blasted. This is sometimes varied by working a graveyard and attempting to raise a corpse to get information from it. There is another school which believes that all magical ceremonies should consist of an act together with a rhyming spell. That is, you must show the Powers what to do, then bind them with a rhyme.

Now if anyone in the last two hundred years had tried to make up a rite they would have used one of these methods or something resembling them. The English witches' method is entirely different. They believe the power is within themselves and exudes from their bodies. It would be dissipated were it not for the circle cast, as previously remarked, to keep the power in, and not, as magicians usually use it, to keep the spirits out. A witch can and does move freely in and out of the circle when she wishes.⁸³

The foundation of magical beliefs, of which witchcraft is a form, is that unseen Powers exist, and that by performing the right sort of ritual these Powers can be contacted and either forced or persuaded to assist one in some way. People believed this in the Stone Age, and they believe it, consciously or not, today. It is now well known that most superstition is in fact broken-down ritual. The unseen Powers that have interested man most in his early history have been the powers of fertility and of contact with the spirit world; of Life and Death. These are the elementary powers that became the divinities of the witches, and their worship is as old as civilisation itself.

The meaning of witchcraft is to be found, not in strange religious theories about God and Satan, but in the deepest levels of the human mind, the collective unconscious, and in the earliest developments of human society. It is the deepness of the roots that has preserved the tree.⁸⁴

Witches believe that much of their knowledge came from the East and they think there are witch practices described in the Kabbalah, notably verses 964-969 of the Greater Holy Assembly of the Book of Zohar and elsewhere. Similar things occurred in most religious cults at the same time, but I think it must have been a Kabbalist who pointed these passages out to them.⁸⁵

The Templars may have attempted practices which, while sheer heresy to a witch, were founded on her methods. Witches teach that to work magic you must start with a couple, a male and a female intelligence being necessary, and they must be in sympathy with each other; and they find that in practice they become fond of each other. Sometimes it is undesirable that they should fall in love. Witches have methods by which they try to prevent this, but they are not always successful. For this reason, they say, the goddess has

strictly forbidden a man to be initiated by or to work with a man, or a woman to be initiated by or to work with a woman, the only exceptions being that a father may initiate his son and a mother her daughter, as said above; and the curse of the goddess may be on any who break this law.

They think that the Templars broke the law and worked with magic, man with man, without knowing the way to prevent love; so they sinned, and the curse of the goddess came upon them.

To my own knowledge, using these witch methods is very apt to cause a fondness which could lead to an "affair" if it were not suppressed from the start. But that means doing two things at once, trying to produce sympathy and at the same time killing all natural fondness, and it is much easier to do one thing at a time. In wartime Templars may have gone all out for the one thing, not knowing of, or not caring for, the consequences.⁸⁶

I have asked witches what is the origin of the story of their turning into animals. To them it is only a joke; but they have memories of confused stories that at times they would play sorts of games, much as children do.

If they were going across country, for instance, they would say: "Let us go as hares," and try to imitate hares running; or as goats, butting each other, or as deer; and there is a suggestion that in the burning time they were told: "If you see anyone behaving as an animal, they have become an animal. If questioned, say you saw no man, but only a hare, or a goat, etc., because if you simply lied and said you saw no one they might know you lied, but if you said you saw some goats, and believed it, you had the resemblance of truth, even under torture."

Of course there is a widespread belief in men turning into animals, and the witch's explanation may not be the true one, but it is the only one they know of.⁸⁷

He [Gardner] believes in intuition, and in reincarnation. Both of these ideas are also witch-beliefs, even though he discerned them in himself years before he knew that there was such a thing as a witch religion. Those two factors have always had an effect on his life, and continue to influence him. The idea of "belonging" to the Craft; to "coming home" - these are the warm, meaningful bases of his certainty that humanity has eternal existence.⁸⁸

He [Gardner] has known the ecstasy of the condition of identity with the deity of the witchcraft religion...⁸⁹

The Observer survey revealed that half of those who believe in an after-life 'believe explicitly in reincarnation' - which is a fundamental tenet of the Wica, as it happens; the religion which is called the 'old faith' by the witches.⁹⁰

Numerology

The cult seems to use a crude numerology--whence obtained I do not know. The number 3, 5, 8, 13 and 40 are thought good or lucky and all these numbers have significance attached to them. There are three working which are essential and nothing can be done without them; that is, something to cut and stab with, something to strike with and something to bind with. There are five others, all of which have their special uses and are only needed if that particular kind of work is being done. For an initiation all eight must be present and the initiate is told the use of, and holds, each in turn.

Because three and five make eight, many things must be eights; but eight and five make thirteen, so thirteen is another good number; but five eights, or three covens and a leader, make forty, forty is a good number and certain things must be forty. The coven traditionally consists of twelve witches and a leader, probably because it is a lucky number and there are thirteen moons in a year.

The witches and the Druids certainly share a number of beliefs: a belief in a future life and in reincarnation; in the efficacy of the magic circle; in forms of prophecy (or, as we would call it, clairvoyance); in the sacredness of Stonehenge and other stone circles, which in later times became the traditional meeting-places of witches; and in an acute dislike of committing their teachings to writing. But perhaps the most striking link between the Druids and the witches is that of the four great ritual occasions the witches call "Sabbats".

In Ireland, as has been said, there was a great festival on August 1st (Lammas), held at Tailltinn and presided over by Druids. It was said to be in honour of the sun-god Lugh. A similar festival was held in Gaul at Lugudunum (Lyons) in honour of Lugus, god of light and knowledge. The tailltinn festival also honoured Lugh's foster-mother Tailltiu. It is closely associated with the cult of the dead, and Tailltiu being obviously the Great Mother. The energy expended in the games was thought of as giving new strength to the god to bring fertility to the land (witches dance at Lammas today with the same object).

The celebration of Lughnassad (Lammas) ensured plenty of corn, mild, etc. throughout Ireland. If the rites were poor the crops would be poor, and temporary marriages seem to have been a great feature of the rites. To this day "a Tailltinn marriage" is the word for the type of union "when you do not bother the priest with your private affairs."

"Lughnassad" means "the marriage of Lugh", and he was supposed to take the land as his bride. The King of All Ireland was ceremonially married to the goddess, actually to a priestess representing her. This is exactly what was done in Sumeria, when each year the king, representing the god, married a priestess representing the goddess. Samhain (November 1st), the winter festival of the Celts, was the beginning of their New Year, and on Samhain Eve (our Halloween) divinations to know the happenings of the coming year were made. In Ireland this was held at Tara, when all the Druids assembled to sacrifice to the gods. They sacrificed a black sheep, and offered libations to the spirits of those who had died during the year. May 1st was Bealteinne (Beltane); two great fires were lighted by the Druids on each sacred hill, and the cattle were driven between them as a preservation against sickness.

Later, in England, the May King and May Queen, "Robin Hood and Maid Marian", represented the old god and goddess of fertility. Their marriage and union were believed magically to assist the crops. The May Day revels were fiercely denounced by the Puritans, on account of the freedom of lovemaking which prevailed among those who took part in them.

Ross Nichols, in his little book, *Sassenach Stray*, says, speaking of old Gaelic traditions: "The big sun, Beltane, reappears, replacing winter's wizened little sun on Mayday when ceremonial fires of sympathetic magic were lit. On Hallowe'en the little sun substituted for the big sun; the underworld began to dominate the upper world and you could see into the future. At these changeovers supernatural beings became unstuck and flew about.

"Now, the four great festival the witch cult celebrates are Halloween, May Eve (the old "Walpurgis Night"), Lammas, and Candlemas, February 2nd. (It is noteworthy that, being a moon cult, they celebrate the night before the day of the festival.) It will be noticed that these four ancient festivals neatly divide the year into four parts, from which they are sometimes known as "the four cross-Quarter Days". Their origin has been something of a puzzle. It has been suggested that they are connected with the seasons of fertility in animals.⁹¹

The Myth of the Goddess

The Myth of Witchcraft seems to be the story of the goddess here quoted. I am forbidden to give her name, so I will call her G.

Now G. had never loved, but she would solve all mysteries, even the mystery of Death, and so she journeyed to the nether lands. The guardians of the portals challenged her. "Strip off thy garments, lay aside thy jewels, for nought may ye bring with you into this our land." So she laid down her garments and her jewels and was bound as are all who enter the realms of Death, the mighty one. [Original footnote: See Note 2 (page 159). This concerns the practice of binding after death.]

Such was her beauty that Death himself knelt and kissed her feet, saying: "Blessed be thy feet that have brought thee in these ways. Abide with me, but let me place my cold hand on thy heart." And she replied: "I love thee not. Why doest thou cause all things that I love and take delight in to fade and die?" "Lady," replied Death, "'tis age and fate, against which I am helpless. Age causes all things to wither; but when men die at the end of time, I give them rest and peace and strength so that may return. But you, you are lovely. Return not; abide with me." But she answered: "I love thee not." Then said Death: "As you receive not my hand on your heart, you must receive Death's scourge." "It is fate, better so," she said, and she knelt. Death scourged her and she cried: "I know the pangs of love." And Death said: "Blessed be," and gave her the fivefold kiss, saying: "Thus only may you attain to joy and knowledge."

And he taught her all the mysteries, and they loved and were one; and he taught her all the magics. For there are three great events in the life of man -- love, death and

resurrection in the new body -- and magic controls them all. To fulfil love you must return again at the same time and place as the loved ones, and you must remember and love her or him again. But to be reborn you must die and be made ready for a new body; to die you must be born; without love you may not be born, and this is all the magic.

This myth upon which its members base their actions is the central idea of the cult. Perhaps it was coined to explain ideas and rituals already conceived, and to explain why the wiser, older and more powerful god should give his power over magic to the goddess. It is very easy to say this is only the story of Istar descending into hell, but the point of the story is different. Again you can say it is simply Siva, the god of Death and Resurrection; but here again the story is different.

