

FILID, FAIRIES AND FAITH
THE EFFECTS OF GAELIC CULTURE, RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND THE
DYNAMICS OF DUAL CONFESSIONALISATION ON THE SUPPRESSION OF
WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS AND WITCH-HUNTS IN EARLY MODERN
IRELAND
1533-1670

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William E. Kramer

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

TITLE: ***FILID, FAIRIES AND FAITH***
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AUTHOR: William E. Kramer

DATE SUBMITTED: May 2010

COMMITTEE CHAIR: Tom Trice, PhD., Master's Program Coordinator

COMMITTEE MEMBER: Paul Hiltbold, PhD., Professor

COMMITTEE MEMBER: Daniel Krieger, PhD., Professor Emeritus

ABSTRACT

***FILID*, FAIRIES AND FAITH**

THE EFFECTS OF GAELIC CULTURE, RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND THE DYNAMICS OF DUAL CONFSSIONALISATION ON THE SUPPRESSION OF WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS AND WITCH-HUNTS IN EARLY MODERN IRELAND 1533 - 1670

William E. Kramer

The European Witch-Hunts reached their peak in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Between 1590 and 1661, approximately 1500 women and men were accused of, and executed for, the crime of witchcraft in Scotland. England suffered the largest witch-hunt in its history during the Civil Wars of the 1640s, which produced the majority of the 500 women and men executed in England for witchcraft. Evidence indicates, however, that only three women were executed in Ireland between 1533 and 1670. Given the presence of both English and Scottish settlers in Ireland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the dramatic discrepancy of these statistics indicate that conditions existed in early modern Ireland that tended to suppress the mechanisms that produced witchcraft accusations and larger scale witch-hunts.

In broad terms those conditions in Ireland were the persistence of Gaelic culture and the ongoing conditions of open, inter-religious conflict. In particular, two artifacts of Gaelic Irish culture had distinct impact upon Irish witchcraft beliefs. The office of the Poet, or *fili* (singular for *filid*), seems to have had a similar impact upon Gaelic culture and society as the shaman has on Siberian witchcraft beliefs. The Gaelic/Celtic Poet was believed to have magical powers, which were actually regulated by the Brehon Law codes of Ireland. The codification of the Poet's harmful magic seems to have eliminated some of the mystique and menace of magic within Gaelic culture. Additionally, the persistent belief in fairies as the source of harmful magic remained untainted by Christianity throughout most of Ireland. Faeries were never successfully demonized in Ireland as they were in Scotland. The Gaelic Irish attributed to fairies most of the misfortunes that were otherwise blamed on witchcraft, including the sudden wasting away and death of children. Faerie faith in Ireland has, in fact, endured into the twentieth century. The ongoing ethno-religious conflict between the Gaelic, Catholic Irish and the Protestant "New English" settlers also undermined the need for witches in Ireland. The enemy, or "other" was always readily identifiable as a member of the opposing religious or ethnic group. The process of dual confessionalisation, as described by Ute Lotz-Huemann, facilitated the entrenchment of Catholic resistance to encroaching Protestantism that both perpetuated the ethno-religious conflict and prevented the penetration of Protestant ideology into Gaelic culture. This second effect is one of the reasons why fairies were never successfully associated with demons in Ireland. Witch-hunts were complex events that were produced and influenced by multiple causative factors. The same is true of those factors that suppressed witchcraft accusations. Enduring Gaelic cultural artifacts and open ethno-religious conflict were not the only factors that suppressed witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts in Ireland; they were, however, the primary factors.

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I would like to thank the members of my Thesis Panel, who were also the three Professors who influenced and inspired me the most during my graduate studies at Cal Poly. Dr. Trice, who introduced me to the process of writing about history and who has continued to guide and encourage me throughout my time in the Master's Program. Dr. Hiltbold, who first introduced me to the European Witch-Hunts and allowed me to deviate from his planned course work in 2008 to write a *very* preliminary Thesis examining the dearth of witch-hunts in early modern Ireland. Very much the same as Dr. Trice, Dr. Hiltbold has continued to push me to excel in my writing and to never settle for simply presenting information. Dr. Krieger, who rekindled my passion for British and European History, who afforded me the liberty to delve into Irish History whenever I was able and whose encouragement and support have been invaluable. All three of these amazing men demonstrated a faith and belief in my abilities that kept me going even when everything else around me seemed to be falling apart. For that, Gentlemen, I will be eternally grateful. I would never have accomplished what I have without the three of you. It is an insufficient expression of my gratitude, but it is all I have at the moment, thank you. Finally, my daughter, Devon, deserves special recognition for having gracefully endured her Dad's attention being focused on researching and writing this Thesis instead of on her and for never doubting that I loved her. I promise, Sweet Pea, it will all be worth it in the end.

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Prologue:

This work began in January 2008, when a novice historian began his first Graduate Seminar at California Polytechnic University. I developed the concept for this thesis while preparing for Dr. Hiltbold's seminar on the Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe. In reading *The Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe*, I noticed that Brian Levack mentioned that there were very few witchcraft trials in Ireland during the same time period that, literally, thousands of women were being tried and executed as Devil -worshipping witches in the German Lands, France, and even Scotland and England. Obviously, I wondered why that was so. Levack's arguments regarding the preconditions and conditions necessary to initiate and sustain a witch-hunt seemed well reasoned and convincingly presented; and after two additional years of research they remain thorough and convincing arguments. Early modern Ireland, then, presented itself as an opportunity to test Levack's conditions with a negative example. In short, which of Levack's preconditions or sustaining conditions were absent in Ireland that thus prevented the machinery of witch-hunts from engaging or running in that country? The answers proved as multi-layered as Levack's arguments regarding the causes of the European witch-hunts.

Along the way, the nature of my argument changed and evolved. While the concept of proving Levack's arguments through a negative example remain at the core of this work, several other objectives developed. Witch-hunts and the concept of witchcraft are complex social phenomena, subject to local variations and interpretations. Once I confirmed that the

ordinary person in Ireland believed in magic, witchcraft and sorcery, I realized that I had to understand the nature of those beliefs within the Irish context. This was problematic because by the sixteenth century there was more than one “Irish context” due to the sporadic and incomplete nature of English colonization efforts in Ireland. Understanding the Protestant English belief system was simple, refer back to the beliefs as manifested in the “home country.” Understanding the Gaelic Irish context was more complicated. It was, in fact the Gaelic context that proved to be the mitigating influence between belief in witchcraft and witch-hunts. Protestant English and Scottish beliefs had, clearly, resulted in large scale witch-hunts in those countries, but not in Ireland. The additional element of an active, entrenched and resistive Gaelic culture seemed to be the point of departure between conditions in Ireland and England and Scotland, as well as the continent.

This focus on culture marks the largest metamorphosis in my development as an historian. When this project began I was a hard and fast adherent to the “state school” of history. Given Levack’s emphasis on the law, judicial machinery and religious doctrine in facilitating and driving witch-hunts, this seemed a logical position to take. The first article on this subject that I published focused entirely on the actions of the state and the competing interests of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in Ireland, the process of “dual confessionalisation,” in suppressing witchcraft accusations. While these factors are important in understanding the conditions in Ireland and provide ample evidence to support Levack’s causative arguments, they are only part of the picture.

Witchcraft accusations and prosecutions in early modern Europe began in local communities. To understand why certain communities did not denounce witches to the

judicial or ecclesiastical authorities required understanding of the values, beliefs and traditions of that community. The more comparative research I conducted, the more convinced I became that artifacts of Gaelic culture and tradition played an important role in suppressing the Gaelic Irish's, and Gaelicized Anglo-Irish descendants of the earlier Anglo-Norman invaders', need to accuse and prosecute witches. I very quickly discovered the value of folklore as expressions of the Gael's beliefs, values and traditions. Folklore provides a ready source of information and evidence of what did and did not frighten the Gaelic Irish about the supernatural world and just who and what inhabited that supernatural world. The state-school historian evolved into a social and cultural historian.

The production of this thesis has been a transformative journey for me as both my arguments and my approach to history have expanded and become increasingly nuanced and complex. What began as a scratch at the surface of readily accessible historic records has become an excavation into historic realms that require deeper analysis through interpretation and extrapolation. While the initial, underlying motives behind this project remain, what I have actually produced is far greater and more encompassing than I originally intended. As with every journey, some things were gained while others were lost along the way. The success of any journey can be measured by balancing the value of those things gained against what was lost. As to whether this journey, then, is a success, all I will say, all I *can* say at this point, is that the journey is not yet over.

William Kramer
Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
29 April 2010

**Introduction:
A Witch in Youghal**

On 11 September 1661, the Cork Assize convened to hear the trial of Florence Newton on the charge of witchcraft. Newton was accused of bewitching Mary Longdon, a servant of John Pyne, a bailiff of Youghal. Longdon testified that she had quarreled with Newton on Christmas day, 1660, when she refused to give Newton a piece of her master's beef. Newton became angry and said, "Thou had'st as good have given it me," before walking away grumbling. Longdon said that about a week later she met Newton who "violently" kissed her on the forehead and asked that the two women be reconciled. A few days after that encounter Longdon saw an apparition of Newton and a small man in silk clothes beside her bed who offered to grant her wishes if she "follow[ed] his advice," but she refused, asserting her faith in the Lord. Within a month, Longdon began to suffer from trances and seizures, during which she vomited pins, horseshoe nails, wool, straw and other foreign objects. Longdon also testified that, prior to the seizures and trances, she was struck by small stones that were thrown from an invisible source and vanished after falling to the floor; testimony that was later corroborated by Pyne, who also saw the stones strike Longdon. When Longdon completed her testimony, Newton peered at her from between the heads of the people standing between her and Longdon. Newton raised her manacled hands, gestured toward Longdon and said, "Now she is down!" Longdon immediately collapsed in a seizure and began biting her own arms and screaming. Newton was seen pinching her

own hands and arms during Longdon's seizure.¹ Could there be any doubt? "Gammar" Newton was a witch; there was a witch in Youghal.

The trial of Florence Newton for witchcraft in 1661 is remarkable for several reasons, most of which will be explored later in the text. Not only is the Newton trial one of the best documented witch trials of Early Modern Ireland, but at the time that it occurred the Newton trial was the first recorded trial in Ireland in forty-six years and the first one in southern Ireland in eighty-seven years. Coming as it did after the end of the Cromwellian Protectorate and the 1660 Restoration of Charles Stuart II to the throne of England, the Newton trial should be viewed in the context of the 1661-2 Scottish witch-hunts. Both Newton and her accuser, Mary Longdon, conformed to some of the general trends presented in the Scottish witch-hunts. Newton was obviously a poor woman who caused discomfort, suspicion and fear in her neighbors, while Longdon accused Newton of witchcraft *after* she had refused an act of charity toward Newton.² However, while the initial accusations and confessions naming accomplice witches resulted in an increasingly wide spread witch panic in Scotland, the threat in Ireland seems to have ended with Newton. Newton even named

1

J. R. O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit; Tales, Trials and Traditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1880), 51-63; John Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., Ltd., 1913), 105-131; and Patrick F. Byrne, *Witchcraft in Ireland* (Cork: Mercer Press, 1967) 28-37; provide the basis for the summary above. Seymour's account is an almost verbatim recreation of the report in Joseph Glanvill, *Sadducismus Triumphatus, or, A Full and Plain Evidence of Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1726), upon which all other accounts of the trial of Florence Newton have been based. O'Flanagan also relies on Glanvill for details of the testimony, but includes additional sources and information beyond Glanvill's account. Byrne appears to have summarized Seymour's, and thus Glanvill's, account of the trial.

2

Brian Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law Politics and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 92. In his study of the Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Scotland, Levack found that the accused witches conformed to the same stereotype as Newton and that accusations were frequently made by persons who, like Longdon, had previously denied the witch some act of charity. The significance of both of these patterns will be discussed in further detail later in the text.

two other women as witches responsible for Longdon's symptoms, but this failed to result in further accusations and trials when Newton recanted after being threatened with a form of judicial torture.

Despite the fact that both the 1661-2 Scottish witch panic and the trial of Florence Newton both followed the political and religious upheaval of the Restoration and contained similar elements, the trial in Ireland is most remarkable for the way in which it deviates from the trend of the contemporaneous Scottish witch-panic. This contrast is, in fact, typical of Ireland which has become notorious for the absence of witch-hunts. The brief comparison with Scotland demonstrates that there were conditions in Ireland that suppressed the tendency toward witchcraft accusations and the resultant witch-hunts present in other European countries, including Scotland and England both of which sustained at least one large scale witch-hunt in the seventeenth century. Perhaps the absence of any other witchcraft trials in Ireland was the reason that the Newton trial, "excited no ordinary interest" and was attended by the Attorney-General for Ireland, William Domville.³ Identification and analysis of the conditions in Ireland that resulted in localized, typically individual, witchcraft prosecutions is as complex and multi-layered as the causative factors that facilitated the witch-hunts of England, Scotland and Continental Europe. There is no single answer to the question, "Why not in Ireland?"

