

## 1 'Ding! Dong! The Witch is Dead'

From the outset writing witchcraft history was about making witchcraft *history*. When scholars during the early eighteenth century began to reflect on the history of the European witch-hunt they did so with the explicit aim of banishing witchcraft to the past. The historicizing practices of these sceptics have generally been overlooked, but they are the inevitable companion of the other, better-known strategy of presenting witchcraft beliefs solely as the preserve of the credulous multitude.<sup>1</sup> These two strategies come together in a work often regarded as the first history of the witch-hunt, at least for England: Francis Hutchinson's 1718 *An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft*.<sup>2</sup> The sceptical minister of Bury St Edmunds and 'a Whig on his way up' denounced 'the credulous Multitude . . . ever . . . ready to try their Tricks and swim the old Women', while also marking the time since England's last witchcraft execution – 'thirty five Years last past' – and the nation's reputation as 'the first in these latter Ages that clear'd it self of such Superstitions'.<sup>3</sup> Two centuries later Hutchinson's victory appeared so decisive that Wallace Notestein felt comfortable ending his own 1911 study of witchcraft in England with the publication of this 'final and deadly blow at the dying superstition'.<sup>4</sup> The end of witchcraft was history's triumph, or so it seemed. (Figure 1 offers a striking contemporary illustration of the sceptics' heroic self-regard.)

This attitude has endured for a surprisingly long time. In his 1997 study Ian Bostridge still considered Hutchinson's reply to be 'the last word in the witchcraft debate, a masterpiece of humane rationalism'.<sup>5</sup> Yet Bostridge also recovers Hutchinson's anxieties about the timing of the work's publication and its possible reception, and he points out the artificiality of the main argument: the

<sup>1</sup> On this 'historicizing' point, see my review of Hunter, *The Decline of Magic*, and the author's response: Machielsen, 'Review of "The Decline of Magic"'.  
<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Gaskill, 'The Pursuit of Reality', p. 1069. Gaskill presents Christian Thomasius's 1701 *De crimine magiae* as the 'first history of witchcraft' but there is nothing overtly historical about that treatise. A 1712 law dissertation written by Thomasius and defended by one of his students does take a historical perspective: Thomasius, *Disputatio iuris canonici de origine ac progressu processus inquisitorii contra sagas*. Its aim was to prove that the demonic pact was not more than 600 years old. The claim overlooks the use of the past by authors defending the reality of witchcraft. Hutchinson was responding to Richard Boulton's 1715 *A Compleat History of Magick, Sorcery, and Witchcraft*. The question as to when Europeans began to see the past as a different country is a contentious one. For instance, Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, p. 4, dates this moment to 'the late eighteenth century', while Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past*, points to Renaissance humanism.

<sup>3</sup> Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft*, pp. viii, 49, [xviii]. For this description of Hutchinson, see Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, p. 144.  
<sup>4</sup> Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718*, p. vi.  
<sup>5</sup> Bostridge, *Witchcraft and Its Transformations*, p. 142. The claim that Hutchinson's book was 'in any serious sense' the last word is repeated on p. 153. For Sneddon's refutation of this claim, see Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs*, pp. 123–5.



**Figure 1** Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki, ‘Christian Thomasius Helps an Elderly Witchcraft Suspect out of Her Prison Cell’ (1800). Image Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

1712 trial and conviction of Jane Wenham, which preoccupies a sizeable part of the Whig's treatise, showed that the Witchcraft Act had by no means become a dead letter. (Wenham escaped the noose through a royal pardon.<sup>6</sup>) Both Bostridge and Hutchinson's subsequent biographer, Andrew Sneddon, note Hutchinson's redeployment of age-old sceptical arguments ('old wine ... in the new bottles of the "new science"').<sup>7</sup> Strangely, neither scholar has commented on the *Historical Essay's* historical packaging, evident not only from the title but also from the extended 'Chronological Table' with which it more or less opens.<sup>8</sup> Yet the historical approach aligned well with Hutchinson's moderation. The *Historical Essay* restricted itself to an examination of past cases of fraud, deception, and mental illness, avoiding the radical and complete rejections of the spirit world put forth by Thomas Hobbes, Balthasar Bekker, and Baruch Spinoza. In private, Hutchinson even offered to change his mind about witchcraft, 'if ever experience doth shew the contrary'.<sup>9</sup> Upon closer examination, then, the historian comes across as timid, especially when compared to the universal certainties professed by the philosophers.