It is quite possible that the stories of Istar and Siva have influenced the myth, but I think that its origin is most likely Celtic. In Celtic legends the Lords of the Underworld did prepare you for rebirth, and many living people are said to have entered their regions, formed alliances with them and returned safely, but it needed great courage; only a hero or a demigod dared to risk it. Celtic mysteries assuredly contained rituals of death and resurrection, and possibly visits to the underworld with a safe return. I think St. Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg was a Christianized version of this legend.⁹²

Witches have a firmly-rooted belief in their own powers, and the danger of these being misused if uninitiated people learn their methods. Also, they reverence their gods, and do not wish their names to be known, or bandied about and mocked.⁹³

Witches are taught and believe that the power resides within their bodies which they can release in various ways, the simplest being dancing round in a circle, singing or shouting, to induce a frenzy; this power they believe exudes from their bodies, clothes impeding its release.⁹⁴

The modern witches believe that at death the "Mighty Ones", the Old Ones of the cult, come for faithful followers and take them to a favoured place among other initiates who have gone before.⁹⁵

"They share a belief in "the power of the name" to the extent that they do not like their Gods to be named unnecessarily, nor for Their names to be divulged; but this belief as we have seen, springs from a very primitive level of human development and instances of it can be found in almost all human societies."⁹⁶

One interesting burial was found at Stonehenge, which may bear out the witches' idea that the Blue-stone horse-shoe represents the womb. It was a "crouched burial", in which the body was laid in the earth in the crouched position of an unborn child, and it was found within the "horseshoe", just before the Altar Stone.⁹⁷

Later, the Sacred Well became a sacred cauldron, the Cauldron of Cerridwen, of which the Christian version was the Holy Grail, and the pagan one the cauldron of the witches.⁹⁸

Regarding sensationalist press in Britain: In spite of all the agonised appeals of these

papers for members of witch covens to go to their doctor or clergyman, or to the papers themselves, how many did? We may be sure that if any people who were initiates of any genuine witch coven had come forward and begged to be released by the kind offices of these papers, the fact would have been blazoned abroad. So I repeat, how many did? The answer is, None. That fact in itself is evidence that the followers of the Old Religion are happy in their faith.⁹⁹

The Wica seem to have been taught certain beliefs, most probably by the Kabalists, which they have incorporated into their own. One of these beliefs is that there were two parties, or sects, in ancient Israel, which might be compared to our modern English "High Church" of Charles I's time and the Puritans, and the Kings of Israel did what they believed or found politically convenient. That is, they built "High Places" and "Groves" and worshipped there.¹⁰⁰

What did paganism teach about the origin of evil? This, of course, depends upon what one means by "paganism". The only kinds of paganism with which we are concerned here are those which may have had some influence upon the witch cult. Druidism, the religion of the Celts, had no doctrine of an evil deity opposed to the God of Good. There is no evidence that the religion of the Great Mother Goddess or the old Hunting God had any conception of a supernatural author of all evil.¹⁰¹

It was believed that the Gods needed man's aid to perform the blessings required by the tribe or nation, and that it was a religious duty to assist the Gods in this good work. This could be effected by personal self-sacrifice, or vicariously by the sacrifice of others. When the whole nation believed in this, they saw no reason why this service of the Gods should not give pleasure to men at the same time.¹⁰²

Returning to the statement that all the Mysteries are one, I think that this plainly means that there are certain what might be termed "natural" forms of religion which are felt to be true by peoples of European stock. Peoples of Eastern and African stock also have their own "natural" forms, which may be different from those of Europe. ***Christianity, in the form we know it at least, is an Eastern religion which was originally imposed from above by force upon Western Europe, and while it has many good points, it is not of the real form natural to the people of these countries.*** This is, I believe, one reason why the witch cult has survived the most cruel and determined persecutions that mankind has ever known.¹⁰³

It will be readily seen that this is a very different creed from that of the witch cult. There are some superficial resemblances, in that both believed in reincarnation, met in the open air or in obscure places, and that the Catharist Perfecti had a girdle consisting of a sacred cord; yet the main doctrine of the Cathari is diametrically opposed to the witch cult's main tenet, namely the worship of fertility, and hence the sacredness of sex.¹⁰⁴

Witches are inclined to the morality of the legendary Good King Pasol, "Do what you like so long as you harm no one." But they believe a certain law to be important, "You must not use magic for anything which will cause harm to anyone, and if, to prevent a

greater wrong being done, you must discommode someone, you must do it only in a way which will abate the harm."

This involves every magical action being discussed first, to see that it can do no damage, and this induces a habit of mind to consider well the results of one's actions, especially upon others. This you may say, is elementary Christianity. Of course it is; it is also elementary Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Judaism, to name only a few.¹⁰⁵

In a sense, the witch religion recognises all women as an incarnation of the Goddess, and all men as an incarnation of the God; and for this reason every woman is potentially a priestess, and every man potentially a priest; because to the witch the God and the Goddess are Male and Female, the Right and the Left, the Two Pillars which support the Universe and every manifestation of male and female is a manifestation of Them.¹⁰⁶

Witches have pointed out to me the two sets of gestures made with the hands which are so often portrayed in artistic representations of the female form, of this period. One, the hands on the solar plexus, is so like a certain witch gesture; and they think the other, the exhibiting of the two breasts with the hands, represents the full moon and probably the sun as objects of worship, that in this way the woman symbolised the Sun God and the Moon Goddess, and this is why so many of the figures of this period are women.

Men would be present at the rites, and also be totally naked, but they could not represent the Goddess, and so would not have figurines of them dedicated to the Gods. This again is in accordance with the witch custom. The High Priestess stands for the Goddess, but at times can represent the God if necessary (that is if a man of sufficiently high rank in the cult is not present); but no man can ever represent the Goddess.¹⁰⁷

Reincarnation

There is one factor in the continuity of the tradition which the opponents of the cult had not reckoned with. The witches are firm believers in reincarnation, and they say that "Once a witch, always a witch." They believe that people who have been initiated into the cult, and have really accepted the Old Religion and the Old Gods in their hearts, will return to it or have an urge towards it in life after life, even though they may have no conscious knowledge of their previous associations with it.¹⁰⁸

Is there a future for the Craft of the Wica? One of the ways in which the Craft of the Wica has served the Aquarian Age has been in the way in which it has kept alive the teaching of reincarnation and Karma. This was widely believed in the ancient world, not only by pagans but by many of the early Christians; but when the Church wanted to bring in the ideas of Original Sin, Vicarious Atonement, and Salvation by Faith, it realised that this old teaching of the Mysteries contradicted them and must therefore be discredited. So in 553 a.d., the Church Council of Constantinople made the following official pronouncement, "Whoever shall support the mythical doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul and the consequent wonderful opinion of its return, let him be anathema.: So all had to give it up except the "wise ones"! And that, of course, meant the witches.¹⁰⁹

Magic

When I speak of magic I mean the magic which really exists, not what many people think of when magic is mentioned, such as waving a wand and something miraculous happening, or saying a rhyme and making signs and being forthwith rewarded by the appearance of a pantomime demon. A rhythmic form of words (a charm) is used sometimes by witches, to help to direct the power once it is raised; but the "magician" has to raise that power and know how to direct it in the first place.

What this amounts to is that certain people were born with natural psychic powers. They discovered that certain rites and processes increased these powers, and that if they directed them properly they could use them to benefit the community. So the community demanded that they should perform these rites, the more so when they discovered that they could join in the rites themselves, helping to raise power by wild dancing and in other ways. This meant that the witches had to learn to use their brains, because there are things you can do by magic, and there are things which are impossible, and this may be sharply pointed out to him with a spear. So I presume that the ancient witches had also to explain certain things away, and that there were tricks of the trade as well as genuine manifestations.¹¹⁰

Leland says: "There is a strong tradition that the Popes have been practising witchcraft ever since the tenth century, and that Pope Sylvester II confessed to this on his death-bed." Here, however, Leland fails to appreciate the distinction between ceremonial magic and witchcraft proper, as so many writers do. Both Catherine de Medici and Leonora Galigai may have been sorceresses; but they were far too good Catholics to be pagan witches. Ceremonial magic, black or white, the magic of the grimoires, is something quite different from witchcraft, and has behind it quite a different set of ideas.¹¹¹

The witches' practices of ritual dancing, "initiative magic", etc. are much more primitive in form than the solemn and elaborate rites of the ceremonial magician. Ceremonial magic was a pursuit of "clerks" and noblemen; the witch belonged essentially to the people, though the tradition might be handed down here and there in an ancient and noble family.

However, some practitioners of ceremonial magic, though they may not have belonged to witch covens themselves, nevertheless knew of their existence, and sometimes got witches to assist them as clairvoyants. In return, they would help shelter the witch in times of persecution; and the witch, when poor, would obtain good, well-made magical weapons and implements from the magician. I have described in fiction the working of such a "gentlemen's agreement" in my novel, *High Magic's Aid*.¹¹²

The most important part of any operation is the belief, nay, the firm knowledge, that it can be done and that you can and will do it. You may realise that it will not happen at once, and that perhaps you have not got the operation right, so that you may have to vary the spell to obtain the right one. In my own experience, the most important thing is who you are working with. You must be in absolute sympathy with them, and it is very seldom that you are in sympathy with people at once. You can only obtain this by

working with them for some time.

Of course, you may, and very often do, feel instinctively "I can work with that person", and the trap here is that this may be just physical attraction. However, if this is felt by all persons concerned, it is more than likely that practising together will induce the magical sympathy.

One must always remember what magic is and how it works. It is not a case of pressing a button or on turning a tap. It is work, and often hard work. For most things it would be easier to produce the results by ordinary methods of working in the usual mundane way; and it is, above all, not a way to make money. But there are just certain things which cannot be obtained by ordinary methods, and then it works.

The fact is that under modern conditions magic is not the help that it was at one time. Its uses become fewer and fewer. To the primitive man it was almost everything; the difference between a good life and starvation. And it also gave the feeling of safety and protection for which nowadays council houses with subsidised rents, family allowances, doles, free medical attention, false teeth and spectacles, are such a poor substitute.