The social, religious, legal and political conditions necessary for the development and prosecution of a witch-hunt have been thoroughly analyzed by Brian Levack, Robin Briggs, Christina Lerner, Alan C. Kors, Edward Peters, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum,

³ O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 52.

and Anne Barstow.⁴ Both Levack and Larner have studied the pattern of witchcraft accusation and witch-hunts in Scotland. Levack presents a thorough, comparative analysis of Scottish and English patterns following the union of the two kingdoms with James I and VI through the restoration of Charles II, while Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts presented historic background of the social and religious conditions in Scotland surrounding the North Berwick witchcraft trials for their collection of James VI's *Demonology* and other historical documents.⁵ Two collections of essays edited by Julian Goodare place the Scottish witch-hunts and witch beliefs within a global historical and cultural context and include some comparisons with conditions and beliefs in early modern Ireland.⁶ James Sharpe has also analyzed the witch-hunts in England and has produced a detailed case study of the social and political conditions surrounding the fraudulent accusations of witchcraft made

4

Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed, (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd., 2006); Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996); Christina Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, eds. *Witchcraft in Europe, 400 -1700: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), this is primarily a collection of documents demonstrating and chronicling the development of witchcraft belief and the criminal definition of witchcraft; Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), while Boyer and Nissenbaum examine the witch-hunt in Salem, MA, their findings have particular application to Ireland and England through the demographic and religious origins of the New England, Puritan settlers; and Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch-hunts* (San Francisco: Pandora, 1995).

5

Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-hunts in Scotland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1981); Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*; and Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter, UK: Exeter University Press, 2000).

6

Julian Goodare, ed. *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); and Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin and Joyce Miller, eds. *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

by Brian Gunter in 1604.⁷

The patterns of witchcraft accusations and trials in Ireland have received significantly less attention. Levack and Barstow mention that Ireland was uniquely spared the worst of the witch-hunts, but neither provides more than a passing notation for this fact. Levack includes certain statistics for the Irish witch trials and executions in his overall analysis, but the lack of historical research or data for Ireland stands in marked contrast to the rest of Europe in general and the other British Isles in particular. Until recently, those works that have addressed witchcraft trials in Ireland specifically were either somewhat outdated, such as Seymour's *Irish Witchcraft* and Byrne's *Witchcraft in Ireland*, or specific to the modern tragedy of Bridget Cleary, who was burned to death in 1894 by family members, who suspected her of being a faerie changeling.⁸ Elwyn Lapoint's 1992 article, "Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting, 1534 -1711," provides one of the more recent analyses of the absence of witch-hunts in Ireland.⁹ Lapoint interprets the absence of witchcraft accusations by the Catholic Irish as a means of passive resistance to Protestant English dominance and Gaelic mistrust of the English legal system. Lapoint, however, fails to explain why those trials that were recorded took place, which leaves his overall analysis

7

James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997) and *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Deception, Witchcraft, Murder and the King of England* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

8

Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* (New York: Viking, 1999) and Joan Hoff and Marian Yeates, *The Cooper's Wife is Missing: The Trials of Bridget Cleary* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). The Cleary incident falls outside of the parameters of this study, which will confine itself to the early modern period, approximately 1530 - 1680 CE.

9

Elwyn Lapoint, "Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting, 1534 -1711," in *Éire - Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 27, no. 2 (1992), 76 -92.

incomplete. Thorough understanding of the conditions in Ireland that suppressed witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts depends upon the analysis of the conditions that facilitated the trials that did occur in comparison with conditions that otherwise usually prevailed.

What is clear is that something was different in Ireland relative to both England and Scotland. Witchcraft accusations and trials in these two kingdoms, Ireland's nearest and most influential neighbors, exhibited regional variances within the typical "Continental" patterns of Europe and both kingdoms sustained at least one large scale witch-hunt in the seventeenth century. The 1586 witchcraft statute and the details of Longdon's bewitchment indicate that the witchcraft belief systems of both England and Scotland had penetrated into Ireland to some extent. This penetration does not seem to have extended beyond the towns, having met with cultural and religious resistance outside of the Protestant controlled regions. While the Gaelic Irish certainly believed in harmful magic and witches, those beliefs were notably different from the belief systems of both Scotland and England. Gaelic Irish witchcraft beliefs, like those of the Gaelic, Highland Scots, were complicated by an enduring belief in fairies and other supernatural entities.¹⁰ While the kirk sessions and presbyteries in Scotland largely succeeded in demonizing fairies and faerie images in Scotland, such demonization does not appear to have occurred in Ireland.¹¹ The legacy of early Irish folklore, culture and law clearly informed the Gaelic Irish concept of witchcraft and

¹⁰

Ronald Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," in *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context*, 31-2; Julian Goodare, "Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context," in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, 32-3; and Lizanne Henderson, "Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*," in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, 101-2.

¹¹

Goodare, "Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context", 44; and Henderson "Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*", 102.

maleficia.

Sixteenth and seventeenth-century Irish society was divided into three demographic groups: the native, Gaelic Irish; the Catholic, Old English, who were the descendants of the previous Anglo-Norman invaders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; and the Protestant, New English, who were composed of Presbyterian Scots and Calvinistic English Protestants. Following the Norman invasion a process of inverted cultural assimilation occurred, whereby the Anglo-Normans assimilated Gaelic cultural influences rather than imposing their culture on the Gaelic Irish. The assimilation of Gaelic culture became so pronounced that the English controlled government passed anti-Gaelic laws, the Statutes of Kilkenny, in 1361 in an effort to prevent the further “Gaelicisation” of the Anglo-Normans. Gaelic culture and folklore, therefore, probably influenced the witchcraft beliefs of the Old English as well. Scottish Presbyterian and English Puritanical concepts of witchcraft do not seem to have penetrated very far beyond the towns, which were predominantly, demographically, Protestant in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Ireland. The cultural and religious resistance that prevented the assimilation of the English and Scottish patterns of witchcraft belief and accusations, also prevented the consolidation of English control over Ireland. In short, the relative absence of witchcraft accusations and trials in Ireland was related to and, to some degree, produced by the failure of both the English Crown and the Commonwealth to impose cultural and religious hegemony over the Irish.

An examination of the cultural, social, legal, religious and political conditions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland is therefore necessary to understand why the potential for witchcraft accusations was suppressed. The gendering of the crime of

witchcraft in Ireland followed a similar pattern to the rest of western Europe. Including only those trials recorded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the ratio of accusations is exactly three women to one man. The ratio of executions is probably more disproportionate with 100% of the women accused being executed while the fate of the only male witch is ambiguous.¹² Women's positions in Irish society were really not so different from those of women in other western European societies, though Irish society was essentially trifurcated into three major societal groups: the Gaelic Irish, the Old English and the New English settlers. Mary O'Dowd has produced a study of the role and status of women in each of these groups, that when combined with the information in Fergus Kelly's analysis of Early Irish law provides a clearer understanding of the function of gender relative to society, the law, and witchcraft and magic.¹³ The dynamics of religious and political conflict in early-modern Ireland have been insightfully documented by Nicholas Canny, Toby Barnard, Patrick Corish and Brendan Fitzpatrick.¹⁴

Additional research into the development of sectarianism and institutional violence

12

These statistics are based on the two Kilkenny witches executed by Lord Justice Drury, Florence Newton, whom, it is widely agreed, was probably executed and Reverend John Aston of Mellifont in 1605, whose fate, despite Seymour's suppositions, is not recorded. Examination of the Aston case in Chapter 8 below casts serious doubt as to the veracity of the charges as well his possible execution for witchcraft. He is therefore presumed to have survived his "trial" at this point in my research.

13

Mary O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland, 1500 - 1800* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005); and Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988).

14

Nicholas Canny, "Religion, Politics and the Irish Rising of 1641," in Judith Devlin and Ronan Fanning, eds., *Religion and Rebellion: Papers Read Before the 22nd Irish Conference of Historians Held at University College Dublin, 18-22 May 1995* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1997); Toby Barnard, *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641 - 1770* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004); Patrick Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience: A Historical Survey* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 1986); Brendan Fitzpatrick, *Seventeenth-Century Ireland: The War of Religions* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1989).

in early-modern Ireland by several historians has been conveniently published in two volumes of collected essays.¹⁵ Ute Lotz-Heumann applied the paradigm of confessionalisation to Ireland in an effort to develop a more precise model of periodization and to identify the competing forces of “dual confessionalisation” in Ireland.¹⁶ The confessionalisation paradigm, developed by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling, expands the concept of “confession building,” the establishment of religions requiring “confessions of faith,” into the process of early modern state formation.¹⁷ I recently explored the historical progression and effects of the development of double and competing confessionalisation in Ireland on the process of witchcraft accusations and trials.¹⁸ Crawford Gribben’s analysis of the internal, theological fragmentation of the Protestants in Ireland during the 1650s both complicates and reinforces the divisions between the Catholic Irish

15

Alan Ford and John McCafferty, *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), includes Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalisation in Ireland: Periodization and Character,” which applies the “Confessionalisation paradigm” to Ireland and demonstrates the conflicting and competing dual Protestant confessionalisation from above and Catholic confessionalisation from below; and David Edwards, Padraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait, eds., *Age of Atrocity* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

16

Ute Lotz-Heumann, *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung in Irland: Konflikt and Koexistenz im 16. und in der ersten Hälfte 17. Der Jarhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). Lotz-Heumann’s article in Ford and McCafferty, *Sectarianism*, 24-53, was originally submitted in 1999, revised in 2003 and is based on the monograph cited here. This book has, so far, only been published in German, but Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, “The Confessionalisation of Ireland? Assessment of a Paradigm,” in *Irish Historical Studies* 32, no. 128 (2001), 567 - 578, provides an excellent synopsis and review of the text.

17

Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalisation in Ireland”, 27-8. Reinhard and Schilling built on Ernest Walter Zeeden’s “confession building” concept by including the relationship between religion society and politics. Confessionalisation addresses the social and political dimensions of “confession building” as part of the whole state building process.

18

William Kramer, “English Reformation and Irish Witches: The Effects of Confessionalisation in Suppressing Witchcraft Accusations in Early Modern Ireland,” in *The Forum: Journal of History* 1 (Spring 2009), 18-32.

and the Irish Protestants.¹⁹ Gribben's study adds nuance to Lotz-Heumann's dual confessionalisation paradigm and indicates that there were competing confessionalising forces within and between the various Protestant sects in seventeenth-century Ireland. The environment of protracted religious conflict prevented the extension of either Calvinist or Anglican ideologies into Gaelic and Catholic dominated regions. These two Protestant ideologies were frequently at cross purposes with the essentially Anglican Church of Ireland regaining religious dominance following the Restoration; thereby further preventing the kirk from attaining the same theological and ideological influence on witch belief in Ireland as it had in Scotland.

The fact that Ireland is geographically and politically peripheral to the Continental center of witchcraft prosecutions should not be overlooked. Other regions that were on the "fringe" of Western Europe also demonstrated dramatic deviations from the Continental patterns. The pattern of witchcraft prosecutions in the Aragonese Secretariat was also markedly different than the pattern of prosecutions in neighboring France and the German lands.²⁰ Particular to the Crowns of Castile and Aragon was the Spanish Inquisition, whose peculiar alliance with the King of Castile and Aragon allows for the interpretation of the Holy Office as an instrument of confessionalisation, especially within the Aragonese

19

Crawford Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

20

William Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Monter uses the term "Aragonese Secretariat" to describe the Holy Office outside of Castile. The "Aragonese Secretariat" denotes the Crown of Aragon: Aragon, Valencia, Catalonia and the Levantine States; as well as Navarre and the Basque lands. The last two regions fell within the jurisdiction of the Crown of Castile, but the pattern of Inquisitorial prosecutions in those regions actually followed the Aragonese, rather than the Castilian, pattern.

Secretariat. Not totally dissimilar to the conditions in Ireland, Imperial Spain was confronted with internal dissenting religious groups, the Moriscos, the Jews and, frequently, the conversos. The situation in the Aragonese Secretariat was further complicated by the immigration of French Protestants into Catalonia, who were prosecuted by the Inquisitors as heretics. Indeed, closer examination of conditions in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon will demonstrate that witchcraft prosecutions, which were confined almost exclusively to the Basque region of the Aragonese Secretariat, were especially brief and effectively supplanted by the prosecution of more disruptive religious dissidents. This has particular application to the religious dissension within Ireland following the Henrician Reformation and imposition of the Anglican Church of Ireland upon the dominantly Roman Catholic Old English and Gaelic populations. Comparisons between early modern Ireland and “imperial Spain” become particularly relevant given the increasingly close connections between the two countries following the marriage of Mary Tudor to Philip II, who son Philip III, sent Castilian soldiers to Ireland in 1603 to support the “Catholic” rebellion of Hugh O’Neill. Ireland and Spain may have been “fringe” countries relative to the center of western Europe, but they were hardly geographically isolated from each other.

Another “fringe” region that offers interesting comparisons to Ireland is that of Muscovite Russia. Valerie Kivelson’s analysis of the significance of gender in Russian witchcraft accusations poses particular significance for the concept of magic and witchcraft in Ireland.²¹ The majority of prosecutions and executions for the crime of witchcraft in

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Valerie Kivelson, “Male Witches and Gendered Categories in Seventeenth-Century Russia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 3 (July, 2003), 606 - 631.