From these unheroic beginnings, historians have for generations worked hard to make witchcraft a thing of the past, even – or perhaps especially – when they knew that witchcraft beliefs (or other forms of apparent irrationality) still surrounded them. Parallels between witchcraft belief and fascism – 'another delusion, not so different in its effects or in its locale from the early witchcraft persecutions' – circulated widely during World War II and its aftermath.<sup>10</sup> The influential works of Hugh Trevor-Roper and Norman Cohn published during the 1960s and 1970s were still written in the shadow of a war in which both men had served as British military officers.<sup>11</sup> For such authors witchcraft was truly dead and buried – it had to be – but there was always the anxious possibility that it might return from the grave in another, albeit related, guise. Even today, a prominent historical survey remains committed to 'annihilat[ing]' witchcraft belief, while the 'decline of magic' narrative is proving to be nearly as persistent as the beliefs whose death it purports to chart.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> On the Wenham trial and its contemporary reception, see also Guskin, 'The Context of Witchcraft'.

<sup>7</sup> Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs*, p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> The *Essay's* second chapter is entitled 'Chronological Table of some Tryals and Executions of supposed Witches and Conjurers, and Imposters'. As Andrew Sneddon pointed out to me, Hutchinson engaged in a great number of historical projects throughout his life. As a young man, Hutchinson's 'historical studies' were directed by his maternal uncle, the ejected Puritan minister Francis Tallents: Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs*, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs*, p. 122. <sup>10</sup> Guerlac, 'George Lincoln Burr', p. 152.

<sup>11</sup> Trevor-Roper, 'The European Witch-Craze'; Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*.

<sup>12</sup> For a study 'designed' to 'annihilate' fears of witches 'by providing a better understanding of the roots of belief in such a figure and how they developed in a European context', see Hutton, *The*

All that said, the historicizing project has mostly been abandoned. At a time when modernity itself seems in peril, historians have come to reject larger, often sociological frameworks of modernization and disenchantment that underpin the very essence of the ‘early modern’.<sup>13</sup> The past two decades have seen a venerable boom in studies of nineteenth and twentieth-century witchcraft beliefs as well as studies of how modern Wiccans have constructed new histories of their own.<sup>14</sup> Instead of the decline of magic, historians study its transformation in new guises and new contexts. Still, while academic history has moved on, this earlier campaign to make witchcraft a relic of the past has proved surprisingly successful. In our lecture theatres, seminar rooms, and Zoom classes we are reaping a past vision of history that our predecessors sowed. Students continue to arrive with views of witchcraft as inherently irrational, superstitious, false, and therefore *obviously* past tense.

The problems with these popular attitudes are manifold. They drip with condescension and paternalism towards the past. They evince no understanding of or interest in the agency and beliefs of those involved in the witch-hunt (including the victims themselves); they simply prescribe better knowledge as a panacea.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, these views unwittingly adhere to the same dichotomy between axiomatically true and false beliefs that structured the belief system they so ostentatiously scorn – dressed up in the same (originally religious) language of superstition that the demonologists once used themselves.<sup>16</sup> The problem with the past was simply a lack of scientific rationalism. Refuting such facile assertions of reason or irrationality is not the principal focus of this study, however. These observations are simply a by-product of this Element’s central preoccupation: the ways in which witchcraft beliefs have unthinkingly come to be seen as ‘past’, long before they actually were. (If, indeed, they are.) In 2006 the classicist Christopher Mackay chose as the motto for his new translation of the *Malleus maleficarum* the well-known line by L. P. Hartley that ‘the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there’.<sup>17</sup> While frankly uninspired,

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*Witch*, p. 280. For the latest articulation of the decline of magic narrative, see Hunter, *The Decline of Magic*. For the point about magic’s endurance, see William Pooley’s excellent review of the same volume: Pooley, ‘Review of “The Decline of Magic”’.

<sup>13</sup> For modernization, see Walker, ‘Modernization’, esp. pp. 38–9. For a critique of the ‘disenchantment of the world’ theory, see Walsham, ‘The Reformation and “the Disenchantment of the World” Reassessed’.