For one thing, although the voters may think these things are wonderful, they do not give that spirit of wonder and romance which magic still gives in these prosaic days; that curious mingling of excitement and calm which its votaries feel. Again, in these "ghastly, thin-faced times of ours" we are debarred from the emotional release that people used to obtain from the big dances. They were natural and simple, and "delivered the goods", shall we say?¹¹³

The witch generally does not believe it is possible to alter nature--to cause storms, for instance; but she does believe that most important events are controlled by some human mind or minds, and that it is often possible to form a link with, and so influence, the minds of others (human or animal) by a means I can only describe as a sort of long-range hypnotism, the results depending on the amount of power raised, the skill in directing it, the sensitivity or otherwise of the brains at the other end and whether they are opposed to the idea which comes into their minds or not; and that their minds may still be so influenced, even if some counter-influence is exerted.

As the witch told the psychical research man: "To do magic you must work yourself into a frenzy; the more intense you feel, the more chance of success." You simply can't get the required number of people to do it just for fun, or if it's likely to come off naturally; the chance are then usually 80-90 per cent against.

Other people tell me: "If you are determined enough you can force anything through without having to resort to witchcraft," quoting: "Napoleon said 'There is no such word as *impossible* in the French language,'" but as a witch said when they told her this: "I suppose Napoleon said it in Corsican when we put it into his brain it is *impossible* to cross the English Channel."¹¹⁴

"Magic", Gardner says, "is the art of getting results". For this reason the attributes of clairvoyance, healing, hypnotism and things formerly thought of as supernatural are a part of the witch's armoury."¹¹⁵

In my own belief, there are some things that can be done by magic, and some that cannot, and I doubt whether rain can actually be caused to fall by magic. But it must be remembered that I know one type of magic well, and am therefore inclined to believe that all types work in much the same way; I may be mistaken on this point. Those spirits which magicians and Qabalists attempt to invoke or evoke may exist, and if they do I suppose they could affect the weather. One class of such spirits are those called "elementals", that is, spirits inhabiting the "four elements" of the ancients, earth, air, fire and water. I do know that there are people who appear to believe that they can affect the weather.

However, the witches tell me, "In the old days people would want the witches to "make rain" or "make dry weather", and of course we couldn't; but if we said so our influence was gone. Well, we were usually weather-wise, and we could sometimes get clairvoyantly what was going to happen. So it was a case of putting them off until we knew what was wanted would happen naturally. They it would be safe to do some rite."¹¹⁶

As we know in schools, the most prosaic lessons get repeated in a sort of sing-song, and they often fall into some sort of rhyme, the end words being distorted until they rhyme. This is employed instinctively when witches start repeating spells not laid down in rhyme. In the old days alliteration was also much used, but this was more frequent among practitioners who worked alone. Alliteration is difficult to write, and more difficult to remember. To say aloud "So mote it be", does not come with the same decisive hammer stroke as it does if it is the last line of a rhyme.¹¹⁷

Between blessing and banning, it appeared to our ancestors there were many formulas which produced mysterious results if said with the correct intonation, which "tuned in" to the vibration they sought. You may say, "Oh, we know that some special tomes have effects on you, that's not magic!" Exactly; but I understand magic is knowing certain things have certain effects, and how to make use of these effects to render people more sensitive to certain other influences. Combining half a dozen or more of such influences - say dancing, chanting, incense, etc. - has effects which some people would say "work like magic."¹¹⁸

A European witch is taught "there are many *paths or ways all leading to the centre*", and uses many (or all) of them combined in one operation to gain all the power she can.¹¹⁹

When I wrote my first serious book on the subject, *Witchcraft Today*, speaking of the use of the wax image, I said: Up to now I have not found anyone who knows the exact rite used. I have not the slightest doubt that some still know it though they won't admit so. I particularly want to obtain possession of it because I think it is apt to be more or less unchanged from the days when the cave man practised it. Since then I have been lucky

enough to see one made, but unfortunately, or rather fortunately, this was not to kill anyone, as I think the method used could kill. It also bore out what a witch told me long ago, "Before you can do any harm to your enemy by means of a wax image you must be in a genuine and spontaneous rage, as you would need to be before you knocked him down physically.

"In this case a certain man whom we may call X, attempted to gain some property by blackmailing the owner, saying in effect "If you don't give it up, certain facts will be known which will be extremely unpleasant for you and your friends." The owner consulted lawyers, but was told, "If this was spread about it would be unpleasant. X would not say it himself, or we might get him for slander. He would get other people to spread the yarn. You must judge if it is not better to let him have the property than let your friends suffer. It is only a matter of three thousand pounds.

"The owner objecting to being blackmailed, went to a witch who knew the blackmailer well, and did not approve of his doings. So at the next meeting, she brought this case up as all had had unpleasant experiences with X. It was agreed that he might be dealt with, but only in a way which would cause him no harm. So I was able to see exactly what was done. Of course I may not tell what this is, but I can say I consider it to be a very ancient practice, a way of directing a curse, something which I suppose has been found out by trial and error, that doing something in a particular way will have a particular effect. In this case the power was directed to prevent the offender speaking, by pinning his lips together, and to prevent his moving in any way against the owner, by binding the figure tightly.

Of course the unbeliever will say it was pure coincidence that X stopped all threats immediately, sold his house and left the district. To be truthful, I know the Chief Witch was in a rage, and I believe if the others had allowed her, the man might have been seriously injured, if not killed. But this I think also shows what I have so often said, "Witches may be angry and forget their teaching, but the others will not let them do any harm." For, if there is anyone present who does not agree to all that is attempted, they can spoil the charm.

There are very few witches who know how to do it, the rank and file certainly don't. I was talking to a couple who had been present when the "Poppet" was made, and both said, "We saw it done, but still don't know how to do it," and that's exactly my position; I feel there is something which escaped me, and 'she who did it' won't tell me. It is quite probable that people who are not witches know the secret. The use of an image to protect one against evil, is common knowledge among witches, especially to cure illnesses. When the patient was at a distance an image was made, the "link formed" and remedies were applied to it. When we burn someone in effigy, we are really attempting to bring at least bad luck to him.¹²⁰

But to return to the making of the wax image. I think that the binding of this figure illustrates one of the uses to which a witch puts her cord. From ancient times "Cords, Threads or Clews" have been mentioned as used by witches, for evil or good, and often

they are described as coloured. Greek witches are always described as using coloured cords. Modern witches do the same; I have asked the reason, and they say it's just because they are pretty. This may simply mean that as witchcraft is a religious rite, they have everything as "nice" as possible, or there may be some reason which is now forgotten. It has been suggested to me that it might be merely that white cords would soon show dirt, but I don't think this is right, or they would use black, or dark coloured ones, though Italian witches use black cords or thread when making an evil charm.

In this Museum I have a dried-up lemon stuck with black pins and bound with black thread. This was made to part two lovers whose union the parents did not approve of, and black cords are said to be employed for "killing spells". Incidentally, the witch used white cords to bind the blackmailer, but this was not to injure him in any way, simply to prevent him arming others, and was the only cord she had handy.

It is said that Babylonian witches snared people's souls by tying knots in a cord, saying a spell at each knot. It was an old charge against witches in Europe, that they tied knots to ruin people, though my friends deny knowing this art. But there is not the slightest doubt that (so called) witches in the Isle of Man and elsewhere used to sell knotted cords to sailors, to give them favourable winds, it being usually said that untying the first knot made a light wind, which soon died away, untying the third knot brought a storm which generally sank the ship.

This I think shows how everything a witch did was distorted. Sailors are not bigger fools than other people. It is obvious that no one in his senses would untie the third knot if he believed it would raise a storm, and any canny Captain would buy a number of cords and only use the first two. *I say "so-called witches", for everyone who sells charms and spells has not been initiated.* And it is an old witch law that "you must never work magic for money." Though, of course, as with every religion, not all adherents always obey the teachings.¹²¹

Let's get this business of "bewitchment" and "Putting curses on people" straight. There are two necessary prerequisites for "putting a curse on someone". The first is a genuine motive for doing so, and the second is the ability to do it. When those two things come together, and they sometimes do, you get an indubitable result. I know too many stories of this kind personally to say that it can never happen; but what I do say is that it is rare. In the first place, to do a thing like this requires a considerable expenditure of psychic force, which no one with real knowledge would do upon trivial grounds.

Secondly, those who really know about these things would not resort to such an act unless in exceptional circumstances. Consequently, ninety-nine percent of the people who think they are being "bewitched" are cases of sheer auto-suggestion, and I believe that such cases have been enormously increased by the newspaper scare campaign.¹²²

The same witch, in answer to a suggestion by a member of the Society for Psychical Research, said:

"I doubt whether performing a series of magical experiments to observe the result for the sake of psychic research would ever work. If people had only a ha'p'orth of *practical experience* they would never make such a proposition, because in successful magical operations one of the strongest stimuli is the *emotional factor*. Before you can do any harm to your enemy by means of a wax image you must be in a genuine and spontaneous rage, as you would need before you knocked him down physically.

"Before you can work a love charm you must feel *genuine* and passionate desire for the object of it. These states of mind cannot be switch on and off at will to please the S.P.R. I believe the same thing may apply to astral projection. The records we have of successful projections are nearly always the result of strong and spontaneous desire. The exceptions are the case of people in feeble health."

This is simply one witch's opinion, but I think it is very generally held. She speaks as if she knows something of how to make a wax image, but she says this is only general knowledge. Up to now I have not found anyone who knows the exact rite used. I have not the slightest doubt that some still know it, though they won't admit it. I particularly want to get it because I think it is apt to be more or less unchanged from the days when the cave man practised it, and knowledge of this might give one some idea of what a cave man thought.¹²³

That witches have magical powers is something about which Gardner is certain. In his books and in everyday conversation, he speaks a good deal about the religious aspect of the Craft. But, like the followers of almost all religions, the witches believe that supernatural effects can be caused by faith. When witches work magic, as he himself carefully notes, it is not always possible to attribute a happening to their intervention; it might have happened in any case.