Russia were against men rather than women. Kelly's study of Early Irish law provides evidence that certain categories of men in Gaelic Ireland, Poets, were believed to possess particular magical abilities. The societal role of Poets and the admission of women into the profession of the Poet will be discussed in greater detail below; however, the particular gendering of both the profession of the Poet and magic in Gaelic Irish society presents intriguing parallels to Muscovite society and the Russian pattern of prosecutions. Further, in his analysis of Scottish witchcraft belief, Julian Goodare found parallels between the Gaelic fairies and the Russian ved'ma as a symbolic rather than actual Other.²² While Goodare presents Baba Iaga (Yaga) as example of the ved'ma, Christine Worobec finds Baba Iaga to be an archetypal female witch according to Russian and Ukranian peasant folklore.²³ Worobec also noted that even the female witches of Imperial Russia possessed male, particularly phallic, characteristics and symbols, reinforcing the male gendering of Russian witchcraft presented by Kivelson. More significantly, there are definite similarities between the male dominated Gaelic Irish Poet class and the shamanist traditions of Siberia. An analysis of the similarities between the Gaelic/Celtic Poet and the Siberian shaman demonstrates that the two offices had similar impacts upon their relative culture's fears of the witch. Both Gaelic Irish and the native Siberian cultures presented an absence of recorded witchcraft accusations and trials.²⁴

The conditions in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland may not have been

²² Goodare, "Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context," 33.

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Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 95-6.

²⁴ Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," 27-9.

unique, but they were sufficiently different from the conditions within England, Scotland and the European continent for the pattern of witchcraft accusations typical of the period between 1530 and 1680 to be dramatically altered in Ireland. In my opinion the two most important of those conditions were the enduring artifacts of Gaelic culture and folklore, the societal position of the Poet and the continued belief in the existence and power of fairies, and the perpetual religious conflict of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that resulted in the process of dual confessionalisation and the impediment of spread of Protestant, particularly Scot Calvinist, beliefs and ideology into Ireland. The Irish, like most Western Europeans, clearly believed in witches and the harmful nature of witchcraft and malefic magic, but the process of accusations and trials was suppressed due to the ongoing and open social, cultural, political and religious conflicts between the Catholic Gaelic Irish and Old English, and the Protestant New English and Scottish Presbyterian settlers. The dynamics of the confessionalisation process in Ireland intensified internal social, political and religious tensions and conflicts. The “enemy” or “other” in Ireland was almost always identifiable as a member of an “opposing” religion, race or culture. The Irish did not need to look for the “enemy within” and to relieve social anxiety through witchcraft accusations. Only on rare occasions did internal tensions reach such a point without erupting into open conflict.

In presenting my argument, the rest of this book is divided into three main sections followed by a concluding section. Section one, Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe, examines the European concept of witchcraft, the witch and witch-hunts. Chapter one, “The Evolution of Witchcraft Belief: From Delusion to Crime” traces the development of the elite beliefs of witchcraft from the Canon Episcopi in the tenth century, wherein Regino of Prüm

declared witchcraft and the belief by witches that they flew with Diana at night to be delusions and phantasms, through the *Malleus Malificarum* to James VI's *Daemonologie*. This study also includes the skeptical work of Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. It is important to note that Scot did not deny the existence of witches so much as deny the validity of the evidence presented by the Inquisitor Institoris in the *Malleus*. Levack has termed this the "cumulative definition" of witchcraft. Applying the paradigms presented in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to the "discipline" of demonology in early modern Europe the definition of witchcraft becomes less cumulative than it has previously appeared. If demonology qualified as a "science" in the early modern era, then Kuhn's model of "anomalies" creating intellectual crises requiring the development of new paradigms for resolution may better explain the shift in witchcraft belief from delusion to apostasy. Viewed in this light, the 1324 trial of Dame Alice Kyteler in Ireland may demonstrate the presentation of a new paradigm by Bishop Ledrede rather than an anticipation of the sixteenth-century cumulative definition. After becoming a real crime in Europe, witchcraft quickly became a "crimen exceptum" in that the normal rules of evidence and testimony did not and could not apply. Additionally, as a crime, witchcraft was particularly gendered, though the specific gender associated was subject to regional and temporal variances.

Chapter two, "The Social Role of the Witch and Witchcraft" examines the non-elite approach to witchcraft belief and witches. This chapter examines the role of the witch as the societal "other" and as an example of socially and societally unacceptable behavior. By blaming the witch for misfortunes, early modern peasantry were able to take an active role

in resolving these problems through the use of counter charms and “witch-doctors.” This seems to be an attempt to assert agency by a population otherwise subjected to the demands of the aristocracy and local elites. Chapter two examines both who the witch was and why she, or he, was accused. Robin Briggs has demonstrated that the stereotype of the witch as an elderly, poor female, is not entirely accurate because it ignores the “suspicion building” process that frequently took years, if not decades to develop from the first rumors and suspicions of witchcraft to actual accusations. Frequently the women accused were young when this process first began.

The European witch-hunts were complicated events combining social, religious, legal and political processes. While the argument presented here addresses some of these European processes, the focus remains on the conditions in Ireland, rather than a global treatment of the witch-hunts in early modern Europe. Chapter three, “Conditions for an Irish Witch-Hunt” examines the preconditions necessary to facilitate witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts as they applied in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland. Levack has presented a very concise analysis of these conditions and Briggs has demonstrated how the development of these conditions can be disrupted. Chapter three examines both the requisite preconditions and potentials for disruption within the context of early modern Ireland. Many of the conditions in Ireland that undermined the conditions necessary for witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts will be examined in greater detail in the following section. Chapter three, however will serve to demonstrate what conditions did exist in Ireland and which ones seem to have been insufficient to accommodate or sustain a witch-hunt. This chapter will also serve to transition into the second section.

Section two, *Filid* Faeries and Faith presents the crux of my argument. Chapter four, “*Filid*” examines the social role of the Gaelic Poet, *fili*, as providing an alternate source of magic in contrast to that of the witch. The Irish Poet remains, even into the twentieth century, a figure of renown, importance and power. In fact, Fergus Kelly recounts an incident in which Thomás O’ Croimhthainn left work to listen to a Poet rather than risk “being satirized by him.”²⁵ According to Brehon Law, the Poet possessed both the power and the right to kill a king who had offended him by reciting satirical verses about the king. Additionally the Poet provided protection to his king from sorcery simply by remaining near the king. Women were also allowed, by law, to become Poets and similarly able to work magic. Illegal or unjustified satirizing carried strict penalties, particularly for women who unlawfully satirized according to the Brehon Laws. Many of the stereotypes associated with the European witch apply equally to the woman satirist which may have provided an alternative form of accusation and punishment to witchcraft in Gaelic societies.

Chapter 5 “Faeries” examines the Gaelic Irish belief in fairies that has endured through and beyond the seventeenth century. Edward MacLysaght noted that the Gaelic Irish continued to ward against the malicious antics of fairies, including the disappearance of butter or milk from churns, pails and cows themselves.²⁶ Gaelic Irish fairies were believed responsible for the same type of misfortune typically attributed to witches in Scotland, England and the Continent. While the presence of faerie images in witchcraft confessions in Scotland was quickly demonized by the Calvinist clergy, the kirk session and presbyteries did not exercise similar influence in Ireland. Irish fairies were already perceived as

²⁵ Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005), 44.

²⁶ Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1979), 177-9.

malicious and dangerous but not demonic and were never designated as such. One of the worst crimes attributed to witches was that of infanticide. Fairies were deemed responsible for a similar atrocity in Gaelic folklore, child stealing. The fairies would replace the stolen child with a “Changeling” that resembled the original, but would be struck with melancholy and wasting. When the changeling vanished, the real child would be forever lost to the fairies. William Butler Yeats described the Changeling as an act “worthy of the witch.”²⁷ The belief in the real and supernatural power of the fairies persisted into the nineteenth century as demonstrated by the case of Michael Cleary of Clonmel in 1895 when he became convinced that his wife Bridget was a Changeling and burned her to death in attempt to drive the Changeling away and bring his real wife home. In 1959 construction workers in County Mayo refused to proceed with the Mayo County Road construction because it would mean destroying a faerie fort, forcing the rerouting of the road in order to complete its construction. Belief in fairies by the Irish was real and enduring and it seems likely that fairies provided an alternative to the witch in Gaelic culture.

Chapter six, “Faith,” examines the impact of religious conflict between the Roman Catholic Gaelic Irish and Old English, and the Protestant New English, also known as the Protestant Ascendancy. Competing religious interests very quickly became tied to the armed conflicts that typified much of Early Modern Irish history. Within a year of Henry VIII’s break with Rome and the formation of the Church of England, Thomas Lord Offally turned an essentially political uprising into a religious conflict by claiming opposition to Henry’s reforms as part of the justification for his rebellion. As the program of plantations

²⁷ William Butler Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* (London, 1979), 383.

progressed under Elizabeth I and James I, the Old English came to identify more and more with the Catholic Gaelic Irish and social stratification began to occur along religious rather than racial lines. Neither Henry VIII, Elizabeth I nor Oliver Cromwell were ever able to eradicate Catholicism in Ireland and the resultant process of dual confessionalisation between competing and often openly hostile religions intensified the religious nature of armed conflicts in Ireland. Admittedly, the Old English were frequently caught in the middle due to their enduring political loyalty to the Crown of England. For the Catholic Gaels, however, the author of their political and economic misfortune was obviously the Protestant New English. For the Protestant Ascendancy, the greatest threat to their godly society would always be the Wild Irish Papists, especially during the period of the Protectorate which saw an increase in Puritan and Scottish Presbyterian ideology in Ireland. Open religious conflict and a clearly identifiable “Other” relieved the people in Ireland of the need to identify social deviants as witches.

As noted above, thorough understanding of the disruption to the accusation and prosecution of witches requires an understanding those trials that did occur. Section Three, “Irish Witchcraft Trials in Historical Context,” examines the three recorded witchcraft trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Understanding of the political and social dynamics of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are necessary for understanding the significance of the 1578 and 1605 witchcraft trials in Ireland. Given Seymour’s comments on the witch-hunting reputation of James I and VI relative to the fate of John Aston in 1605, chapter eight includes an analysis of James’s progression from witch-hunter in sixteenth-century Scotland to sceptic as the King of England. Similarly the history

and demographics of Youghal are important to understand the accusation and trial of Florence Newton. Developing from a temporary Norse settlement to one of the most important shipping ports in southern Ireland, Youghal was in a region politically controlled by the English government. Nevertheless, the Protestant population of the city was surrounded by significantly larger population of Irish Catholics. Internal conflicts between these two groups left the Protestant elites in control of the city, though not securely. Increased tensions among the elites of Youghal following the restoration of the known Catholic sympathizer Charles II to the throne of England produced the need to re-inforce social control by identifying and punishing nonconformists. The witchcraft trial, though not necessarily the accusation, of Florence Newton is one result of these efforts.

The “Conclusion” summarizes the argument presented in the text, situating the recorded witchcraft trials within the framework enduring Gaelic culture and competing confessionalising interests in Ireland. Reiteration of similarities between Ireland and other, “fringe” regions in Europe place Ireland within a global context demonstrating that, while Ireland was distinct, it was not necessarily unique. Broader cultural and confessional patterns emerge linking Gaelic cultural artifacts with the enduring culture in Siberia, while the mechanisms of confessionalisation in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon provide further evidence of the impact of a persistent counter confessionalising faith upon witch-hunting activity and impulses. Comparisons between the judicial systems of Ireland and Scotland are also discussed, particularly in relation to the 1661-2 witchcraft panics in Scotland demonstrating the importance of the judicial system to the perpetuation of witch-hunts. Ultimately, however, witch-hunts relied upon accusations from the peasantry to begin,

accusations that were in decidedly short supply in Ireland. This dearth of popular accusations is primarily explained by the reasons discussed above, the enduring cultural artifacts and beliefs of the Gaelic Irish and the religious and political upheavals associated with the dual confessionalisation in Ireland.

Part I

Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe

Chapter I

The Evolution of Witchcraft Belief: From Delusion to the Worst Crime Imaginable

Belief in witchcraft, as the practice of harmful magic, was and is an almost universal belief and can be found on every inhabited continent in the world.²⁸ While the belief that certain members of society used magic to injure their neighbors may have been an almost global phenomenon, certain aspects of the witchcraft beliefs of medieval and early modern Europe were particular to Christian Europeans. For example, according to the learned concept of magic, witchcraft necessarily involved a face to face pact with the Devil, which was typically consummated through sexual intercourse between the witch and the Devil. Along with the Pact, witches were believed to gather in large and secret nighttime assemblies to worship the Devil, engage in various obscene acts including cannibalistic infanticide and orgiastic, sometimes homosexual, sexual intercourse with demons and other witches. Additionally, witches plotted the overthrow of Christianity at these Sabbaths, making them a direct threat to the Church and the established social and political order.

The witchcraft and demonological theories that facilitated the great witch-hunts of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe were the product of Christian theology and contained elements of diabolism that are typically absent from other cultures' witchcraft beliefs.²⁹ The diabolical nature of European witchcraft was primarily the concern of the

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Ronald Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 19; and Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3.

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As will be discussed in greater detail below, the European demonological theories of the learned concept of witchcraft included a face to face pact with the Devil that resulted in the witch becoming the Devil's agent on Earth. These elements of European demonological theory were derived from uniquely Christian concepts of the Devil and the nature of evil.

educated elite of Europe. The peasantry, on the other hand, was far more concerned with the immediate effects of *maleficia*, or malevolent magic, than with the possibility that a particular witch was also a devil-worshiper. In this regard, the European peasantry more closely conformed to the wider global patterns of witchcraft belief. To be sure there was dissemination of the learned concept of witchcraft to the peasantry so that by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries popular accusations of witchcraft contained elements of the prevailing demonological theories.