<sup>14</sup> See especially Waters, *Cursed Britain*, Pooley, ‘Magical Capital’, and the collection of essays included in Davies and De Blécourt (eds.), *Witchcraft Continued*.

<sup>15</sup> On the agency of victims of the witch-hunt, the starting points remain Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil* and Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*; Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*.

<sup>17</sup> Institoris and Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, ed. Christopher S. Mackay.

the choice also reveals how unreflectively *past* witchcraft has become. Metaphorical uses of witchcraft and witch-hunting are instructive. Labelling judicial investigations ‘the greatest witch hunt in American history’ not only lays claim to innocent victimhood, the grievance also seeks to discredit and delegitimize.<sup>18</sup> Even politicians who blatantly contravene societal and political norms know that witch-hunting is fundamentally not us. It is what our ancestors did. Only the Middle Ages are used in a similar way. The news media abound in denunciations of terrorist atrocities and other horrors, even poor mobile phone reception, as ‘medieval’. Both the time period and the witch persecutions are seen as the very essence of past ignorance that can be used to criticize aspects of the enlightened present. These metaphors create a bridge between the past and present that should not exist. It is no wonder that the witch-hunt is so often wrongly seen as a product of the ‘Dark Ages’, rather than the early modern period.<sup>19</sup>

Historians in recent years have shown renewed interest in ‘presentism’: the ways in which the present is anachronistically read into the past and the past is put to use in the present.<sup>20</sup> This study is interested in a form of presentism that at first sight might appear its antithesis: the past as a place of banishment, a Pandora’s box containing Europe’s inner demons, which should remain closed but always risks being opened. Far from its alter ego, this is presentism on steroids – it articulates a relation between past and present which emphasizes difference, distance, and thus moral superiority, though this is always imperilled and cannot be taken for granted. A comprehensive study of the origins of witchcraft’s pastness would be a veritable whistle-stop tour. Beyond the case study to which this Element is devoted, it would pay special attention to the 1691 Salem witch-hunt and examine how, almost from the outset, it became lodged in the American national subconscious.<sup>21</sup> It would most certainly explore the long history of metaphorical witch-hunts and the ways these established a parallel between the past and present. World War II, as already suggested, looms particularly large here, with Nazis in the role of witch-hunters. (In 1945, as part of the tercentenary commemorations of the East Anglia Witch-Hunt, *The Essex Newsman* described Witchfinder General

<sup>18</sup> By one count President Trump tweeted the words ‘Witch Hunt’ more than 300 times: Almond, ‘You Think This Is a Witch Hunt, Mr President?’

<sup>19</sup> For the examples and the parallel with witch-hunting, see Falk, *The Light Ages*, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. Welch, ‘Presentism and the Renaissance and Early Modern Historian’, which notes on p. 247 that for witchcraft historians ‘the past is not the beginning of today but often an unrecognizable alien environment, one where walking and talking with demons was the norm, not the exception’. The classic, recently revised study of presentism is Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*.

<sup>21</sup> Gibson, *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*.

Matthew Hopkins as ‘the Himmler of his time’.<sup>22</sup>) Especially important in this regard is Arthur Miller’s 1953 play *The Crucible* and its attack on McCarthyism.<sup>23</sup> Its enduring influence can be measured by the fact that one recent scholar, in a botched attempt at reactionary revisionism, has called for historians to return to the *play’s* understanding of the Salem witch-hunt: ‘if ever there were an instance of “throwing the baby out with the bathwater”, the post-1960s historians of witchcraft have produced one’.<sup>24</sup>

No study of popular culture could ever be a linear history, however, and a survey would also include those cross-currents that agitate against the witch-hunt’s pastness: for Wiccans and feminists the early modern witch-hunt has been a formative injury, as ‘the burning times’ or a ‘gynocide’, with consequences for the present and future.<sup>25</sup> Indirectly, however, these foundation myths may still contribute to the narrative that interests us here. By doubling down on the *craze* in ‘witch-craze’ and amplifying its scale to that of a genuine Holocaust, even these rival understandings of witchcraft history as not-past contribute to popular views of the witch-hunt as the very essence of the irrational past.<sup>26</sup>

While others were certainly more important in disseminating and popularizing witchcraft’s pastness, the two figures at the centre of this study – Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918) and his student George Lincoln Burr (1857–1938) – were instrumental in its formulation. Indeed, the importance of the two nineteenth-century American historians becomes clearer still if we approach our subject genealogically. Their works mark the first contributions to the history of witchcraft within English-speaking academia – White was the first President of the American Historical Association – and very possibly beyond it. The only work which the two men acknowledged as a precursor to their own, and which devoted a chapter on the witch-hunt, was the *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (1865), by the gentleman scholar William Lecky.<sup>27</sup> While witchcraft prosecutions had

<sup>22</sup> ‘The Witch Hunter’, *Essex Newsman*, 27 February 1945. I owe this reference to my dissertation student, Robert Pearce.