It is for this reason that one story, well-attested, about one of the most important members of the Craft is of value as illustrating the use of this magical power.

One day this lady was talking to her bank manager. He was a book collector, and he knew that she was especially interested in magical works. He did not know that she was a witch.

"I saw something that would have made you cry the other day", he said.

"What?"

"I was valuing for probate some things belonging to an old doctor who recently died. He had several books, which I bought from the widow".

"Yes, but what would make me cry?"

"He had a lot of magical manuscripts, which the widow is going to burn".

"But she shouldn't do that".

"I know; but it is no use. I tried to buy them, but she is adamant. She hates them, is afraid of them, and she is going to burn them".

The witch felt that she could not very well ask the name and address, but managed to bring the subject around to the district where the doctor had lived. She got on a bus and went there. People in the neighbourhood told her how to find the house of the local doctor who had died.

"It was a semi-detached house, pebble-dashed. She went up the little path which divided at the house, right or left. She went right. She saw the front door, with a porch over it, at the side of the house. She knocked and rang for some time. There was no answer. She wondered what to do. Then she noticed that a pebble from the wall had fallen onto the grass. She took it to "form a link" and hurried home, for she had work to do.

Gardner continues; "She called in some friends that night, and they did what was necessary, and then she went to sleep".

She woke up after a while, and felt that she was out of her body, naked. Her nose seemed to be pressed against something. She was out in the open air, and it was dark. Against the sky she saw the outline of the porch of the front door of the pebble-dashed house...

"She willed hard and suddenly she was inside the house. She could see a hand pointing to a green satin divan, with a lot of dark-coloured books lying upon it".

A voice seemed to say: "Now are you satisfied?" Then she woke up to find herself in bed.

Next morning the bank manager telephoned. "I have had a most curious phone call from that widow I was telling you about. She is in a strange state. She says that I have a lady friend who will take away those magical manuscripts that I told you about. Now, I have not spoken to anyone about them except yourself. Can you explain this? I forget the name... Yes, ere it is,... Mrs. Blank. Do you know her?"

The witch said she did not know her, but would go to see her if she wished it.

That afternoon the witch visited the widow. "You are from the manager of the bank... come in."

She was ushered into a room; there was the content of her dream, a green satin-covered divan with a pile of bound manuscripts on it. "Now are satisfied?" the widow said, "I tried to burn them, and something made me take them out of the stove. And I am very frightened. Will you please take them away?"

There were twenty-eight magical books, two magical swords, two pentacles, and some other things. The manuscripts were those given to initiates into the Golden Dawn - a

society started by the magicians MacGregor Mathers and Wynn-Westcott. They should have been learnt by heart and returned to the organization. One bore the name of Count MacGregor de Glenstrae, a name used by Mathers. She kept the swords, but gave the MMS. To Gardner, who placed them in his Museum.

This, Gardner feels, is an interesting - and curious way "in which the power sometimes works. She could only put out a wish to get them somehow. The power first stopped the widow putting the papers completely into the fire (some are scorched); and then put into her head that the bank manager had a lady friend who could take away what she was frightened of."¹²⁴

Charms

Witches have many formulae for making all sorts of charms, though few use them nowadays; when stripped of their superstitious practices they chiefly amount to forcing one's will into an object with the aim of influencing the waverer's mind: "Be brave, nothing can harm you, the object of your affection will love you" type of thing. Coupled with this, however, are instructions as to its use, and if you can carry them out I have little doubt that the charm would have some effect. For instance, a charm to make a young couple love each other end with: "Try to ensure that the pair are thrown together alone, in exciting and if possible dangerous circumstances (or let them think they are dangerous). Soon they will begin to rely on each other; then let them know that a love charm has been made. If they be of the cult, make them perform the rites together and the charm will soon act."¹²⁵

This is a question I am often asked [Is It Possible for Witches to Do People Harm?]. I can only say that I have not known them to try. I know no spells to this end. But anyone can make a new spell for himself, and the witches' way of training couple to work together, then a number of couples to work so as to form a sort of battery of human wills, is I think a most efficient way of doing things.¹²⁶

Sex

The worship of the witch cult is, and always has been, that of the principle of Life itself. It has made of that principle, as manifested in sex, something sacred... There is still, in the collective unconsciousness of men's minds, a realisation of the rightness of the Old Sacred Marriage... Let me make it clear, however, that the witch cult does not hold sex sacred as an end in itself, but as a living symbol and manifestation of the Great Source of All Things which men call God.¹²⁷

Witches do not believe in or encourage promiscuity. To them sex is something sacred and beautiful, which should not be allowed to become sordid or cheap... In a rare old book in my possession, *Receuil de Lettres au Sujet des Malefices et du Sortilege... par le Seur Boissier* (Paris, 1731), there is quoted much valuable evidence from a big witchcraft trial at La Haye Dupuis in 1669, which illustrates the attitude of the witch cult in this respect. One witness, Margeurite Marguerie, said that when a male witch was not at the Sabbat

his partner did not join in the dance, and it is said further, "As for the dance, it is done... back to back and two by two, each witch having his wife of the Sabbat, which sometimes is his own wife, and these wives having been given to them when they were marked (i.e. initiated; My note) they do not change them; this kind of dance being finished they dance also hand in hand, like our villagers..."¹²⁸

History

By circa 900 b.c. archaeologists consider that, owing to the successive immigrations from the Continent, the language spoken in Britain must have been recognisably Celtic.¹²⁹

The position of the (witch) cult in Roman and Saxon times seems rather a puzzle. The great question is, were the witches and the Druids members of the same cult? The witches have no exact traditions on the subject. Personally, I think they were not; the witch cult was the religion of the soil, as it were, and the Druids were the more aristocratic religion, much as things were a thousand years later, when the witch cult was the religion of the peasants, but the Roman Church was the dominant power.¹³⁰

Up to that time (of the Saxon Invasions) it is doubtful if the Wica had a distinctive name for themselves. They were the people, the priests and priestesses of the Old Goddess, who were recognised as of the people. The Saxons hated and feared anything to do with magic. They worshipped Odin (Woden) and Thor and the other Scandinavian gods, and were extremely "respectable" in a Germanic way. When they became Christians they were more so. That Odin used to have a Wild Hunt resembling that of Herne, and Valkyries who were in some ways like the witches of legend, only they rode horses through the air instead of goats or broomsticks, made things worse; they hated the memory of Odin and the Valkyries because they were pagan divinities. I have been asked, "Did the Saxons make changes in the witch cult?" And I say, "I don't think so."

Caesar records that the customs of the "Germans" were entirely different from those of the Celts. By the time the Angles and Saxons started to invade Britain, they had acquired more civilisation than when Caesar and Tacitus described them. Even so there was a great difference between them and the cultured, literate Romano-British, many of whom were Christians of the old Celtic Church. It is to this period that King Arthur and his chivalry must have belonged, if he had an historical existence.

The Saxons came in as heathen conquerors; they looted and killed and raped. Most of the Celtic population were dispersed in these long wars, and the remnants lived in inaccessible places. Only in the big towns did the races meet and mix, and even there they were hated conquerors, who had dispossessed the Celts from their ancestral lands and forced them to live in the outlands. Also, they hated magic. This is no condition for any mingling of cult practices.

Then the Saxons became Christian, the new kind of intolerant, Roman Christian, which made matters even worse. And then, just as the Saxons were settling down nicely, the Danish invasions commenced. To them the Saxons were renegades who had forsaken the

old faith of Odin and Thor, and so deserved exterminating. But in time these Danes themselves were baptised and made Christians, and lived in an uneasy confederacy with the Saxons. *It is a curious fact that when the witches became English-speaking they adopted their Saxon name "Wica".*¹³¹

The Roman, and later the Saxon invasions came. The kings, nobles, and the Christianised Druids suffered badly, and many fled to Ireland and Scotland, but contrary to what is often thought, the main population remained in their villages. The Saxons, at first heathen, were converted to Christianity by missionaries from Rome, and some laws against witchcraft were made.

After the Norman Conquest the Saxons became a race of serfs under Norman masters. Later the two races tended to amalgamate and intermarry, becoming English instead of British and Saxon. As there is no trace of Saxon customs in the cult, it does not seem that such Saxon witches as there were ever came into it; but then the Normans arrived they had a tradition of something like witchcraft. Whether this came from Norway or from Gaul I am not sure, but it certainly existed. At any rate, the British had always thought of the Saxons as oppressors who had robbed them of all the best in their country and the witches disliked them because they made laws against witchcraft, so both were wryly amused to see the Saxons being bullied in their turn.¹³²

It is said that after the Norman Conquest, when there were numerous Saxon risings in out of the way parts, the Norman troops sent to suppress these were often led by "French-speaking witches." This can mean that the local witches were better educated than most, and spoke French; but it is more likely that Norman witches came over at the Conquest, fraternised with the dwellers on the heaths, the "heathens", the British people of the outlands who hated the Saxon usurpers, and found out what was going on. Hereward the Wake is said to have killed one of these witches who was helping to hunt him in the Fen country.¹³³

I presume he [Pennehorne Hughes] thinks he knows what he is talking about, so let me reassure him that to the best of my knowledge most of these accusations are false. Witches did cast spells, to stop Hitler landing after France fell. They met, raised the great cone of power and directed the thought at Hitler's brain: "You cannot cross the sea," "You cannot cross the sea," "Not able to come," "Not able to come." Just as their forefathers had done to the Spanish Armada with the words: "Go on," "Go on," "Not able to land," "Not able to land." Is that allying themselves with the King's enemies?

I am not saying that they stopped Hitler. All I say is that I saw a very interesting ceremony performed with the intention of putting a certain idea into his mind, and this was repeated several times afterwards; and though all the invasion barges were ready, the fact was that Hitler never even tried to come. The witches told me that their great-grandfathers had tried to project the same idea into Boney's mind.