Development of the learned concept of witchcraft, sometimes described as the “cumulative concept” of witchcraft was closely related to, and informed by, the development of the Christian concept of evil and the Devil.³⁰ While the prevailing definition of witchcraft during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been described as “cumulative” we shall see that this definition was, in fact, the product of theological and ideological crises that produced paradigm shifts and resultant alterations in the demonological theories of the educated elite and scholastic theologians. Rather than being an accumulation of concepts, the early modern witchcraft theory that facilitated the great hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the result of philosophical revolutions similar to those that occurred within other scientific fields.³¹ In taking this approach it is important to remember that the demonology of the Middle Ages and Early Modern eras was considered a science

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Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 32-51. Here Levack introduces the term “Cumulative Concept of Witchcraft” and describes the development of the various elements of this primarily educated concept of witchcraft.

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Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd edition (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996). I will apply Kuhn’s crisis and paradigm shift model to the analysis of the development of early modern European witchcraft theories.

by the theologians and demonologists of the time.

Additionally, the concept of a “crisis” needs some explanation. A scientific or, in the case of witchcraft belief, theoretical crisis occurs when the existing theories prove unable to accommodate an anomaly which does not conform to expected patterns. When this anomaly remains unresolved a crisis ensues wherein the existing paradigms fail and are eventually replaced with new paradigms. A scientific anomaly can occur internally within the bounds of normal research, or can be provoked by external forces. In the case of witchcraft beliefs speculation on the physical nature of the Devil and demons in relation to the sexual consummation of the diabolical pact created an internal anomaly that caused the Dominican Inquisitor, Institoris, or Heinrich Kramer, to challenge previous canon law in 1487. In this instance, the nature of religious belief and Church law as a controlling influence on theological discourse and demonology produced the coexistence of two paradigms. While Thomas Kuhn noted that this was rare in the fields of natural science, demonology being a far more theoretical discipline was more accommodating to such conditions.³² The Protestant revolutions of the sixteenth century provided external conditions that created anomalies resulting in crises and paradigm shifts. While none of the paradigm shifts that occurred within learned witchcraft beliefs were as dramatic as the scientific shift to a heliocentric galaxy, there were definite alterations in belief and re-evaluations of particular concepts of demonology. An examination of the development of the learned concept of witchcraft of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will demonstrate the theological and theoretical anomalies that resulted in demonological paradigm shifts.

³² Kuhn, *the Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, xi.

The Source of Witchcraft: the Devil and the Diabolical Pact

As noted above the Christian concept of the Devil and evil informed the development of the educated concept of witchcraft in Early Modern Europe. The European concept was distinct because only Europe and the European colonies were subject to Christian ideology as exercised by the Roman Catholic Church and later Protestant churches. As Christianity spread across Europe, Church fathers asserted Christian religious hegemony by declaring that the older pagan gods were demons masquerading as gods and deceiving the ignorant. In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, St. Augustine of Hippo produced a series of texts outlining the distinction between paganism and true Christianity. In *On Christian Teaching*, Augustine asserted that pagan religious practices, consultation with demons and contracts with those demons for the purpose of practicing magic, and traditional healing rituals were superstitions.³³ Augustine also identified demons as “corrupt angels” who deceived humans according to God’s providence.³⁴ Augustine’s writings established several concepts that would inform future demonologists and theologians. Augustine successfully demonized the old pagan gods and established the fact that demons were fallen angels. The concept of demons as fallen angels and accomplices of the Devil was important to the development of the image of the Devil and the witch. The idea that demons and humans engaged in contracts, or pacts, would also become important to future demonologists in defining the crime of witchcraft. Significantly, Augustine argued that even when the magic and divination of demons seemed real and accurate, they were in fact illusions intended to

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Augustine of Hippo, “On Christian Teaching”, in *Witchcraft in Europe, 400 - 1700: A Documentary History*, 2nd edition, eds. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, 44-5.

³⁴ Augustine, “On Christian Teaching”, 46.

delude and deceive people in order to obstruct humanity's return to God.

The belief that the Devil and demons deceived people with illusions would remain the position of the Church through the tenth century. In the Canon Episcopi, c. 906 CE, Regino of Prüm reasserted this ideology by declaring that women who believed they journeyed at night with “Diana, the goddess of the pagans”, had been seduced by Satan and subjected to the “illusions and phantasms of demons...”³⁵ Once again the religion of the pagans was reduced to superstition and delusion, the product of Satan and demons. These nocturnal journeys would later be amalgamated into the belief that witches assembled at night to worship the Devil in meetings known as Sabbaths, or Sabbats. The reality or illusion of night flights to these secret meetings would become the subject of debate among demonologists and theologians in the late fifteenth century. Institoris attempted to find middle ground in the *Malleus Maleficarum* between his belief in the reality of the night flights and the pre-existing canon law of Regino that such flights were delusions produced by demons and the Devil. As we will see, particular conditions of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries resulted in the belief that the Devil's power on earth was growing prompting a paradigm shift in the demonological system of witchcraft beliefs. In the tenth century, however, the Church firmly asserted that nocturnal gatherings and progressions by women were illusions created by Satan for the purpose of subjugating weak minded women. Regino was adamant that these illusions were *not* real, “Who is so stupid and foolish as to think that all these things which are only done in spirit happen in the body...”³⁶ Theological doctrine in the tenth century did not allow for *any* witches being bodily transported to secret

³⁵ Regino of Prüm, “The Canon Episcopi” in *Witchcraft in Europe*, Kors and Peters, 62.

³⁶ Regino, “Canon Episcopi,” 62.

nocturnal Sabbaths. Believing otherwise, demonstrated a lack of faith in God and heretical faith in the power of the Devil.

Two other issues were presented in the Canon Episcopi that bear particular significance for witchcraft theorists. Regino clearly states that, “the pernicious art of *sortilegium* (sorcery or learned magic) and *maleficium*...was invented by the devil,” the practitioners of which were clearly identified as heretics.³⁷ Witchcraft, then was powered by the Devil and seems at least initially, to have been more illusory than real. Secondly, Regino specifically named the Devil as “Satan” and noted that Satan “transfigures himself into an angel of light.”³⁸ The Devil, or Satan, was central to the educated European concept of witchcraft, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Regino clearly identified the Devil as the source of *maleficium* in the tenth century. In the thirteenth century, Saint Thomas Aquinas used Aristotelian scholasticism to prove that mere humans were not capable of creating magic on their own but that magic came from other beings to whom the magician’s words were addressed.³⁹ According to Aquinas this magic was always used for evil purposes, “...for they are often employed in order to further adultery, theft, murder and like malefices, wherefore those who practice these arts are called *malefics*.”⁴⁰ The source of power for these evil acts must also be evil itself, therefore the Devil. While Aquinas does not specifically mention witchcraft, his description of the malefic acts that utilized evil magic was almost identical to those crimes that were attributed

³⁷ Regino, “Canon Episcopi,” 61-62.

³⁸ Regino, “Canon Episcopi,” 62.

³⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, ed Brian Levack, 37.

⁴⁰ Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles,” 38.

to witches. The identity and nature of the Devil underwent a sort of evolution as the demonological concept of witchcraft progressed and changed over the Middle Ages and Early Modern era.

Regino's identification of the Devil as Satan was based on Old Testament accounts of Satan, which translates to "the Adversary." Satan's appearance in the Old Testament was rather limited and he is more often portrayed as an agent of temptation for humanity or as servant of God in the form of a harmful, but obedient, angel.⁴¹ The Old Testament reflects the strong monotheistic ideology of Judaism. God, or Yahweh, was the source of *all* creation and operation in the universe, including evil. It was not until First Chronicles that Satan is actually named in the Bible and, in the Book of Job, presented as an "opposite" or challenge to God and the "opponent" of man⁴² The Devil appeared far more frequently in the New Testament where, through his temptations of Jesus, he was presented as the enemy of Christ and thus, in the eyes of the Church, the opponent of Christianity. The Devil was also identified by the name Lucifer, the name assigned to the archangel who rebelled against God. This name does not appear in the Bible itself, but patristic writers identified Lucifer with the star in Isaiah that tried to become like God and was cast out of heaven. The book of the Apocalypse, or Revelations, in the New Testament, described a war in heaven

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2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chron. 21:1 (Good News, English Version). 1 Chron. 21:1 specifically names Satan as the cause of David's actions and is the first time the name "Satan" appears in the Bible, while 2 Samuel 24:1 names God and God's anger toward Israel as the source of David's decision to conduct a census in Israel, which resulted in the people being punished by plague and a sword wielding angel, who remains unnamed.

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Job 1:6-12, 2:1-7 Satan challenges Job's devotion to God as the result only of God's blessings upon Job. God *gave* Satan permission to exercise power over Job with the caveat that he not "hurt Job" and later that he not kill Job. Job 1:6, footnote c states that Satan's name indicates that he is man's "opponent."

between the archangel Michael and Satan and their respective armies of angels. Satan, the Devil or the Dragon, was cast out of heaven along with all of the angels who had fought for him. Regino, also, noted that the Devil was able to assume the appearance of an angel of light in order to entice the ignorant into following him. Lucifer, then, became the name of the Devil before the fall. The angels cast out of heaven with Satan were understood to have become his demonic servants. Demonologists later argued that these demons occasionally acted as surrogates for the Devil in initiating and consummating the diabolical pact that became so central to the learned concept of witchcraft.

The early Christian image of the Devil was decidedly different from the image of the Devil recognized by sixteenth and seventeenth century demonologists, and the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Originally portrayed as somewhat bumbling and incompetent by the early Christians, the Devil's machinations were easily thwarted by faith and adherence to the regular sacraments.⁴³ The demonization of the pagan religions provided some aspects of the Devil's visual appearance. The cloven hoof or hooves, hairy legs and horns were drawn from the images of Pan and the Celtic god Cernunnos.⁴⁴ The association of the Devil with the color black, either his skin or clothing, was a purely Christian image. Christianity equated sin with the color black and darkness. Thus the Devil as a black man, or clothed entirely in black, was the product of Christian symbolism.⁴⁵

Witches, sorcerers and court magicians were believed to have acquired their magical powers from the Devil. The idea that even the educated necromancers who summoned

⁴³ Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, 10.

⁴⁴ Levack, *The Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe*, 33.

⁴⁵ Levack, *The Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe*, 33.

demons, received their powers from some sort of face to face bargain with the Devil was prevalent even before the Canon Episcopi. The pact between scholarly magicians and the Devil was conceptualized as a legal contract into which each party entered for his own benefit. Education being the prerogative of men, scholastic magicians were exclusively male and their relationship with the Devil was one of, at least, equal partners. Frequently the human magician was in the position to command the Devil through the contract. Here is the concept of the bungling and inept Satan, outwitted and manipulated by human magicians for their own ends. Certainly, the Devil gained some benefit from these contracts, but he was never actually in a position of dominance relative to the magician. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the dominant position of the magician became irrelevant. By contracting with the Devil or a demon, the magician was now perceived to have paid homage of some sort to the Devil, giving to Satan what should have been God's alone. Necromancy and court magic, regardless of its beneficial intent was considered idolatry and thus, heresy. Worse, the magician had essentially abdicated his Christian faith and was, therefore an apostate.

Church fathers in the twelfth century began to realize that the apparent victory of Christianity had not been as complete as they had previously believed, "something new and dreadful in the history of Christendom had appeared."⁴⁶ Initially perceived to be the spread of heretical sects, by the fourteenth century that new and dreadful something was identified as heretical witchcraft. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, witchcraft had become the single greatest threat to most of Christian Europe. Monks attempting to counter spread

⁴⁶ Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, 4.

of heretical sects such as the Waldensians and Cathars deliberately constructed the image of heretical sects as nocturnal, sexually promiscuous, devil worshipers, in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. This was the same image the ancient Romans had constructed of early Christians and was intended to prevent the growth of these heretical sects and encourage their suppression.⁴⁷ In the middle ages the image of the heretical sect was applied to the practitioners of low magic, witches.

The connection between organized heresy and malefic magic were first demonstrated in 1324, in Ireland. Bishop Richard Ledrede was appointed to the see of Ossory which included the town of Kilkenny, in 1317. In 1324 Ledrede brought charges of heretical sorcery against Dame Alice Kyteler. Kyteler was a wealthy woman whose fourth husband had become mysteriously and seriously ill. Certainly the fact that Kyteler had survived three other husbands and had managed to deprive her step children of most of their inheritances provoked suspicion and resentment from her step children and other members of the community. As will be demonstrated in a later section, the Kyteler trial was an example of a politically motivated witchcraft trial, typical of the Medieval era. The nature and character of the charges brought against Kyteler and her accomplices are of more immediate significance. Kyteler was charged with leading an organized sect of diabolical heretics who routinely and ritually denied their faith in Christ in order to obtain rewards through the power of sorcery.⁴⁸ Kyteler and her coven were accused of making sacrifices to a specific

⁴⁷ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 42-3.