<sup>23</sup> Miller’s own reflections on writing the play are a good starting point: Arthur Miller, ‘Why I Wrote “The Crucible”’.

<sup>24</sup> For this unusual use of Miller’s play, see Fels, *Switching Sides*, p. 127.

<sup>25</sup> For introductions to these alternative histories, see Shuck, ‘The Myth of the Burning Times’. For ‘gynocide’, see Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 198.

<sup>26</sup> On the eighteenth-century origins of the figure of nine million executions and its adoption by pagans, feminists, and even Nazis, see Behringer, ‘Neun Millionen Hexen’.

<sup>27</sup> In September 1907, when Henry Charles Lea announced to Burr his plan to resume work on his history of witchcraft, he could still claim that ‘so far as I am aware, with the exception of Lecky’s brief sketch, there is no work in our language on the subject which has any claim to consideration’: Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, MS Coll. 111: Henry Charles Lea papers, Box 4, Folder 209. Cape May, NJ, 7 September 1907. Unlike White and Burr, however, Lecky never

ended, White and Burr still grappled with the same problem that confronted Hutchinson a century earlier: what to do with a superstitious present that is not yet past? Their solution was to position witchcraft within a wider struggle between scientific investigation and religious dogma. This constitutes a – perhaps *the* – crucial link in the development of modern popular understandings of witchcraft. In this larger – indeed, still ongoing – war between rationalism and superstition, the end of witchcraft prosecutions became a hallmark of the progress already made and proof of an enlightened present. White and Burr were warriors. Their histories cast witchcraft into the past as part of an ongoing war against present-day unreason; that war was by no means won, but witchcraft’s pastness demonstrated that, with enough effort, it inevitably would be.

These wider objectives indicate that White and Burr cannot be confined to the history of witchcraft. Indeed, placing White within the context of witchcraft historiography may come as a revelation to some, yet the case for doing so is compelling. Witchcraft books and manuscripts form a central part of the President White Library, many of them purchased by Burr on White’s behalf in Europe. Cornell University Library, to whom White bequeathed his books, still possesses one of the world’s largest collections of such texts.<sup>28</sup> Yet despite his evident interest in the subject, White himself is principally – perhaps solely – remembered for his contributions to the history of science. His two-volume *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (hereafter *Warfare of Science* or simply *Warfare*, 1896) has rarely, if ever, been out of print since its first publication. Unlike witchcraft historians, historians of science have long waged a campaign against *Warfare*. Considered to be the origin of many of the falsehoods surrounding the history of science,<sup>29</sup> the work ‘is no longer regarded as even a reliable secondary source for historical study’.<sup>30</sup> As such, historians of science have devoted entire volumes to debunking myths propagated by this book.<sup>31</sup> As this suggests, the emphasis has been on refuting rather than understanding White. He acts principally as a straw figure representing the outmoded ‘conflict’ thesis which postulated mutual hostility

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held an academic post. White’s presidential address was published in its proceedings and its text can still be found on the American Historical Association website: White, ‘On Studies in General History and the History of Civilization’. [www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/andrew-dickson-white-\(1884\)](http://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/andrew-dickson-white-(1884)).

<sup>28</sup> The Cornell University Witchcraft Collection contains over 3,000 titles, many of them digitized: ‘The Cornell University Witchcraft Collection’.

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. the comments in Park, ‘That the Medieval Church Prohibited Human Dissection’, p. 43, and Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, p. 172.