At the time of the Spanish Armada the invading force was off the coast before the cult really heard about it. They knew it was useless trying to get at King Philip; he was out of

touch with and could not change the Armada's course, and they had not the slightest idea who was in command. The only thing they could do was to send out a general idea: "Go on," "Go on," "Go on," "You cannot land," "You cannot land," and hope it would take effect. If they could have raised a storm, they would have done so, but they did not know how, though naturally they would pray to their gods to bring disaster to the fleet and this would probably include storms.

I doubt if witches ever raised a havoc; at least I've never heard of their doing so, and I and they do not know how they would set about it; I would like information on the subject -- dates and places, please?¹³⁴

When Holland, Belgium and France fell, as Gardner puts it, "We expected Hitler on the seashore any day. We had no weapons worth the name. In my three-mile beach sector there were six shotguns, my Luger and Donna's revolver, and a few other pistols, with about six rounds apiece for them. Then there were my pikes and swords. By the end of that week, six soldiers and a sergeant were sent to defend the three miles. In another seven days these had been augmented by fifty men under an officer. Later, drabs and drabs came; but, barring rifles and not much ammunition, they had nothing. No artillery, no automatic weapons. I tried to get an old Malay cannon going, with some blasting powder and explosives, but nothing came of this".

This was where the witches again came, incongruously one might think, into the picture. Old Dorothy called up "covens right and left; although by Witch Law they should not be known to each other". And this was the start of "Operation Cone of Power", when the witches, as they claim, sent up a force against Hitler's mind. This is documentarily an important enough part of the history of witchcraft to quote verbatim from Gardner's own mouth. He refers to it in both of his witchcraft books, and it has been repeatedly referred to by reviewers and columnists. The most complete details now available are thus:

"We were taken at night to a place in the Forest, where the Great Circle was erected; and that was done which may not be done except in great emergency. And the great Cone of Power was raised and slowly directed in the general direction of Hitler. The command was given: 'You cannot cross the Sea. You cannot cross the Sea. YOU CANNOT COME; YOU CANNOT COME'. Just as we were told, was done to Napoleon, when he had his army ready to invade England and never came. And, as was done to the Spanish Armada, mighty forces were used, of which I may not speak. Now to do this means using one's life-force; and many of us died a few days after we did this. My asthma, which I had never had since I first went out East, came back badly. We repeated the ritual four times; and the Elders said: 'We feel we have stopped him. We must not kill too many of our people. Keep them until we need them'".¹³⁵

Tradition

The contact in a mystical sense between ancient Egypt and the Greeks, he thought, might possibly account for resemblances between cults. A stream of teaching might have reached out from Egypt to West Africa and Europe as well. He noted the English witch

tradition that the cult came from the East - from the Summer Land. He observed at the same time that there was a possibility that witch-practises might at a very early period have been taken by witches to West Africa, in order to escape from European persecution.¹³⁶

The actual practice of witchcraft, of course, continued. The various covens met and carried on their rites as they had done (according to their traditional lore) since prehistoric times.¹³⁷

"What interests me", he[Gardner] wrote in the English Digest in the spring of 1955, "is the fact that numbers of people meet every year and perform witch rites because they believe in them".¹³⁸

To this day, the witches preserve these traditions: the flame upon the altar, and the ritual knife with which the magic circle is drawn. Both may well have their origin in the very dawn of human civilisation.¹³⁹

The four magical talismans which the Tuatha de Dannan, the ancient Irish Gods, brought to Ireland with them were the Sword of Nuada, the Lance of Lugh, the cauldron of the Dagda, and the Stone of Fal, which are analogous to the Sword, the Wand, the Cup, and the Pentacle comprising what A. E. Waite called "the Four primary symbols of the Tarot". And the Sword of Nuada, "from whose stroke no one ever escaped or recovered", is none other than the sword of the Old God of Death Himself, which is yet borne symbolically by His representative in the rites of witchcraft.¹⁴⁰

There is a story among New Forest folk that around a certain tree in the forest, called the Naked Man, witches used to dance. Few believe that the legend is true - yet witches dance there yet! "The Tree was blown down just after the War. But I hear they still use the site."¹⁴¹

Incidentally the evidence which Boissier quotes also shows that those who attended the Sabbats were naked; that for the most part, the witches were those who came from witch-families, and had been taught by their parents; that those who wished to slip out of their houses unseen to attend the Sabbat were in the habit of doing so via the huge, old-fashioned chimneys; that there were three "marks" given to the witches at three different times, but only the older ones had all three, which was "to make them magicians" (i.e. the modern "Three Degrees") and that the witches, in order to scare people away from their meeting-place impersonated the Wild Hunt; all of which I had written of in my previous book, *Witchcraft Today*, as having been told me by present-day survivors of the witch cult, before Boissier's somewhat rare book came into my possession; and before I had even heard of it.¹⁴²

I don't want for a moment to convey the impression that witches are more ethical than other people, and I think that when first attacked they hit back, but the actual "initiated witches" as distinct from the "Congregation" were few. The Church as a whole was a strong clever force, and knew how to strike swiftly, and to a certain extent to protect itself

against magic. It is a tradition among witches, that thousands of people were tortured and burnt for every one witch; and every time a witch struck back, many thousands more were martyred.

The witches met and decided, "We can't fight against this terror every time we strike, so many thousands were massacred, the only way any of us can survive, is to go underground, never hurt any, however much they have wronged you, then in time we will be forgotten." They did so, and with a bit of skillful propaganda, made witchcraft a figure of fun, an old woman wit a black cat, flying on a broomstick, and so, slowly, they were forgotten, all laws against them having been repealed, as soon as it was known how harmless they were.¹⁴³

Another way in which the British craftsmen of old days preserved the signs and symbols of the Old Religion was by their so-called "Masons' Marks" with which they used to mark the stones they worked.¹⁴⁴

In the good old days, when if you went half a mile from the village at night you could be sure no one would spy on you, because everyone not of the Craft was frightened to be out in the dark, it was possible to have the old dances, with plenty of music, to shrill out the calls, to have the chants and to make all the noise you wanted to.

But nowadays you have to work in small rooms, where you cannot make a noise without the neighbours complaining. The result of this is that the old dances are being forgotten. The dance in the circle can be kept up, as long as you dance quietly, but the calls--long shrill cries, which vibrate and produce terror--cannot be used. The spiral or meeting dance is sometimes performed if there is room. This is a sort of "follow my leader" dance, the priestess usually leading, dancing round in a right-hand spiral to the centre, when suddenly she turns and unwinds the spiral. As she does this, she kisses each man she meets and all the other girls do the same.

They say it is called the meeting dance because in the old days people came from distant parts and did not know each other, and this was designed to get them acquainted. But one man told me he had danced it at a church hall when he was a boy; so it may simply be an old children's game which the witches have taken over, or vice versa. Nowadays the only music they can have is a gramophone, or sometimes a sistrum, a rattle, or a small drum, played softly.

Fifteen years ago I heard many of the old tunes. Unfortunately I know nothing of music and I did not note them down.

They showed me one queer trick with music which I described in my novel *High Magic's Aid*, in the chapter called "Music Magic". They told me they could make me fighting mad; I did not believe it, so they got me to sit, fixed in a chair so I could not get out. Then one sat in front of me playing a little drum; not a tune, just a steady tom-tom-tom. We were laughing and talking at first...it seemed a long time, although I could see the clock and knew it was not. The tom-tom-tom went on and I felt silly; they were watching me

and grinning and those grins made me angry. I did realize that the tom-tomming seemed to be a little quicker and my heart seemed to beat very hard. I felt flushes of heat, I was angry at their silly grins. Suddenly I felt furiously angry and wanted to pull loose out of the chair; I tugged out and would have gone for them, but as soon as I started moving they changed their beat and I was not angry any longer.¹⁴⁵

I found these verses in a witch's book. The owner did not remember where they were copied from or if they were ancient or modern, if they were by someone who had seen the dance or simply by someone with a vivid imagination. So, with acknowledgement to the unknown author and congratulations on a good bit of description or imagination, I give them:

Twilight is over, and the noon of night
Draws to its zenith, as beyond the stream
Dance the wild witches, fair as a dream
In a garden, naked in Diana's sight,
Flaming Censers on the sweet altar, light
Gleams on the waters, drifting vapours teem,
Laughter and swaying white shoulders gleam.
Oh joy and wonder at their lovely sight!

The author of this evidently had no faith in the foul old witch story.¹⁴⁶

It is one of the Laws of the Wica that no money may be made out of the religion...¹⁴⁷

He [Gardner] knew as many fully initiated witches who were men as he did women. The other witch came in on a slightly different tack.

"Witchcraft was older and far wiser than the magic practised in the Middle Ages. Flying upon broomsticks was a joke "at the expense of credulous outsiders". With the positive, unequivocal assertiveness which strongly recalls Gardner's own phraseology and treatment of the subject in his books, this witch ends: "Our old rites may be simple, crude and primitive, but there is nothing black about them, and perhaps because they are simple they work. I sign myself - A WITCH".

It is undoubtedly this kind of categorical statement, heard from the witches who initiated him, which first impressed Gardner with their sincerity. At the same time, it is not difficult to see that the very unequivocal certainty of claims made by these witches have had the effect of making Gardner's works unique. He had to preserve the ex cathedra assurance of his informants with the respect which such research material demanded. Concurrently, his academic attitude compelled him to theorise as to ways and means whereby such statements were arrived at. Both *Witchcraft Today* and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* abound with what would be considered sophistries by those who did not realise that he was dealing with unusually emphatic material.¹⁴⁸

Once it had been established that witchcraft as known and practised by the organisation called the Wica, was a religion and not a cult carried out by cranks, and was not run for profit, the question of its name naturally arose. Why, said some well-wishers, do you not escape the adverse publicity by changing your name? By Gardner's own reading of the situation, the Wica (wise ones) was an Anglo-Saxon word, probably given to the followers of the Cult by the relatively new Germanic immigrants from across the Channel. But psychological considerations made such a change now unlikely. In the first place, the name was established: one could not change names, any more than horses, in mid-stream.