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Richard De Ledrede, "A Contemporary Narrative of the Proceedings Against Dame Alice Kyteler Prosecuted for Sorcery in 1324," trans. Gail Ward, *The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler*, ed L. S. Davidson and J. O. Ward (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1993), 27-8.

demon, with whom Dame Kyteler was also accused of having sexual intercourse. The witches consulted with demons for the purpose of divination and engaged in ceremonies that inverted Christian services and dedicated themselves to the worship of demons. Finally, Dame Kyteler and her coven were accused of using the parts of dead animals and children, which were exhumed, though not murdered, by the accused witches to make “powders ointments and lotions” which they used to make people fall in love or hate or kill other people. Dame Kyteler also used these powders to “afflict the bodies of faithful Christians.”⁴⁹

Ledrede was not Irish and had been trained on the European continent under the Avignon Papacy. The concept of witchcraft as an act of heresy was brought to Ireland by Ledrede. The trial seems to have been an application of the demonological theories the ambitious Bishop learned in France. Ireland had a long history of isolation from the religious trends that developed on the continent. In the seventh century, Irish Christianity had fallen behind the progress of the rest of Roman Christianity. When King Oswy held the Synod of Whitby in 654 he was presented with two different versions of the Bible. The Irish Bible presented by the Irish monk, Coleman, contained three fewer books than the Vulgate Bible presented by the Roman Catholic monk, Wilfred. The Vulgate bible had more Gospels, in a different order and was written in Latin, while the Irish Bible was written in Greek, which seemed to King Oswy suspiciously similar to magical texts. The pagan king recognized some of the Latin characters while he recognized none of the Greek. Oswy’s

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Ledrede, “A Contemporary Narrative of the Proceedings Against Dame Alice Kyteler Prosecuted for Sorcery in 1324,” trans. Gail Ward, *The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler*, ed. Davidson and J. O. Ward, 28.

decision to endorse and ascribe to continental, or Roman, Catholicism effectively ended Irish monasticism in Britain. Six centuries later, when Ledrede arrived at his episcopate in Ossory he found the conditions in Ireland significantly different from what he had come to expect on the continent, including the fact that Irish priests frequently kept concubines. As part of his effort to impose continental standards upon the Irish Church, Ledrede also attempted to impose the model of witchcraft belief that was developing on the Continent. He was only marginally successful. While Kyteler's maid, Petronilla, was burned at the stake for her heretical practices, the Lady herself escaped to England and effectively disappears from history.

Kyteler's carnal relationship with the demon, "Artisson," as an increasingly common part of the diabolical pact and source of the witch's power was problematic. Demons and angels were believed to have no physical bodies. They were understood by theologians and demonologists to be pure spirit. However, demons and angels could take shape by mixing vapours from the earth with the air to create non-corporeal bodies. Being, thus, composed of natural elements they were therefore able to engage in physical acts such as dancing and sex, common actions involved in the witches' Sabbaths. The absence of a flesh and blood body was believed to be the reason that accused witches typically described the Devil and demons as "cold" during sexual intercourse.

The Devil's most important power was the creation of illusions. The changing of people into beasts or depriving men of their "virile member" were all diabolical illusions. The Devil was believed to be able to perform magic by moving physical bodies together or apart in defiance of natural law. Orthodox belief was that the Devil was able to perform

magical acts with God's permission. Manichaeans and Cathars argued for a more dualistic approach. These groups perceived the Devil as having power close to God's, which was heresy in the eyes of the Church.

Flight to the Sabbath and Examples of shifts in Demonological paradigms

Closely related to the later concept of the witches' sabbath was the belief that witches could fly. The secret and nocturnal nature of the sabbath meetings required that witches travel long distances and still return home before dawn. The only way this could be accomplished was through the power of flight, granted to the witch by the Devil. Belief that witches could fly had a distinctly popular origin as the combination of various vestigial pagan beliefs: belief in the Strigae, women who became screech owls and stole children, and the belief that women rode out at night with the goddess Diana. Directly related to the belief in nighttime rides with Diana was the belief in the "furious horde" of prematurely dead led by Holda. These were women known as the "ladies of the night" who flew through the night sky, usually for beneficial purposes under the command of a mysterious queen. Until the fourteenth century Church doctrine declared these delusions, as expressed in the Canon Episcopi, which became part of the canon law of the Church in the twelfth century. In the late Middle Ages the image of the Strigae and the Ladies of the Night became fused in the minds of scholastic demonologists so that the ladies of the night became perpetrators of cannibalistic infanticide. Fusion began through the works of John of Salisbury in the twelfth century and was completed by the fifteenth century. Salisbury's *Policraticus* describes nocturnal gatherings in the presence of a "witch-ruler," which involved cannibalistic infanticide. The children so dismembered and consumed were magically reassembled and

returned to their cradles unharmed before morning. These meetings, therefore, had to be illusions created by “sporting demons” which only “poor old women and the simpleminded kinds of men” believed.⁵⁰ Certain events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries forced scholastic theologians and demonologists to reevaluate the power of the Devil on earth and the reality of the sabbath and the witches’ ability to fly to these meetings.

Beginning in the thirteenth century the Church experienced a theological shift by abandoning the seven deadly sins in favor of the Ten Commandments as the source of Christian morality. The emphasis on the Ten Commandments was part of a broader program of emotionalizing the relationship between people and God. The suffering of Christ became the focus of the concept of the crucifixion. The exiled Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm, developed the idea of “atonement” through which Christ, by suffering on the cross paid “satisfaction” to God on behalf of humanity for our disobedience. Mere mortals were unable to pay this satisfaction without suffering in hell. Anselm’s concept was based on a feudal image of God’s honor and mercy; to satisfy the offense to His honor by humans’ disobedience, God provided the “perfect substitutionary sacrifice,...his own Son.”⁵¹ Peter Abelard based an alternate theory of the significance of the crucifixion on Christ’s parable of the Prodigal Son. In Abelard’s theory, the crucifixion was an act of love on God’s part. God did not need to be reconciled to humanity, humanity needed to be reconciled to God. By understanding the Crucifixion as an act of love by God toward humanity, humans would

⁵⁰ John of Salisbury, *Policratus*, in *Witchcraft in Europe*, ed. Kors and Peters, 77-8.

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Roger E. Olsen and Adam C. English, *Pocket History of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 62-3.

understand that God loves them and begin to love Him in return.⁵² Attention to the suffering of Christ effectively increased the perceived power of the Devil to harm humanity. Additionally the shift in focus toward God the Father rather than on Christ shifted the role of the Devil from anti-Christ to anti-God. The Devil continued to operate with God's permission, but now diabolic efforts were directed toward the overthrow of God, not simply the teachings of Christ. This new moral system would be adopted by both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches and contributed to the alteration of the crime of witchcraft from simple *maleficia* to Devil-worship. In short, increased fear of the Devil translated to an increased fear of the witch, the Devil's human agent.

Allegedly there were physical manifestations of the increased power of Satan on earth in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The political and religious institutions of Catholic Christendom were crumbling. Warfare in Italy drove the Papacy to relocate to Avignon in 1305, where critics perceived that the spiritual integrity of the popes was compromised through accommodation of the desires of the Frankish Emperors. Pope Gregory XI's return to Rome only resulted in greater division within the Papacy as Romans rioted to ensure the election of an Italian pope while a majority of the cardinals responded by relocating to Fondi, where they elected a new Avignon pope. The Papacy was contested between Pope Urban VI and the "anti-pope" Clement VII. The 1409 council at Pisa not only failed to resolve the dispute but further complicated matters by electing a third pope, Alexander V. The Catholic Church struggled under three different Papacies until the 1417 Council of Constance finally resolved the office under a single pope. Added to the religious

⁵² Olsen and English, *Pocket History of Theology*, 63-4.

and political chaos of the fourteenth century were environmental disasters. Unusually heavy rain followed by a colder summer resulted in the Great Famine from 1315 to 1318. The arrival of the Black Death, 1347 to 1348 resulted in the death of nearly half the population in Europe. The nature and timing of the papal “Great Schism” the recurrence of the plague in 1379, 1390 and 1407 must have seemed like the wrath of God or the unbridled power of the Devil. Given that the Devil was understood to operate with the permission of God, the two conditions were arguably synonymous.

The increased fear of the Devil was compounded by various, internal, religious reform movements within the Catholic Church. William of Occam, a Franciscan philosopher argued against Church governance by the Papacy, which he believed should be replaced by ecclesiastical councils elected at the parish level. John Wycliffe challenged Church doctrine in 1378 with a more humanistic view of the relationship between humans and God; the Church was not the mediator between God and the people, but, rather the agency responsible for guiding individuals toward God. Wycliffe inspired an entire movement in England, the Lollards, who launched an armed rebellion in 1415. The Church was also confronting the persistent heresy of the Waldensians, who survived into and through the Protestant revolutions of the sixteenth century. The various reform movements within the Church weakened the power of traditional rituals and practices by declaring them to be mere superstition. As superstition, the rituals and traditions that had protected the faithful from an inept Devil were suddenly useless against one whose power seemed to be increasing. Without these protections, the Devil became a more fearsome figure and so, by

association, did the witch.⁵³ The increase in witchcraft trials in the fifteenth century became a kind of self-perpetuating mechanism, demonstrating the increase of diabolical power in the world which necessitated the extirpation of witches generating increased fervor in hunting them out.

Against this backdrop was produced one of the most influential treatises on witchcraft and witch-hunting, the *Malleus Maleficarum* by the Dominican inquisitor Institoris, Heinrich Kramer, and James Sprenger. If the Roman Catholic Church could be fragmented and riven with internal strife, if half of the people in Europe could be killed by the Black Death, in two years then the power of Satan was increasing on earth and the threat posed by the witch was greater than had once been believed. Institoris began his argument not only by asserting the reality of witchcraft but by stating that belief in the reality of witchcraft was a fundamental element of Catholic faith and to believe otherwise “savoured of heresy.”⁵⁴ The concept of the witch and nature of witchcraft presented by Institoris became the dominant, learned concept of witchcraft and endured for over two centuries. While some of the ideas presented in the *Malleus* were advancements or developments of previously existing demonology, other aspects of witchcraft were departures from the earlier paradigm.

Institoris began the *Malleus* with a detailed analysis of the nature of witchcraft and Devils as the source of witchcraft. The witch as the agent of Satan on earth was given the

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The abandonment of Catholic rituals, sacraments and relics as holy objects and rites that defended against diabolical or demonic assault has been cited by various witchcraft experts as one of the possible factors for increased fear of witches and the Devil in Protestant lands.

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Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summer (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 1-11.

power to cause harm through occult and preternatural power, from the Devil and with the permission of God. In the second section of the *Malleus*, Institoris provided a detailed description of the Pact followed by a detailed analysis of the power witches exercised. Some of these were the products of “glamours” or illusions such as the power to deprive a man of his “virile member,” while other effects of witchcraft were very real.⁵⁵ While men were convinced only through the power of illusion that their genitals had been removed, a witch possessed the very real power to cause miscarriages in pregnant women and storms at sea. No longer were all of the Devil’s powers illusion; some had become frighteningly real.

While Institoris wrote very little about the witches’ sabbath meetings, he did address the method by which witches were transported to their nocturnal gatherings. Under the prevailing theories of demonology the Devil’s power over local motion became the ability to bodily transport witches to the sabbath.⁵⁶ Night flight ceased to be an illusion and became, at least for some, a reality in the late fifteenth century. This theory was problematic in that it directly contradicted the Canon Episcopi and canon law which clearly defined night flights to the sabbath as demonic illusions. Here in the *Malleus*, Institoris equivocates by attempting to assert both ideologies at once, that flight was an illusion for some and for others a reality.⁵⁷ Under Kuhn’s model this would be the simultaneous existence of two different paradigms. While in the natural sciences such conditions are very rare, in the philosophical fields of demonology and theology such a compromise was easier to establish

⁵⁵ Kramer and Sprenger, *Malleus Malificarum*, 118-22.

⁵⁶ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 48.

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“In the same way all other objections can be answered: that it is found that some witches are transported only in imagination, but that it is also found in the writings of the Doctors that many have been bodily transported.” Kramer and Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 108-9.

and maintain. Even though demonology may have been perceived as a scientific endeavor, there were no empirical tests that could be completed to prove or disprove the validity of either paradigm. Institoris's position on the witch's power to fly to nocturnal gatherings as both real and illusory was a distinct departure from demonological theory. This change in paradigm was the result of the theological and demonological observations that evidenced that the Devil exercised greater power on earth than had previously been perceived.

The diabolical pact and the witches' sabbath was more prominent in Scotland than in England, which may be a product of the religious and legal differences between the two countries. Scottish Calvinism and the concept of the godly state were particularly threatened by the concept of an anti-society presented by the pact and the sabbath. The Scottish judicial process enabled the use of torture, which has been identified as the process through which the educated elite introduced learned demonological theory into witchcraft trial proceedings and sparked large scale hunts through the identification of accomplice witches. English law prohibited the use of torture in witchcraft trials which inhibited the introduction of the sabbath into trial proceedings. The English tended to focus more on the harm alleged to have been caused by the witch, *maleficia*, rather than the concept of a collection of diabolical witches meeting to plot the overthrow of society.