<sup>30</sup> Russell, ‘The Conflict of Science and Religion’, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> See Numbers (ed.), *Galileo Goes to Jail!*; Numbers and Kampourakis (eds.), *Newton’s Apple and Other Myths about Science*.

between science and religion.<sup>32</sup> For all its historiographical importance, therefore, the context in which this seminal work was written has been remarkably little studied, as we shall explore further in section 3. Burr's role in the composition of *Warfare of Science* has gone almost entirely unnoticed.<sup>33</sup>

While historians of science have at least taken cognizance of White, students of the early modern witch-hunt have ignored both men.<sup>34</sup> One reason for this lack of attention to the *longue durée* has been the existence of a truncated narrative that roots the origins of witchcraft historiography in the works published by Montague Summers and, especially, Margaret Murray during the 1920s. Although their interpretations could hardly have been more different from each other, both scholars insisted that witchcraft had in some sense been *real*, in a way that White and Burr, as committed 'rationalists', had not.<sup>35</sup> Murray's 1921 *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* argued that early modern Europe's witches had been members of a secret pagan fertility cult. Summers, an ostentatious convert to Catholicism, argued that demon worship was real and continued in other (e.g. Communist) guises up to the present.<sup>36</sup> Burr, still alive to rebut these claims, insisted on witchcraft's pastness: 'Mr Summers is still in the Middle Ages ... writing to bring back the days of the *Malleus Maleficarum*'.<sup>37</sup> Murray was similarly charged with seeking to turn back time. It was 300 years since Friedrich Spee's *Cautio criminalis*,

which did most to convince the world that these confessions ... were but fabrications wrung from them by torture. ... The rational eighteenth century invited yet more thoroughgoing revelations; and now for more than a hundred years Protestant scholars and Catholic, once rivals in credulity, have been disputing instead as to the credit for priority in unmasking the cruel delusion.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For criticism of the 'conflict' thesis, see esp. Brooke, *Science and Religion*, pp. 1–68.

<sup>33</sup> The existence of Glenn C. Altschuler's excellent biography of White could have been a reason, but I have found it very little cited by historians of science. The only previous discussion of Burr's role is Bainton, 'His Life', pp. 48–58.

<sup>34</sup> The best (though brief) discussion of White's and Burr's role in witchcraft historiography remains Estes, 'Incarnations of Evil', pp. 136–8. Fudge, 'Traditions and Trajectories', p. 493, mentions Burr only in passing and gives the wrong years both for his birth and his death; Gaskill, 'The Pursuit of Reality', p. 1069, lists Burr only as 'inspired' by the Cologne archivist Joseph Hansen, although many of Burr's publications predated Hansen's famous 1900 work. Burr is entirely absent from the otherwise comprehensive survey by Christa Tuczay, 'The Nineteenth Century'.

<sup>35</sup> On Murray and Summers, see esp. Wood, 'The Reality of Witch Cults Reasserted'.

<sup>36</sup> See, in particular, Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*.

<sup>37</sup> Burr, 'A Group of Four Books on Witchcraft and Demonology', p. 491. In his autobiography, Summers expressed delight that 'the vulgarians snapped and snarled': Summers, *The Galant Show*, p. 157.

<sup>38</sup> Burr, 'Review of *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*', p. 780.



Burr, in the 1920s, struggled to keep the Pandora's box of the past closed.

When British historians returned to the subject of the early modern witch-hunt in the 1960s, they set their sights on Murray. (It seems that Summers, for all his learning and philological skill, could be ignored as a harmless eccentric.) When, in 1967, Hugh Trevor-Roper published his essay on 'The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', he told his readers that 'the fancies of the late Margaret Murray need not detain us. They were justly, if irritably, dismissed by a *real scholar* as "vapid balderdash"'.<sup>39</sup> Keith Thomas's tone was more restrained in his 1971 *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, though he similarly dismissed Murray's work as 'much overrated'.<sup>40</sup> Murray's lasting influence (also on the modern Wicca movement), her tenacious defence of her own work (Thomas praised a contemporary for his 'dignified reply to her staggeringly ungenerous notices of his work'), and her longevity (she optimistically entitled her 1963 autobiography *My First Hundred Years*) help account for the sharpness of these attitudes.<sup>41</sup> While no one has been able to salvage Murray's working methods, the gendered nature of these criticisms is hard to miss and has been called out.<sup>42</sup> Both Murray and Summers were also easily represented as amateurs, the antithesis of serious historical scholarship.<sup>43</sup> Dichotomies such as these – objective versus subjective, professional versus amateur, masculine versus feminine – sustained this shortened historiographical narrative which represents the 1960s as the dawn of a new era which rescued the subject out of the damaging hands of the dilettantes.<sup>44</sup>