Then there was the consciousness of identity, the feeling of kinship, with the nine million people who had been killed during the witch-persecutions of the past. These events were of a part of the emotional heritage of the Craft. If the Wica had no [written] theology, little hierarchy, it had a tradition. And the mere fact of opposition, whether from scaremongers of the Press, Church or anything else, could not be considered grounds for a change. So the witches remained witches.¹⁴⁹

Working Tools

Now a witch has eight working tools. Of these, five are used only for special purposes; but there are three that she must have in every operation, and the cords are among these three. She could have worn the cord as a girdle to disguise it.¹⁵⁰

There are no witch's supply stores, so a poor witch usually has to make or improvise her own tools; a novice is often presented with an Athame, and of course in a witch family there are often old tools to be had. Old tools are always preferred, as they are supposed to have *Power*.

If you cannot get these, you are told to attempt to make your own, and I have seen some very clever work. Women are usually helped with making their tools if they have no family ones, but some of them are very clever work-women also.

The tools may be of the simplest construction, but actually, as they are used for a religious purpose, they try to make them as nice as possible.

Of course, the average witch does not have a full battery of tools; not all have the sword, for instance. An Athame (witch's knife), a censer, some cord and one or two other tools are quite enough to work with. For initiations the whole battery of tools has, of course, to be present; but these usually belong to the coven.

Witches use incense in quantities. Nowadays they usually buy this at the nearest church stores, but some compound their own. They are very secretive about this, and I think they put some strong stuff in it; at least I have known people [to] behave rather queerly after it has been burned in a confined space, though it has never had any effect on me--or at least none that I noticed. During the Second World War they had to do without anointing; but nowadays one or two have managed to get small amounts.¹⁵¹

Bracelet, Garter and Necklace

The only distinct mark I know of is that ladies of a certain grade are entitled to wear a bracelet with their name and grade sign engraved on it, and as the uninitiated would not recognize these, they are often worn in public. Another witch would of course recognize them, even at a distance. There is also a higher order, the witch's garter; but this is never worn so that it can be seen in public.

I have mentioned a necklace, but this can be of any sort as long as it is fairly conspicuous. They have no story of its origin or meaning; it is merely the custom. Myself, I think there must be some story to the effect that the goddess always wore a necklace; I believe that Astarte always wore one and was known as the Goddess of the Necklace, being otherwise "sky-clad", as they say in India. I have known one or two witches who wear talismans on their necklaces, but these were mainly astrological, being made for the owner only, and they bear no witch signs, so that I am inclined to think that the necklace itself is the important thing.

[Original footnote: Diana of Ephesus wore a necklace of acorns; many Celtic goddess are mentioned as wearing them. At witch meetings every woman must wear one. When the ritual objects are being set out for a meeting, a number of strings of beads are put handy, so that if any witch hasn't brought a necklace, she promptly borrows one for the occasion. I remember one girl coming wearing a small string of pearls being told: "You know, dear, you mustn't do that; get a proper one from the box, one that can be seen." They cannot give me any other reason than that a witch must wear a necklace that is obvious.]

Necklaces were important things both to Celt and Saxon. Some important priestess must have set the fashion. Thank goodness we are not plagued with people in the cult who are continually changing the fashions. Monsieur Dior would not find any customers for his *New Look*. We are very contented with the *Old Look*.¹⁵²

The European witch laid great stress on cleanliness and purity. Women witches in Europe lay great stress on necklaces. It is not merely the religious legend which is preserved but also the rite, the conditioning and the effect that it produces.¹⁵³

The Witches Garter

The garter is part of the witches' insignia.¹⁵⁴

Some authors confound the cord with the "Witches Garter". This is a badge of rank which is seldom used nowadays as far as my experience goes, but a number possess them and occasionally wear them. The garter was occasionally employed in the old days as a sign of recognition. It would not be much use nowadays when, if anyone wanted to pretend to be a witch, it is the first thing they would think of.¹⁵⁵

I have seen two witch garters; they are of green snakeskin with gold or silver gilt buckles and were backed with blue silk. They were worn above the left knee. They are badges of rank.

In this connection, can anyone tell me exactly what is the meaning of the double SS on the collar of the Garter? It is sometimes said to mean the Virgin, sometimes the Holy Ghost (*Sanctus Spiritus*). The Order is dedicated to the Virgin, certainly, but I do not see how it can refer to her. Nor does it seem to be dedicated to the Holy Ghost. My reason for asking is that on all Athama and many other witch tools I have seen--and I have seen many besides those in my own private collection--there are a number of signs carved. These are always the same and in the same order and have the same meanings. It is necessary to have these signs put on before they are consecrated. (In the burning times they would write them in ink and wash them off after consecration.) The third sign is SS: that is, two S's as used on the collar of the Garter. Witches have their own interpretation of this sign (and it is not the Virgin or the Holy Ghost).¹⁵⁶

The Cord

The Chronicle of St. Denis states very emphatically: "In their girdles was their mahommerie." It has been said that this meant that they were secretly Mohammedans; but to charge them with embracing Mohammedanism would have been the most damning charge, and it was never even hinted at. In those times a Mammoth was used to denote a doll or an idol and Mahommerie would mean "having to do with idols". They were said to have used these cords to bind the skull or head which they worshipped. To a witch this binding of the skull could have a meaning.¹⁵⁷

Now all this [the great value that the Templars were said to have for their cords] might apply to the consecrated cord which witches possess and use in many ways. All those I have seen are coloured, usually red, though I have known other colours used. They value them as they do all their working tools and naturally would be most annoyed if anyone removed (stole) any of them.

I am forbidden to tell of the uses a witch makes of her cord, and I doubt whether the Church knew, or they might have mentioned it at the trials. Or perhaps they did know and did not wish this knowledge to be made public.¹⁵⁸

Anointing

I have never known witches to anoint themselves all over, but I have been shown a recipe for an anointing oil. This consisted of vervain, or mint crushed and steeped in olive oil or lard, left overnight, then squeezed through a cloth to remove the leaves. Fresh leaves were then added and the squeezing repeated three or four times until it was strongly scented and ready for use. It is said that if they lived in the country where they could not be seen, they would strip and rub the oil into their skin and go to the sabbat naked. This would keep them warm enough until they reached the dance. At times they would mix soot with the oil so as not to be seen at night.

One of the charges against witches was that they went invisible by night, and, it may be noted, vervain was at one time thought to confer invisibility. They have a very powerful scented oil, which nowadays they speak of as anointing oil. This is only used by the ladies, who dab it on their shoulders, behind the ears, etc., much as ordinary perfume. When they are heated with dancing, this gives off very strong fumes, and most certainly produces a very curious effect.

What it is made of is kept a great secret; they had to do without it during the war and for some time afterwards, but supplies are coming forward again. They went naked to the meetings because if they were raided they might not have time to dress and so would leave incriminating clothing behind. Another thing was that they found that the soldiers would usually let a naked girl go, but would take a clothed one prisoner. The slippery oiled bodies also made them hard to catch hold of. In winter they managed to get some sheltered place, a cave or a ruin, for their meetings where they could light fires and be warm.

They would wear clothes going and coming to and from these places. The local "quest", inquiring into abnormal happenings, could be trusted to stay at home in winter. They also tell me that in most villages the witches arranged that the first and last house was occupied by a member of the cult, and any strange witch, travelling or "on the run", could go where she would be sure of help and protection. In the villages the members of the cult went clothed to this house and were anointed there. The occupiers of the house never attended the sabbat, but as soon as the last witch had left made some excuse to be seen by as many people as possible in the village, so that if it became known that a sabbat had been held in the neighbourhood they themselves would be above suspicion.¹⁵⁹

After I had written this I received a letter dated September 19, 1952, telling me of a meeting held in a wood in the south of England about two months before, in the traditional nude (luckily the weather was warm). They cast the circle with the Athame, did the fertility dances on broomsticks, performed the proper seasonal as well as other rites, and had some of the old dances. The letter also mentioned three indoor meetings in the last few months where everything had been done very satisfactorily and spells performed which worked!¹⁶⁰

"After this came two priests to the cross, and the first ordered Sir Pereeval to withdraw from the cross"; and when he had done so, "the priest kneeleth before the cross and adoreth it, and boweth down and kisseth it more than a score of times and manifesteth the most joy in the world. And the other priest cometh after and bringeth a great rod and setteth the first priest aside by force, and beateth the cross with the rod in every part and weepeth right passing sore.

Pereeval beholdeth him with great wonderment, and sayeth to him, 'Sir, herein seem you to be no priest. Wherefore do you do so great a shame?' 'Sir,' sayeth the priest, 'it nought concerneth you of whatsoever we may do, nor nought shall you know thereof for us.' Had he not been a priest, Pereeval would have been right wroth with him, but he had no will

to do him any hurt. Therewithall he departed...." [Original footnote: " Dr. Sebastian Evans, The High History of the Holy Grail, pp. 89, 191."]

Later the King Hermit explains that both priests love Christ equally, and that he who beat the cross did do because it had been the instrument of bitter pain and anguish to Our Lord. Can this explanation have been inserted to explain and justify a ceremony of kissing and beating, or of defiling the cross, such as it was alleged that the Templars performed?

The High History was written about 1220; it seems to show that the then ceremony was old and had a legitimate explanation in the eyes of those who took part in it. The writer was probably a Templar priest or someone who knew and approved of their practices, and possibly wished to explain away any rumours which had been spread.