In Ireland, clearly the concept of the pact and the sabbath were present in the learned concept of witchcraft. The sabbath, however seems not to have been significant to the learned concept of witchcraft after the fourteenth century. Neither the pact nor the sabbath were mentioned in the two documented witchcraft trials of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As will be demonstrated in a later chapter, the concept of the

diabolical pact was present in the 1661 witchcraft trial of Florence Newton of Youghal in County Cork, though the Devil himself was not identified in any of the records of this trial. Irish folklore, as gathered by William Butler Yeats in the early nineteenth century, recognized the Devil as the source of the witch's power and as her master.⁵⁸ As demonstrated in the tale of "A Queen's County Witch," the diabolical pact was perceived as far more dangerous to the witch than the rest of Irish society. Priests, especially Roman Catholic priests, and cunning folk, or charmers, were sufficient to counter the misfortune and mischief caused by witches. The conspiratorial and communal concept of witchcraft does not appear to have survived Bishop Ledrede in Ireland.

The Witch as Rebel

Another development in the learned concept of witchcraft was the association of witchcraft with rebellion. As rebellions and political instability increased with the fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire the idea of witchcraft as an organized crime developed. The earliest descriptions of the Sabbath coincided with a wave of social rebellions in the late fourteenth century.⁵⁹ As popular rebellions, peasant jacqueries and religious civil war increased so did the intensity of witch-hunts. The Devil, after all, began his career with an act of rebellion against God, making the witch the "quintessential rebel."⁶⁰ As a heretic and apostate, the witch was guilty of treason against God. Devil worship became a conspiracy of the lower classes attempting to subvert and overturn the divinely

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William Butler Yeats, "A Queen's County Witch," *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 164 -8.

⁵⁹ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 66.

⁶⁰ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 66.

ordained nature of the world and Christendom. In the fifteenth century the Council of Basel associated rural rebellion with a Satanic conspiracy to overthrow clerical celibacy.⁶¹

The witch's act of *lèse majesté* took on new significance with the development of the divine right monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that one of the most fervent prosecutors of accused witches, Jean Bodin, was one of the principle proponents of the divine right of kings. Bodin based his concept of the divine right monarch on Roman law, which he also used to support his theory on the proper prosecution of witches in which he advocated an inquisitorial process initiated by magistrates. Bodin determined that states maintained their status and greatness through their programs of reward and punishment of crimes. Punishment was intended to appease the wrath of God, especially when that crime, like witchcraft, was a direct affront to the majesty of God.⁶² Witches, therefore threatened the very state in which they resided.

In Scotland in 1590 and 1597, witches went beyond an ideological threat to a direct, treasonous threat against the person of the King, James VI, and his bride to be. The witchcraft trial in North Berwick centered around a rebellious conspiracy in which the fifth Earl of Bothwell, in collusion with a group of witches, allegedly attempted to undermine the reign of James VI by preventing his marriage to Princess Anne of Denmark via storms at sea that prevented Anne from sailing to Scotland and may have been attempts on Anne's very life. The Earl of Bothwell was James's first cousin and potential heir to the throne through his father's marriage to Mary Queen of Scots after James's father died. Following the

⁶¹ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 66.

⁶² Jean Bodin, "Excerpt from *Démonomanie de sorciers*," *Witchcraft in Europe*, ed Kors and Peters, 290-1.

conclusion of the 1590-91 witch-hunt, James wrote and published *Demonologie* a witchcraft treatise that also served as a political treatise in defense of the divine right monarchy. Attempting to overthrow the king installed by the grace and design of God was further evidence of the conspiratorial and subversive nature of witchcraft and demonstrated that witchcraft was a threat to the king and state.⁶³

Crimen Exceptum

Both Bodin and James VI noted that witchcraft was an exceptional crime and difficult to prove; and both recommended unorthodox measures in the investigation and examination of accused witches. While James VI endorsed the Ordeal by Water, or “swimming” in *Demonologie* this method of identifying a witch had long since fallen into disfavour among other magistrates.⁶⁴ Bodin, in *Démonomanie des sorciers* endorsed exceptions to standard practices of interrogation and evidence. It was the exceptions to the normal rules of evidence and torture that made witchcraft a *crimen exceptum*, not the nature of the crime itself, per se. To be sure, as a compound crime of both *maleficia* and Devil-worship, witchcraft was difficult to prove in both the secular and ecclesiastical courts. Each jurisdiction addressed these issues differently.

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For a translation of *Demonologie*, a collection of primary source documents and a concise description of the conditions in Scotland surrounding the North Berwick witch-hunt see: Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

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The ordeal by Water involved throwing a suspected witch into a river with her hands and feet bound behind her. The concept was that water, as integral to the sacrament of Baptism and having baptized Christ, would reject the witch and she would float. Ironically, an innocent woman would sink and probably drown before she could be rescued. The problem with the Ordeal by Water was the women were usually fully clothed when they were dropped into the water. The bulky skirts and dresses typical of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often kept the woman afloat for some time before becoming sodden and dragging her to her death by drowning. This method had been determined to be judicially unsound and James VI’s endorsement of “swimming” was a departure from contemporary practice.

Physical evidence was difficult if not impossible to uncover, excluding the “Devil’s mark.” The search for the Devil’s mark by piercing the witch’s body with a needle, known as “pricking,” was arguably a form of torture. Typically prohibited except in extreme cases, even under the inquisitorial system of justice, the use of torture to obtain both a confession and the identification of accomplices was common in witchcraft trials. In Scotland, a sort of hybridized system of justice, torture was officially prohibited without the authorization of the privy council, though it was frequently used by the kirk sessions and presbyteries to develop the evidence needed to obtain privy council permission to actually try someone who had been accused of witchcraft. In an effort to avoid charges of unlawful torture, the Scots developed a particularly effective method of extracting a confession: forbid the accused from sleeping. Sleep deprivation was not considered torture, but was the continuation of examination. England, however, had express legal prohibitions against torture, which were translated to Ireland though the assize courts in the English controlled regions. In addition to torture, testimony normally considered inadmissible was permitted during witchcraft trials. Women, children and convicted criminals, including other persons convicted of witchcraft, were permitted to give evidence during the trials. This evidence carried as much, or more weight than the testimony presented by those normally permitted to give evidence.

Chapter II

The Social Role of the Witch and Witchcraft Proescutions

For the learned elite of early modern Europe, the witch was a conspiratorial Devil-worshiper working toward the overthrow of Christianity. In some cases the witch provided the foil to, and therefore the justification of, the divine right monarchy. For the vast majority of Europeans in the early modern era the witch was the practitioner of preternatural *maleficia*, bringing harm and misfortune to her enemies and neighbors. Underlying the popular concept of the witch and witchcraft were far more complex social mechanisms

The popular concept of the witch was different from the learned concept. The peasantry, the primary accusers of witches, were concerned with the harm the witch caused through *maleficia*. Idolatry, diabolism and apostasy were usually unimportant or irrelevant to most of the peoples of Europe and were typically absent from the initial charges brought against the accused witch. This is not to imply that the two concepts of witchcraft were completely isolated. As demonstrated in the previous chapter popular beliefs informed learned concepts of witchcraft such as the belief that witches flew to the sabbath meetings. By the seventeenth century, the popular concept of witchcraft had definitely been informed by elite beliefs. As will be demonstrated later, there were elements of the diabolical pact and the subservient role of the witch in Mary Longdon's accusations against Florence Newton in the County Cork assize in 1661.

For the general population witchcraft accusations and prosecutions were assertions of agency. For the educated and dominant elite, witch-hunts were essentially exercises of power, dominance and control. These statements should not be construed to imply that

witchcraft prosecutions and witch-hunts were not about witches. Without doubt, people believed in witches and the danger of witchcraft. Peasants denounced the witch to judicial or ecclesiastical authorities only when all other remedies failed to curtail the witch's activity. Witch-hunts began because of the very real fear of diabolical, conspiratorial witchcraft and the Devil's efforts to undermine and overthrow Christianity and Christian social order through his earthly agents, witches. To be sure there were some accusations which were motivated by personal gain or as acts of revenge; and as witch-hunts accelerated out of control opportunists took advantage of the political and financial gain to be had through accusations of witchcraft. Overall, however, belief in and fear of the witch produced accusations and hunts.

Within the framework of witchcraft belief, the witch can be seen as having additional representative significance. For the European peasantry, especially the rural peasantry, the witch provided an explanation for misfortune and tragedy which were otherwise beyond human control. Additionally, by ascribing responsibility for misfortune to a witch, people now had a means for redressing and, frequently, undoing the misfortune and harm caused by the witch. In many ways the witch provided the disempowered peasantry with a sense of agency that may otherwise have been denied to them.

The witch was also the "other," the social deviant who violated accepted and expected behavioral norms. The witch was a social outsider, frequently a member of the marginalized elements of society, who functioned and very often lived on the periphery of the community. She, or he, was different and very often had been considered "different" for a very long time. There was something threatening about the witch beyond just her power

to cause harm and misfortune. The witch threatened the communal order, sometimes as a frightening symbol of change and sometimes as a painful reminder of abandoned traditions.

In prosecuting this type of witch popular and elite interests overlapped as efforts to reinforce the dominant social order.

Assertion of the social order had different meanings for the peasantry and elites. By publicly identifying, trying and executing a witch, the most extreme example of behavioral deviance, the ruling elite not only reinforced the social order and societal expectations, but also asserted their power and their right to rule. This was almost certainly the case when James VI became involved in the North Berwick witch-hunt in Scotland 1590 and again in 1597. As will be shown later, assertion of behavioral expectations and rulership were probably underlying motives for the poorly documented trial and execution of two witches in Kilkenny in 1578. These positive aspects of witchcraft belief functioned only when accusations and prosecutions were infrequent, “sporadic and subjected to firm controls.”⁶⁵ The reassertion of control by the ruling elite of a community could also be provoked when that elite perceived that its control was threatened by external changes. Such was likely the case in Youghal in 1661 when the Restoration of Charles II, a known Catholic sympathizer was perceived by the ruling elite as a potential inspiration for the Irish Catholics, the majority of the population in Youghal, to attempt to overthrow the Protestant government.⁶⁶

For the general population witchcraft accusations that reasserted behavioral and

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Ronald Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunts,” *The Scottish Witch-Hunts in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 23-4.

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This will be explored in greater detail in Section Three, which examines the causal factors of particular witchcraft trials in Ireland.

social expectations were frequently an attempt to eliminate anxiety over the perceived failure of societal expectations. That anxiety could become remarkably intense when it was produced by the development of a new social order such as occurred in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. In that instance, resistance by citizens of Salem Village to the rapid change from a traditional agrarian economy to the dominance of the urban, market economy of Salem Town culminated in a series of witchcraft accusations by the disaffected Villagers against representatives of new order.⁶⁷ While this condition does not appear to have been present in early-modern Ireland there were other elements of the witch-hunts in Salem that were present in the 1661 trial of Florence Newton.

Who Was the Witch

The stereotypical image of the witch as, “old, lame, bleare-eyed, pale, fowle and full of wrinkles; poor, sullen, superstitious and papists...in whose drouisie minds the divell hath gotten a fine seat,” has been artificially influenced by court records.⁶⁸ Reginald Scot, the seventeenth century skeptic, may have intended his description to satirize and ridicule the courts for prosecuting helpless and senile old women, but his satire was based on a real judicial trend. Most, though not all, witches tried in the various courts were indeed poor, old women living on the margins of society; that is, by the time of their trial. It was the timing of the judicial or ecclesiastical trial itself that produced suspects that were old, poor and widowed, not the popular conception of the witch. The popular concept of the witch

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Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 211-3.

⁶⁸ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 4.

certainly included old women, but also encompassed young women, men and children.⁶⁹ The court records did not account for the period of suspicion building that preceded the official denouncement and accusation of witchcraft to the local authorities. The witch's age at the time of the trial was a function of the entire reputation building process.⁷⁰

Accusations of witchcraft were actually the last resort and were made only when other traditional methods of familial and social control failed to regulate the witch's behavior and typically came after a long period of increasing suspicion, conflict and misfortune until people were "goaded...past endurance" by the witch's behavior.⁷¹ This period of suspicion building could last as long as fifteen to twenty years, indicating that the accused witch became the suspected witch in her middle years of life, or earlier.⁷² In some cases the reputation for witchcraft was an inherited stigma that was the result of sustained suspicion between neighbors and family members that could take two or three generations to reach the point of official denouncement.⁷³ The build up of suspicion was a product of living in close knit communities with no other means of escape from misfortune, quarrels or suspicion. In the small communities of early modern Europe, people were unable to escape each other or, thus, avoid confrontation and unresolved quarrels. The reputation for witchcraft grew over time until it became an image the witch could never escape.⁷⁴

Scot was correct when he determined that witches were, "odius unto all their

⁶⁹ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 22.

⁷⁰ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 264.

⁷¹ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 398.

⁷² Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 23.

⁷³ Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, 15.