The resulting omission of White and Burr is both unjust – Trevor-Roper's essay drew heavily on Burr's scholarship, as Thomas slyly noted – and a form of poetic justice.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, their elision from the historiographical narrative

<sup>39</sup> Trevor-Roper, 'The European Witch-Craze', p. 107, n. 45. Emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 436, bibliographical note.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 516n; Murray, *My First Hundred Years*. On the reception of Murray's work, see also Simpson, 'Margaret Murray'. Norman Cohn held the recent 'extraordinary proliferation of "witches" covens"' against Murray: Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. 108.

<sup>42</sup> On Murray's working methods, see Oates, *A Coven of Scholars*. For a discussion of criticism of Murray, see Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, p. 63.

<sup>43</sup> Although employed by University College London, Murray was in fact based in the Egyptology department. Even in that career, she was largely an auto-didact (and proud of it): Murray, *My First Hundred Years*, pp. 93–6. In his refutation of Murray, Norman Cohn not only drew attention to her status as an amateur – she 'was not by profession a historian' – but also to her age – she 'was nearly sixty': Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, p. 109.

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, Malcolm Gaskill's representation of Trevor-Roper's essay as 'a watershed in modern scholarship [which] banished the earlier twentieth-century idea that real witches had been targeted': Gaskill, 'The Pursuit of Reality', p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas notes that Trevor-Roper made 'spirited use' of material introduced and partly edited by Burr: Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 435, bibliographical note. Trevor-Roper's enmity towards Thomas was notorious. To a correspondent he admitted he was rash to tackle

accidentally stemmed from the same gendered oppositions that we shall find embedded in their writings. These attitudes were part of the way the two men saw themselves as warriors committed to making witchcraft history. A study of White and Burr's scholarship therefore is also important for three historiographical reasons. First of all, it makes the perhaps mundane but hopefully valuable point that early witchcraft historiography was much more diverse than the focus on the 'eccentrics' allows. Secondly, and consequently, it reveals the extent to which witchcraft historiography, a field typically regarded as shaped more by feminist scholarship, has been forged by scholarly masculinity. As Trevor-Roper's comments about Murray show, White and Burr were not the last historians to fashion their identities out of their own opposition to (feminine) 'unreason'.<sup>46</sup> Finally, while White and particularly Burr's scholarship in their explicit rejection of the 'realism' of witchcraft may feel more 'modern' than Murray's or Summers's, their scholarly personae also produced real blind spots.<sup>47</sup> White and Burr produced an apocalyptic vision of the witch-hunt, of good versus evil, in which the accused themselves – and, by extension, women – barely featured. They banished witchcraft to the past as a way of legitimating their own battles in the present.

In addition to their contribution to popular perceptions of witchcraft, then, White and Burr's work on the early modern witch-hunt has had long-lasting historiographical consequences that later generations have struggled to recognize and overcome. While all history may be contemporary history, the preoccupations and practices of past historians have ways of shaping the views of their successors in ways they do not recognize. The impact of White and Burr's scholarship was not pre-determined, nor did these effects play themselves out solely in gendered terms. For instance, the progress narratives also intersected with White and Burr's high regard for recently unified Germany and its modern research universities which ultimately cast a long shadow on later witchcraft historiography that they could not possibly have foreseen. This study will show that there is real value in taking stock and examining the longer history of our own field. Stripped of its narrative of steady progress, the study of *longue durée* witchcraft historiography can even inform current research questions.

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a topic as vast as the witch-hunt, 'but it will annoy Keith Thomas, which (I suppose) is something': Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 378. Trevor-Roper may also have prevented Thomas from succeeding him as Regius Professor of History at Oxford: *ibid.*, p. 452.

<sup>46</sup> See Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, chap. 3, and, in particular, her especially insightful discussion of historians identifying with male sceptics, pp. 63–5. Trevor-Roper also published an essay on Erasmus and had a portrait of the humanist on his wall: Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, pp. 261–2.

<sup>47</sup> For the concept of the 'scholarly persona', see Daston and Sibum, 'Introduction'; and as applied to the historian: Paul, 'What Is a Scholarly Persona?'