It has occurred to me the witches have a rite which involves kissing and then beating an object, with the intention of charging it with power. It is not a cross and they do not speak or think of it as a cross; but on reading this account it struck me that an observer at a little distance might easily mistake it for one. It is rather cross-shaped. If the Templars used the old magic, they would be most likely to perform this rite, and rumours might spread about.¹⁶¹

Kat and Herbs

I am told that in the olden days witches had knowledge of a herb called Kat which, when mixed with incense, would release the inner eye, the subconscious, but unless another herb, Sumach, was mixed with it, it could not be used for long as it would produce hallucinations. If you used both correctly, it was possible to leave the body. Unfortunately they do not know what these herbs were; but both were said to grow in England. It is said that if a man breathes incense with Kat in it, then woman becomes more beautiful, so it is possible that it contained wild hemp.

Sorcerers used something for the same purpose and their mixture contained hemp and many other ingredients to tone it down. Many primitive races use drugs to obtain elevation of the spirits, Coca in South America, Peyotil in Mexico and many other substances. They have a varying effect on the nervous system, bring about what might be the opening of the inner eye or perhaps hallucinations. Alcohol has the effect of increasing precognition, as the Society for Psychical Research records prove.¹⁶²

Other

What does a witch get out of witchcraft? For one thing, she has the satisfaction of knowing that she is serving an ancient creed which she believes to be true. Nowadays, many people have only the simple pleasure of being themselves and following these things in which they are interested, among friends who understand them. To some there is the fun of belonging to a sort of secret society. This is a harmless type of amusement,

realised by many organisations, such as that of Freemasonry.

But in witchcraft there may be more. If you have any power, you are among people who will teach you how to use it. As one witch said to a reporter, "What do I get out of it I get a life that holds infinite possibilities, and is entirely satisfying to me on all planes of consciousness. I have power to move into other dimensions and realms of being. I have communication with entities of different life forms, and by the development of new and magic gifts within myself I have certain powers of extra-sensory perception. I have knowledge, and the ability to bring about anything I really want in my own life. I experience forms of pleasures whose very existence is unknown to the majority of people. I have conquered fear. I have learned of the ordered pattern behind apparently unrelated things. "

Another woman, a convert to witchcraft, told me, "When I was a little girl I used to be terrified of the dark and of being alone, because I often had the sensation of unseen presences around me. We were never encouraged to try to understand the spirit world. 'Spirits' were either banned altogether as a subject of conversation, or regarded with terror as evil. Since I have studied these things, however, I have lost this fear. Now I understand that just because an entity is not incarnate in flesh it is not necessarily evil but that spirits are just like human beings in this respect; some are desirable companions and some are not. I know now how to deal with the 'undesirables', so I no longer dread them. This is one of the things that witchcraft has done for me."¹⁶³

Witchcraft in Britain "They (the witches) are sincere in a satanic belief that theirs is the ancient religion of Britain; they claim it is older than, and superior to, Christianity. "That paragraph appeared in a series of articles on witchcraft printed by a Sunday newspaper. It is perfectly true. I am a witch, and that is what I believe. The only word I would disagree with is the word "satanic". Whether or not my religion is superior to Christianity is a matter of opinion, but that it is much older is a matter of fact, as eminent anthropologists will tell you.

So why do people persist in accusing me of worshipping the Devil? The idea of the Devil is something belonging to Christianity; the scapegoat which men have invented to excuse their own follies and crimes. I don't believe in the Devil, so how could I worship him? Whom, then, do the witches really worship. They worship the ancient Gods of this land of Britain, whose tradition is rooted deep in British soil. The Old Gods are not dead, as I know by experience.

During the last war a witch coven invoked the Old Gods to protect this land from Hitler's threatened invasion, even as their forefathers had done against Napoleon and, earlier still, against the Spanish Armada - or so the tale is handed down to us. I have seen them invoked for many purposes and have invoked them myself; but I have never seen them invoked for a bad purpose. And these purposes have been so often achieved that to call it coincidence, as many will, would, if they knew all the details, require a greater effort of credulity than to believe that there's something in it.

You want to know how these ceremonies are performed? Well, I can tell you this, that they are not performed with ridiculous obscenities so often attributed to them. How many witches are there in Britain? Very few genuine ones, and most of these come from witch families in which the tradition has been handed down. We believe in reincarnation and that those who in former lives have belonged to us will be drawn back into the cult. We have no need to "dupe" or "snare" anyone into witchcraft. Our own will come to us. We know when people want to join us whether they belong or not. Sensation-seekers hoping for foul and erotic rites please note - we don't want you!

Out in the wilds, as far as we can get from so-called civilisation, we gather to celebrate our rites. Perhaps around an old time-worn stone circle, or upon a hill-top, or in the depths of a forest. There- not in luxury flats, as has been described, we feel close to the unseen powers of the universe; we can sing the old song in a lost language, dance the old dances, and do other things of which I may not tell you (though they are neither evil nor obscene.) And the Old Gods come. I have been possessed by the Goddess of the witches; it felt as if I were being burned with cold, white fire. Another girl I know has had the same experience and her face changed so that she looked like another person.

I have had the experience, too, of going out of my body and visiting a person at a distance of hundreds of miles; I was able to identify later, in the flesh, the things I had seen in this "astral" visit. (Incidentally, it is this power which gave rise to the old idea of witches flying through the air!) And I have seen in the course of a ceremony the power rising from the body of the high priest like thin, feathery spirals of smoke.

I have seen spirits, too, who have come to join in the rite; but they have been spirits of men and women - not demons - and I have felt that they came as friends. One of our rites consists of calling upon the Lord of the Gates of Death to permit our friends, who have passed into His realm, to return for a while to speak with us. If I say that they have returned, and that I have spoken to them and they have answered me, you may not believe me; but it is the truth, and I know others who have had the same experience.

Do you really think that if witchcraft was merely a tissue of obscenities and absurdities, or a mocking of the Christian religion, that it would have lasted from generation to generation, from century to century? Why then, if witchcraft is not evil, is the Church opposed to us? My answer is, because they are afraid of us. They know that in centuries of persecution they have not succeeded in stamping us out; nor will they ever do so, and they know, too, that they have lost their hold on the people, who have become dissatisfied with Church dogmas. Hence they fear us, as they have always feared us - as a rival. One day, I believe, the people of the world will turn back from the road of scientific, orthodox civilisation which has proved so stony and return to the live and religion of nature.¹⁶⁴

Another said: "We ever pick out those who have a little inherent power and teach them, and they practice one with the other and they develop these powers. We only seek to live quietly and worship our gods in our own way and enjoy ourselves in our own fashion and be content and at peace. The art only comes by developing your own power, and not by a stroke of a magic wand. It is a strange mystical experience. You feel a different person,

as if much dross were sloughed off. There is some strange mystery of worship, delicate as a dream. It is as if I were in a trance during the rites; I can scarcely remember what happened; something seems to brush against my soul and I ever think of it with excitement - the old secrets of joy and terror quicken my blood."

Remember this: you will never advance if your blood is not stirred and quickened, for truly "the Blood is the Life". The fact is that the rites do affect many, if not all, of the people in a curious way, and they usually feel very much better after performing them. This is not merely suggestion, as initiates who know nothing about it feel just the same.¹⁶⁵

First I must make it clear--I am a humble member of a coven. I am not its head or leader in any way, and I have to do what I am told.¹⁶⁶

Witchcraft was, and is, not a cult for everybody. Unless you have an attraction towards the occult, a sense of wonder, a feeling that you can slip for a few minutes out of this world into the other world of faery, it is of no use to you. By it you can obtain peace, the soothing of jangled nerves and many other benefits, just from the companionship, but to obtain the more fundamental effects you must attempt to develop any occult power you may have. But it is no use trying to develop these powers unless you have time and a suitable partner, and it is no place to take your maiden aunt, even if she is romantic, for witches, being realists, have few inhibitions and if they want to produce certain effects they do so in the most simple way.¹⁶⁷

After I had written this I received a letter dated September 19, 1952, telling me of a meeting held in a wood in the south of England about two months before, in the traditional nude (luckily the weather was warm). They cast the circle with the Athame, did the fertility dances on broomsticks, performed the proper seasonal as well as other rites, and had some of the old dances. The letter also mentioned three indoor meetings in the last few months where everything had been done very satisfactorily and spells performed which worked!¹⁶⁸

Witches are consummate leg-pullers; they are taught it as part of their stock-in-trade.¹⁶⁹

The late Aleister Crowley taught his disciples to bleat, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." Too late they found that this meant in practice, "Do what Aleister Crowley wills shall be the whole of the law."¹⁷⁰

Gardner has a charter issued by Crowley, authorizing him to perform the Rites of the O.T.O., though he has never done so... "I had neither the money, energy nor time".

The attack-and-defence movements between witches and Press were not, however, the major part of the activities which were going on. In the middle of the publicity period, a fresh figure eased his way into the picture. This was a self-styled witch, who claimed to have inherited certain witch relics, and who wanted to gain control of the Museum. Why and how this idea should have seized him - for he had no knowledge of the kind of witch-

rites that were carried on by the Wica - is uncertain.¹⁷¹

Voodoo drums, free drinks and song and dance raced through the thrilling phrases of the newspapers, giving some sort of an echo of Voodoo, but nothing about witchcraft.¹⁷²

Regarding another sensationalist newspaper article: What has "Egyptian blood" got to do with a position of authority in a British coven? Are we to deduce from this that the Egyptians are witches? They were all Mohammedans and Copts when I was out there. But coloured blood is considered preferable for the High Priestess of a Voodoo society. American and West Indian negroes believe all magic came from Egypt, so a person who was half-Egyptian would have some magical authority among them. In this way only could be explained her extraordinary statement that she was made the High Priestess on her initiation. By no means do I wish to appear to defend the practices she has described. On the contrary, I think them thoroughly undesirable, stupid and nasty; but to say that they are "witchcraft" and that the people who carry them on are "witches" organised into "witch covens", is ridiculous and untrue.¹⁷³

There were several private armies in existence at the time (1930), and in his search for a freer, more venturesome life, Gardner joined one of them; for he always felt at home with weapons, as if some sort of inherited memory told him that this was a part of his true self. He joined the Legion of Frontiersmen. The members were mostly Colonials, seasoned men, wily in bush or desert and always carried guns. This precursor of the Commandos was formed to give instruction in fighting in rough country. This was a time of reaction against the lack of British preparedness which had been revealed so dramatically in the Boer War, when hardly any of the willing citizens who volunteered in such numbers had so much as seen a rifle.