⁷⁴ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 4 & 267.

neighbors.”⁷⁵ Briggs noted that the popular image of the witch was a person motivated by spite and ill will, who lacked a sense of community. The typical witch was “notoriously quarrelsome,” demonstrating resentful behavior that was probably influenced and reinforced by her reputation and local accusations of witchcraft.⁷⁶ Witchcraft accusations further damaged the “witch’s” communal relationships by creating an air of suspicion on the part of other community members and creating feelings of anger and resentment in the accused witch. The witch’s reputation developed over a long period of time through the accumulation of various behaviors that served to alienate the witch from the rest of the community. The popular image of the witch varied between that of a terrifying figure and pathetic figure that was “despised and insulted” by the rest of the community.⁷⁷

Essentially the witch was an “outsider,” someone who did not “belong” to the community for one reason or another. In some cases the witch, as demonstrated above, was a marginalized member of the community whose behavior or circumstances failed to adhere to communal expectations. People whose socio-economic status steadily declined, or in some cases suddenly improved, were also subject to accusations of witchcraft. Sudden improvement in status could be seen as the result of witchcraft, especially if it came at the expense of fellow community members or in ways that challenged community norms.⁷⁸ In rural, agrarian communities a family’s overly good fortune with dairy or crop production, especially if compared to a neighbor’s diminished production, could also lead to the

⁷⁵ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witches*, 4.

⁷⁶ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 23.

⁷⁷ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 23-4.

⁷⁸ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 199-201, Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 91.

development of a reputation for witchcraft. The magical theft of butter from churns and of milk from cattle were charges frequently leveled at accused witches.⁷⁹ More commonly, the decline in, or loss of socio-economic standing would expose people to witchcraft accusations by increasing their dependence upon the other members of the community. Most frequently the witch was destitute and relied for at least a portion of her income and survival upon the charity of others.⁸⁰ Poor, single, older women were among the most vulnerable members of society, lacking husbands, brothers or sons to protect them from allegations and accusations.⁸¹ Briggs noted that in Early Modern European society, wives remained outsiders in the families into which they had married. How much more peripheral, then, was the impoverished widow without a surviving family?⁸² Poverty combined with transience could increase the risk of witchcraft accusations as it did for the Pappenheimer family in seventeenth century Bavaria and Sarah Buckley and Sarah Good in Salem, MA in 1692.⁸³ In all of these cases the witches were not native to the villages in which they were accused, as well as being poor. The Pappenheimers were habitually itinerant, while Good and Buckley entered Salem Village already poor and failed to establish “roots” within the community. Buckley compounded her negative reputation by failing to attend any church services in the Village. Similarly, Dame Kyteler was a Flemish immigrant to Ireland,

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Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 87-8 & 90; William Butler Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 142-44, 144-46 & 169-79 provide folkloric examples of this behavior attributed to witches in the Protestant regions of Ireland.

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Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 203-4; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 276; Levack, *The Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe*, 158-9; Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 92.

⁸¹ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 227.

⁸² Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 274

⁸³ Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 106-7 & 149 -58; and Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 191 & 202-4.

though her social status indicates a different model of witchcraft accusations, Kyteler may have been more vulnerable because of the perception that she was an outsider. While the trial records make no mention of Florence Newton's origins, it is clear that she was far from an integrated member of Youghal society in 1661.

Literal outsider, or marginalized and ostracized local, the witch was the "other," someone who did not "belong" or conform to the community. Popular understanding of the sabbath was as an inversion of normal social and village gatherings.⁸⁴ The witch, then was a member of an anti-community and became the enemy within that had to be extirpated for the good of the community.

The Purpose of Accusations and Prosecutions

The underlying causative factors leading to witchcraft accusations, prosecutions and witch-hunts varied from community to community. There were certain general trends in the purposes served by those accusations and hunts that were common to most early modern European societies. Witchcraft accusations and hunts during the Middle Ages were distinctly politically oriented. In the early modern era, the witch had become a primarily lower class, uneducated figure and political accusations were rare except as part of large scale hunts that were accelerating out of control, such as those in Bamberg and Würzburg where the learned concept of witchcraft produced accusations from confessions based solely on the concept of the diabolical pact and attendance at the Sabbath. In these two, extreme cases, prominent and wealthy individuals were accused of witchcraft and their property seized and forfeit, enriching those elites who drove the hunts. In the end, it proved to be the

⁸⁴ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 40.

accusation of otherwise unimpeachable people that increased popular and judicial skepticism to the point that the hunts ground to a halt. In seventeenth century Russia, witchcraft accusations were also politically motivated, though lower class witches remained the primary targets.⁸⁵ The nature of the Russian autocracy and Muscovite society produced accusations directed against a predominantly male demographic.⁸⁶

Medieval witchcraft accusations and prosecutions followed a particular pattern that was distinct from the pattern that developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the Middle Ages, witchcraft accusations were typically made against political rivals, or, more frequently, their wives. Women, even with a husband's protection were the more vulnerable members of society. Destruction of a rival's reputation by associating him with an accused witch could easily result in the advancement of the accuser. It is important to remember that witchcraft was a very real threat in medieval, as well as early modern Europe, and accusations were normally based on the belief that the accused had engaged in witchcraft.

The trial of Dame Alice Kyteler provides an informative example of politically motivated witchcraft accusations. Based on the trial records left by Bishop Ledrede, it is clear that a rivalry had developed between the Seneschal Arnold le Poer and Roger Outlawe, the acting Justiciar of Ireland, and Bishop Ledrede. Both of these men were directly

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Christina Lerner, "Crimen Exceptum? The Crime of Witchcraft in Europe" in *Witchcraft and Religion*, 40. Lerner describes politically motivated witchcraft trial as involving a socially or politically prominent figure as either the suspected witch, or the victim of witchcraft.

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Valerie A Kivelson, "Male Witches and Gendered Categories in Seventeenth-Century Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 3 (July, 2003), 622-23.

connected to Kyteler and, following her accusation, worked very hard to protect her. The fact that Kyteler's stepchildren from her previous marriages were willing to accuse her of witchcraft and the murder and bewitchment of their fathers provided Ledrede with an ideal weapon against his rivals. Both Arnold le Poer and Roger Outlaw, who happened to be the brother of Kyteler's first husband, worked very hard to protect Kyteler following her accusation. This association with an accused witch proved detrimental to both men when Kyteler was convicted in absentia, having fled to England. William Outlaw, Kyteler's son from her first marriage, who also received all of his step-father's possessions, Kyteler's second husband, in 1307, worked even harder to defend his mother and was assigned a penance that resulted in a £ 1000 debt to Roger Outlaw. Clearly, from Ledrede's trial records, there was strong hostility between the Bishop and the Seneschal.⁸⁷ The conviction of Kyteler for heresy and sorcery allowed Ledrede to triumph over his rivals in Ireland. The political motivations and rewards of this case for Ledrede would not have been possible without the allegations of sorcery and heresy against Kyteler by her step-children. Belief in witchcraft was essential to this case, as it was to most of the other "political" witchcraft trials of the Middle Ages.

Conditions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the collapse and fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire, the various internecine wars, the Protestant revolution and Catholic reformation all served to produce an environment of political and religious instability. These conditions were compounded by the effect of the "little Ice Age" upon

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Bishop Richard De Ledrede, "A Contemporary Narrative of the Proceedings Against Dame Alice Kyteler Prosecuted for Sorcery in 1324" *The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler*, ed. L. S. Davidson and J. O. Ward, 30-38, 39-43 & 44-46; document some the particulars of Ledrede's dispute with le Poer and Outlaw including his incarceration by le Poer.

crop production and rapid population growth which resulted in wide spread food shortages and increased poverty in Europe.⁸⁸ Against this backdrop, the malefic witch became a much more local concern. Accusations, therefore served more colloquial purposes, the alleviation of guilt by the accuser. Increased poverty paired with the movement away from traditional forms of charity tended to produce anxiety among those who were thus unable to engage in older communal customs of charity when confronted by someone in need.

Guilt likely turned to anger when the refusal to give aid was met with vocalized resentment and curses from a poor, indigent woman. Accusations in this environment served to alleviate the accuser's guilt over having failed in his or her traditional duty to help support a fellow community member.⁸⁹ While Levack argues that this condition was not present in early modern Scotland, there is some indication that Briggs's analyses of the conditions in early modern Europe do apply to Ireland.⁹⁰ Florence Newton was accused of witchcraft *after* Mary Longdon refused her charity on Christmas Day. Longdon's symptoms appeared after Newton met with her, offered something of an apology and assured Longdon that she bore her no "ill will." Subsequent misfortune blamed on the witch as revenge for the refusal of aid provided justification for refusing charity in the first place and absolved the "victim" of guilt.⁹¹ Witchcraft accusations and prosecutions could also serve to exorcize the guilt projected upon the accused. During the Salem witch-hunts, public confessions served as a social ritual that provided for forgiveness and re-integration into society; none

⁸⁸ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 292.

⁸⁹ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 295.

⁹⁰ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 92.

⁹¹ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 141.

of the witches who confessed were executed.⁹² While the Salem witch-hunts occurred within a primarily Puritan community the concept of repentance and absolution occurred in Catholic and other Protestant societies in Europe. Even the *Malleus Maleficarum* prescribes the “mercy” of absolution and lifetime imprisonment for those who confess and demonstrate sincere abjuration of his or her sins and penitence.⁹³

Since those accused of witchcraft tended to be those whose behavior deviated from the expected social norm, accusations and prosecutions frequently served to reinforce social expectations.⁹⁴ The assertion of social expectations could either come from groups that were losing influence or groups that were attempting to assert new dominance. In Salem Village, 1692, witchcraft accusations came from members of the rural agrarian community confronted by the unsettling rise of market economic forces in the Town of Salem. The primary targets of the Salem accusations were figures that represented the new socio-economic order.⁹⁵

More frequently witchcraft prosecutions were associated with the ascension of a new regime. Witch-finders and leaders of witchcraft prosecutions frequently came from outside the ranks of the traditional elite. Witch-hunts therefore legitimized the power of new groups.⁹⁶ This was certainly the case in Scotland and England in the mid-seventeenth century. Contending with the political uncertainty of the English Civil War, the citizenry

⁹² Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 214-15.

⁹³ Kramer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 252-53.

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Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 23; Christina Lerner, “Crimen Exceptum? The Crime of Witchcraft in Europe” in *Witchcraft and Religion*, 64.

⁹⁵ Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 180, 209-11 & 212-13.

⁹⁶ Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt”, 23.

of East Anglia engaged in the largest witch-hunt in English history, under the direction of witch-finders Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne. The break down of central judicial authority, and central authority in general, in 1642 allowed the recently appointed Puritan ministers in East Anglia to engage in a campaign to bring the English Church in line with the Calvinist church in Scotland. Hopkins was the son of just such a “godly” minister who considered the discovery of witches a religious mission. The 1645 to 1647 witch-hunt can be seen as part of a larger campaign by the East Anglian Puritan clergy to assert dominance and eradicate the influence of the “high church” Archbishop William Laud.⁹⁷ Similarly, under the influence of the Scottish kirk, witch-hunts were a means for social reform in revolutionary-era Scotland in the 1640s and 1650s.⁹⁸ It was just this sort of “godly society” that Hopkins, Stearne and the others in East Anglia were attempting to emulate and impose.

The witchcraft trial in Kilkenny in 1578 seems to have been the result of similar conditions in Ireland. In 1570, the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney attempted to extend English control in Ireland through the establishment of “presidencies” in the provinces of Munster and Connacht. Presidencies were provincial governing councils which were composed of exclusively Protestant English members. Kilkenny is in the province of Leinster, immediately adjacent to the western border of Munster and under the control of Thomas Butler, Lord Ormond, whose brother had supported a previous rebellion by the Desmond Lord of Munster, 1568 to 1573.⁹⁹ The trial and execution of two witches in

⁹⁷ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 75-6.

⁹⁸ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 68.

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Ciaran Brady, “Introduction,” *A Viceroy’s Vindication? Sir Henry Sidney’s Memoirs of Service in Ireland, 1556-78*, 21.

Kilkenny can be understood as part of the campaign to assert English authority in Leinster and southern Ireland by Lord Justice Sir William Drury as a representative of Sidney's government. Sidney was ultimately unable to firmly establish control over either Leinster or Munster as Munster again erupted into open rebellion in 1579, covertly supported by Lord Ormond, who also worked to undermine Sidney's reputation in London.

The anthropological argument that witchcraft trials, as identification and prosecution of socially unacceptable behavior and the assertion of social norms, "functioned as instruments of social health rather than symptoms of social sickness," applies only under specific conditions.¹⁰⁰ Mary Douglas has noted that the positive aspects of witchcraft accusations are only applicable when the rate of accusation was low, or sporadic, and trials were subjected to strict control. Under these particular conditions, witchcraft trials allowed societies to adjust to changing conditions.¹⁰¹ This limited situation may very well be the case in early modern Ireland, where "sporadic" may be an understatement to describe the infrequency of witchcraft accusations and trials in Ireland. As will be demonstrated later, social tensions in Youghal following the Restoration of Charles II seem to have produced conditions that encouraged the assertion of socially acceptable behavior through the prosecution of Florence Newton for witchcraft. Youghal had declared for Parliament in the eleventh hour of the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland and was under the political control of a Puritan minority, surrounded by Gaelic and Catholic Irish.¹⁰² The restoration of a king

¹⁰⁰ Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunts," 23.

¹⁰¹ Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunts," 24.

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A. R. Orme, "Youghal, County Cork - Growth, Decay, Resurgence," *Irish Geography; Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Ireland* 5 (1966), 134.

openly sympathetic to the Catholic Church may have encouraged the assertion of societal values through the identification of a “dangerous deviant,” the witch in an effort to adjust to the sudden governmental change.