This Legion and similar movements were to prove most successful in the struggle against the Germans, eight or nine years later. Gardner was able to study fighting methods which he carried back to Ceylon, where he was a member of the Planter's Rifle Corps.¹⁷⁴

1938 - The only place in England where he [Gardner] had friends was the region of the New Forest, and he managed to get a house there, where wife and collection were duly installed. It was the end of the year; the naturist club which he had joined was closed for the winter, and he was thrown upon his own resources. On one of his long cycle rambles, Gardner came across a curious building in Christchurch. Cut in the stone the legend said: THE FIRST ROSICRUCIAN THEATRE IN ENGLAND. Later he was to find out what this meant. This was the discovery which led to his recruitment into the cult of the witches.¹⁷⁵

Now, at the meetings [at the First Rosicrucian Theatre], Gardner had noticed a group of people apart from the rest. They seemed rather brow-beaten by the others, kept themselves to themselves. They were the most interesting element, however. Unlike many of the others, they had to earn their livings, were cheerful and optimistic and had a real interest in the occult. They had carefully read many books on the subject: Unlike the general mass, who were supposed to have read all but seemed to know nothing.

Gardner always felt at home with them, was invited to their houses, and had many talks with them. The day came when one said:

"I have seen you before". Gardner, interested, asked where. "In a former life". Then all gathered around and agreed that it was so. What made it all remarkable to Gardner was that one of the number proceeded to describe a scene "exactly like one which I had written in *A Goddess Arrives*, which in fact came out the following week".

Then someone said, "You belonged to us in the past - why don't you come back to us?"

"Now I was really very fond of them, and I knew that they had all sorts of magical beliefs" continues Gardner. "They had been very interested when I told them that an ancestress of mine had been burned alive as a witch at Newborough in Scotland about 1640; although I did not mention Grandfather. And I would have gone through hell and high water even then for any of them".

He felt sure that they had some secret, there must be something which allowed them to take the slights at the theatre without really caring. He still thought that they might be mooting Yoga, or something of that nature. He asked them why they were in this community, and whether they believed what Aurelius had to offer. They explained that they had been co-masons, and had followed Mabs (Mrs. Scott) when she had moved to this place; and added that they enjoyed the companionship.

Gardner felt delighted that he was to be let into their secret. Thus it was that, a few days after the war had started, he was taken to a big house in the neighbourhood. This belonged to "Old Dorothy" - a lady of note in the district, "county" and very well-to-do. She invariably wore a pearl necklace, worth some 5,000 pounds at the time.

It was in this house that he was initiated into witchcraft. He was very amused at first, when he was stripped naked and brought into a place "properly prepared" to undergo his initiation.

It was halfway through when the word Wicca was first mentioned: "and I then knew that that which I had thought burnt out hundreds of years ago still survived".

His first feeling about this was: "How wonderful; to think that these things still survive", his interest as a folklorist stirred. Until then his opinion of witchcraft had been based upon the idea that witches killed for the purpose of gaining or raising power, and he had thought the persecutions of them fully justified. He found that his friends, after following Mabs to her settlement, had discovered an old Coven, and remained here because of that. "I found that Old Dorothy and some like her, plus a number of New Forest people, had kept the light shining. It was, I think, the most wonderful night of my life. In true witch fashion, we had a dance afterwards, and kept it up until dawn".

For the first time he realised that witch-power came from within the body of the believer. He felt that all this should be generally known, and that if he could make his new

knowledge available to all, objections to the cult would die down. But his request to be allowed to write about it all was turned down. No one was ever to know anything. The embargo was not lifted - and then only partially - until Dorothy died.

What was the truth about the religion of witchcraft? The documents published by historical research workers and the information since made available by Gardner covering the last thousand years, show quite clearly that no one, but several pagan religions survived the imposition of Christianity upon Europe. Others may have arisen, or could have developed along their own lines. In the earlier writings and in ecclesiastic laws these beliefs are acknowledged to be religious sects or cults - heretical, and pagan perhaps, but religions nonetheless. It was a much later development in inquisitorial thinking which lumped them all together as one, diabolical conspiracy against the church.

The fertility cult represented by the group in which Gardner had now been enrolled is one of these religions, claims to be the oldest, is called by its members the Wica. These, then, are the witches of today.¹⁷⁶

Forward to High Magic's Aid by Patricia Crowther

When it was first published in 1949, 'High Magic's Aid' was one of the most important books on magic and witchcraft to have been written. An exciting atmospheric novel set in 12th century England, its author, Gerald B. Gardner, has encapsulated fascinating magical rituals which draw the reader into the scenes, as though actually experiencing them.

It was written before the repeal of the Witchcraft Act, in 1951, when books biased in favour of these subjects were more or less taboo. Moreover, the author later declared himself to be a witch, and an initiated member of the New Forest coven! He had also included witchcraft rituals in the book, never before published.

The magical novel also heralded what was to become the Renaissance of the Old Religion, in the years that followed publication.

Now, when Gerald Gardner mentioned his thoughts for this book to his High Priestess, Dorothy St. Quintin Fordham, known to her friends as 'Old Dorothy', she was against the whole idea and was quite adamant about it. Any publicity, she said, would bring a renewal of the persecution's - in some form. And that, for the time being, was that!

But, having been a close friend of Gerald's, I knew he could be very persuasive and convincing in his ideas. He often mentioned the affair, and said he had not wanted to see the Craft die out. An how were people to become interested in it, if they did not know it still existed?

As Jack Bracelin says in his biography, 'Gerald Gardner - Witch' "it was to be another seven years, however, before his fellow-witches would allow him to reveal any of their ideas - even their very existence to the world at large." Bracelin is referring to a period

between 1939, (when Gerald was initiated into the Craft), and 1946, when he finally obtained that long sought permission.

Gradually, in the manner that water will wear away a stone, Gardner kept putting forward his plans to 'Old Dorothy'. He explained his fears, that without new blood the Craft was doomed to extinction. And what about the Old Gods? How could They return without recognition? And so it went on.

There is no doubt that his revolutionary enthusiasm in the are of publishing, denied him knowledge of the inner rites of the Craft. The door was now firmly closed in That direction.

Then, finally, in 1946, his High Priestess relented, in as much as any information on the Craft must be written purely as fiction.

It had been said that only the words spoken by Morven, this book's heroine, are to be understood as truly authentic. This is interesting in view of what Gerald said when he presented me with a copy of 'High Magic's Aid' in 1960, "Darling, take notice of Morven's words, they will teach you much."

Then, too, Gerald himself, says at the end of his Introduction to this book, under "Note" – "The Magical Rituals are authentic, partly from the "Key of Solomon" (MacGregor Mather's translation) and partly from Magical MSS in my possession (my emphasis)

And now, in 1992, forty-three years after this novel was written – $4 + 3 = 7$ the number of Saturn, the Lord of Time; a letter has come to light in America. It is a handwritten letter from Gerald Gardner, to a Mr. Gordon B... and contains these relevant passages. "Actually, I wanted to write about a witch and what she'd told me, and she wouldn't let me tell anything about witchcraft, but I said why not let me write from the Witch's point of view. You are always persecuted and abused... So she said I might if I didn't give any Witch's magic, and it must only be as fiction. So, as I had to give some magic, I simply copied it from Jewish Ritual Magic, chiefly "The Key of Solomon the King". It was thought that King Solomon could command the spirits and make them work for him. And if you know these words and sigils you could do the same. This Key is usually in Latin or Hebrew, but there is an English translation by MacGregor Mathers. But personally I don't believe that it works. It's all very difficult and complicated..."

So, in the end, (or the beginning) Gerald has confounded Time and substantiated his own words and actions from across the gulf of the years. We should not be Too astonished at such an occurrence. Followers of esoteric paths often encounter the unexpected in their pursuit of Truth. On the other hand, it is good to be jogged out of our complacency now and again. As we are taught in the Mysteries – there is nothing, except our own doubts, that can inhibit magic's aid – high or otherwise.

Finally, we must remember that thousands of men and women owe their introduction to the Old Religion through the work of an Elder of the Craft – Gerald Brosseau Gardner.

With that in mind, thanks are due to the publisher, Keith Morgan, of Pentacle Enterprises, for making this book available again, to a whole new generation.

Patricia C. Crowther¹⁷⁷

As early as 1939, Gardner had established his interest in witchcraft in a scholarly sense... It was to be another seven years, however, before his fellow-witches would allow him to reveal any of their ideas - even their very existence - to the world at large.

He wrote it in the form of fiction - a novel called *High Magic's Aid*, and only the words used by the witch who is its heroine were claimed to be truly authentic. It appeared three years later - in 1949.¹⁷⁸

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Notes

¹ Gardner1 18

² Gardner2 10-11

³ Gardner2 13-14

⁴ Gardner1 102

⁵ Gardner2 9

⁶ Gardner2 21

⁷ Gardner2 44

⁸ Gardner1 122

⁹ Gardner1 51

¹⁰ Gardner1 28-29

¹¹ Gardner2 126

¹² Gardner1 69

¹³ Gardner1 42

¹⁴ Gardner1 21

¹⁵ Gardner1 33

¹⁶ Gardner2 118

¹⁷ Gardner2 120

¹⁸ Gardner1 24

¹⁹ GGW 199

²⁰ Gardner2 260-261

²¹ Gardner2 165-166

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²⁸ Gardner2 121-122

²⁹ Gardner2 44

³⁰ Gardner2 187

³¹ Gardner1 19

³² Gardner2 25-26

³³ GGW 201

³⁴ GGW 192

³⁵ Gardner2 16

³⁶ Gardner2 13

³⁷ Gardner1 23

³⁸ Gardner2 19

³⁹ Gardner2 46

⁴⁰ Gardner1 130

⁴¹ Gardner2 20-21

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