Limited witchcraft accusations as a mechanism to adjust to social changes should not be confused with the assertion of social values by an existing or innovative dominant group. The former instance was a means by which people attempted to find security in the face of instability. The latter was an exercise in power and control whereby the ruling elite capitalized on popular accusations to assert the dominance of a particular ideology or group. In both cases, however, the processes required accusations by the general populace to function, accusations based on the genuine belief in, and fear of, the power of witches and witchcraft.

The genuine belief in the reality of witchcraft, in fact, provided the early-modern European with some comfort.¹⁰³ By assigning the extraordinary power to cause harm to others, people provided themselves with the means to understand and explain otherwise uncontrollable or inexplicable events and tragedies.¹⁰⁴ Accusations of witchcraft gave the “victims” the power to undo or remedy the harm caused by witches and thereby exercise some control over their own destinies. The suffering caused by witchcraft became a catalogue of the tragedies people most dreaded, an articulation of people’s deepest fears with the witch as the identifiable and comprehensible agent of those tragedies.¹⁰⁵ Identification of the witch as the cause of the victim’s misfortune provided recourse to undo

¹⁰³ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, 1, Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 5 & 266.

¹⁰⁵ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 5; Kors and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, 12.

or reverse the harm caused, or an explanation for otherwise senseless tragedies such as the death of a child.¹⁰⁶ Pressure could be exerted upon the witch, either by the victim, the community or another third party such as a “witch doctor” or cunning person to remove the curse or undo the harm to the victim. The removal of the witch’s curse was typically demonstrated by reconciliatory gestures by the witch toward the victim. Not only did these mechanisms serve to repair communal bonds but they also reinforced social behavioral norms. Reliance upon informal societal methods of redress for bewitchment often precluded the necessity of formal denouncements to legal or ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁰⁷ Alternatively, repeated use of these informal remedies contributed to the suspicion and reputation building process that contributed to the age of the witch when she was finally brought to trial. Conversely reliance upon informal remedies and communal pressures to alleviate the harm caused through malefic magic constitutes an assertion of agency and control over calamities that otherwise defied explanation.

The Gendering of Witchcraft

The sheer weight of witchcraft demographics necessitates an examination of the gendering of the crime of witchcraft. For most of western Europe, witchcraft was understood as a crime committed primarily, though not exclusively, by women. Ireland was no exception to the general western European trend in that the majority of the witchcraft suspects recorded were women. Contrary to the opinion of some witch-hunt historians, the gendered nature of the crime of witchcraft was not the product of violent and excessive

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Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 78. Briggs notes that a high proportion of witchcraft accusations involved infant illness or death.

¹⁰⁷ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 95.

misogyny. The heavy predominance of women witches in the 1645 - 1647 East Anglian witch-hunts and misogynist statements of demonologists such as Institoris and Bodin have led to the “uncritical belief that nearly all of the accused were women.”¹⁰⁸ While a certain amount of prejudice and misogyny were present in the learned concept of witchcraft and the witch-hunts, the gendering of witchcraft was primarily the result of the nature of the crime itself and the process of reputation building.

Witches attacked “things, people or livestock vital to the productive capacity of the household of the accuser.”¹⁰⁹ Household production tasks were primarily the domain of wives and daughters in early-modern European society. Witches were accused of causing the illness or death of livestock more often than they were of causing human illness and death. The animals that witches normally attacked were herd animals used for the production of food and clothing materials such as cattle, sheep and pig. Horses and oxen, animals usually associated with male labor, were only rarely the victims of malefic magic.¹¹⁰ Witchcraft accusations were the product of misfortunes following, closely, quarrels which tended to be over issues related to female labor such as cloth production, dairy production and marketing.¹¹¹ The traditional division of labor in early modern Europe along gender lines meant that women did not compete with men for work and spent more time in the market environment, which necessitated levels of aggressive behavior from women that was

¹⁰⁸ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 22.

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Lauren Martin, “The Devil and the Domestic: Witchcraft Quarrels and Women’s Work in Scotland,” in *Th Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, 87.

¹¹⁰ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 84 & 88-89.

¹¹¹ Martin, “The Devil and the Domestic,” 86; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 268.

contrary to expectations of female submissiveness.¹¹² It was these conflicts, conflicts between women over the spheres of women's labor that produced witchcraft accusations. Additionally, women were far more involved in the reputation building process than men.¹¹³ While children and infants were also particularly susceptible to witches' curses, the concept of the midwife witch was largely mythological, the product of unsubstantiated passages in the *Malleus*.¹¹⁴ In point of fact, Briggs finds that midwives were under represented as a demographic in witchcraft accusations. The reason for this is that the midwife was an inherently trustworthy position and someone suspected of being a witch would not have been allowed to act in that capacity by the very nature of her reputation for untrustworthiness. The gendering of western European witchcraft trials and accusations was reflective of the gendered nature of early modern European society. It is, never-the-less, true that men were able to use the process of witchcraft prosecutions as an agency of male power.¹¹⁵

Briggs notes that the perception of gender bias toward female witches tends to be exaggerated and points out that in many parts of France men comprised the majority of the accused in court records.¹¹⁶ Levack, however demonstrated that the overall percentage of women accused, tried and executed in Europe and New England was at least 75%. Two regions, however stand out in marked contrast to the general western European trend, Iceland and Russia. In these two regions the crime of witchcraft was a male gendered crime.

¹¹² Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 268.

¹¹³ Martin, "The Devil and the Domestic", 88; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 265 & 270.

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Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 270; Kramer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 140-44 & 268-71 in dealing with the crimes of "Witch Midwives" and their punishment respectively.

¹¹⁵ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 271.

¹¹⁶ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 22.

In Iceland, during the period of 1625 to 1685, 92% of the accused witches were men; in Russia from 1622 to 1700, 67% were men.¹¹⁷ Iceland was economically and socially similar to Scotland, particularly in the field of gender relations, nevertheless, Iceland possessed an inverted sexual demographic of witchcraft to Scotland and the rest of the British Isles.¹¹⁸ Icelandic folklore and tradition demonstrates significant influences from Siberian shamanistic tradition, which probably entered western Europe through Finland, into Norway then to Iceland. While the office of the Shaman seems to have prevented witchcraft accusations in Siberia entirely, modifications to the concept of the Shaman imparted by Norse culture resulted in an alteration in the ideas of the practice of magic in northern Norway and Iceland such that men, not women, were seen as the practitioners of malefic magic.¹¹⁹

In Muscovite, early modern or Imperial Russia, witchcraft as defined by the ruling elites was almost never associated with diabolism; instead malefic spells followed an analogous formula, “as this, so that.”¹²⁰ Muscovite Russia was essentially a “command system” society with each layer fitting into and replicating a hierarchical structure, all the way to the family unit with the husband/father male at the autocratic “head.” Men were therefore afforded greater freedoms in Muscovite society, particularly freedom of movement. It was this increased ability to leave one’s community and enter into vagrancy

¹¹⁷ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 141-42.

¹¹⁸ Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt”, 27.

¹¹⁹ Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt”, 28-29.

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Valerie Kivelson, “Male Witches and Gendered Categories in Seventeenth Century Russia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 no. 3 (July, 2003), 609 -11.

that placed men at greater risk for accusations of witchcraft than women. Due to their greater mobility within Muscovite society men posed a greater threat to local communities and state authorities and exhibited those traits the state was determined to suppress during the first century of Romanov rule.¹²¹ While Kivelson notes that sex and gender were not significant to the Russian concept of witchcraft, she also demonstrated that the Judeo-Christian concept of witchcraft associated with women via Eve's transgression was present in the Russian Orthodox Church. She also notes that all of the elements necessary to associate women with witchcraft were present in Muscovite Russia. The eighteenth century folkloric character of Baba Iaga might seem to indicate that the Russian concept of the witch had adopted the European model of the female witch. Baba Iaga and other female witches were typically associated with male sexual characteristics such as a tail which represented the male penis or engaging in gender inverted sexual habits.¹²² Even when presented as female in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Russian witches retained male characteristics.

The gendering of the crime of witchcraft, then, was primarily a function of the social understanding and perception of the nature of witchcraft rather than a campaign against one sex by the other. Western Europeans accused and convicted women largely because of the manner in which society was divided along gender lines, the very same reasons that Muscovite Russians accused and convicted more men of a similar crime. The gender distinctions between Iceland and western Europe derived from a cultural understanding of

¹²¹ Kivelson, "Male Witches and Gendered Categories", 621-23.

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Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 95-97.

who practiced “natural” magic within the respective cultures. Western Europeans understood men to practice learned magic while women were associated with “natural” or uneducated magic.¹²³ Similarly, shamans did not study esoteric texts to learn how to summon spirits, they received this knowledge or ability informally. The fact that the Russian empire conquered Siberia in the sixteenth century may have allowed that culture to inform later images of the witch as possessing male sexual characteristics similar to the Icelandic pattern of witchcraft belief.

Ultimately a person was a witch because his or her neighbors identified him or her as a witch.¹²⁴ People did not spontaneously assume the role of the witch in a society, but had it forced upon them by popular reputation. As that reputation grew, the witch may have come to accept and capitalize on it, eventually believing in his or her own power, perceiving any harm that befell her enemies as a form of wish fulfillment or the result of her magical power, rather than coincidence. This phenomenon may explain the ready confessions some witches offered when brought to trial.¹²⁵ The witch served a particular function within a community both for that community and for herself as well. Only when traditional methods of behavioral control failed to contain the witch’s malefic activity did the members of the community resort to public prosecutions.

¹²³ Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunts”, 26.

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Stuart Macdonald, “In Search of the Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases, 1560 - 1705” *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, 50; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 5- 6.

¹²⁵ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbor*, 267.

Chapter III Conditions for an Irish Witch-Hunt

Belief by both the general populace and the ruling elite in witches and harmful witchcraft are obvious prerequisites for witchcraft accusations, prosecutions and witch-hunts. Acceptance and endorsement of the diabolical concept of witchcraft by the ruling elite was important but not critical.¹²⁶ To develop from accusations to an actual witch-hunt, however, required that other conditions also be met. The additional conditions that had to exist and develop to facilitate a witch-hunt in early modern Europe, as described by Levack, were: the existence of statutes specifically criminalizing the practice of witchcraft, judicial institutions and mechanisms that allowed for the circumvention of traditional jurilegal procedures, and the presence of a “crisis mentality” that encouraged the prosecution of witches.¹²⁷ Robin Briggs also documented the circumstances and events that undermine and disrupt the development of a crisis mentality.¹²⁸ This chapter will examine the existence and extent of each of the above conditions in Ireland from 1530 through 1680, the period of the most intense witch-hunts in Europe during which there were only three documented trials in Ireland.¹²⁹ Given the dearth of recorded witchcraft trials in Ireland it is necessary

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Barstow, *Witcheraze*, 31; Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, 176. As will be discussed later, the Continental version of the diabolic aspect of witchcraft was not the same as the English perspective of the heretical nature of witchcraft. In England, and to some extent, Ireland, the Devil played a role in witchcraft, but not nearly to the extent that he did in Continental Europe.

¹²⁷ Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, Table of Contents and 176-8.

¹²⁸ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 289-316.

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When we confine our examination to 1530 through 1680. If we expand our perspective to include the fifteenth century there is documentary evidence of at least one trial in the mid fifteenth century. The Alice Kyteler trial took place in 1325, but despite its antiquity relative to our period of primary focus, the Kyteler

to begin by determining the presence, or absence, of popular and elite beliefs in witchcraft.

Popular and Gaelic Witchcraft Beliefs

Examination of the legends and folklore of the Gaelic Irish reveals evidence of a tradition of belief in witches and witchcraft. Two of the more prominent figures in Irish folklore are Cuchulainn, the Hound of Ulster, and his warriors of the Red Branch; and Finn MacCumhal and the Fianna. Witches, witchcraft and sorcery appear in the legends of both of these heroes. In the tale of “The Cave of Ceiscoran,” Finn and all but one of his Fianna warriors fell victim to three witches who trapped them in hanks of enchanted yarn inside of a cave.¹³⁰ Not only were these “hags” able to entangle men in their yarn, but they were also able to deprive the otherwise brave warriors of their strength and courage.¹³¹ Finn and his warriors encounter another type of witch in the tale of “The Red Woman.”¹³² The Red Woman was able to transform into a “great water-worm,” in which shape she attacked Finn and his companion Bran.¹³³ When her defeat and death on Finn’s sword seemed immanent, the Red Woman prevailed upon Finn, with thinly veiled threats, to let her live, “‘Keep back your hand,’ said the worm then, ‘and you will not have the curse of a lonely woman upon you.’”¹³⁴ If Lady Gregory’s translation is accurate, the Red Woman’s words seem almost

case presents a prototype for the cumulative definition of witchcraft that so dominated the Continental trials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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Lady Gregory, *Irish Myths and Legends* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1998), 240; Patrick F. Byrne, *Witchcraft in Ireland* (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1967), 13-4. Byrne spells the name of the cave as “Keshcorran.”

¹³¹ Gregory, *Irish Myths*, 241.

¹³² Gregory, *Irish Myths*, 278-282.

¹³³ Gregory, *Irish Myths*, 279.

¹³⁴ Gregory, *Irish Myths*, 279.

prophetic of the stereotype of the witch in early modern Europe.

The stories of Cuchulainn provide further examples of the witch in Gaelic folklore. The central tales of Cuchulainn and the warriors of the Red Branch were passed down orally for centuries before first being recorded in the twelfth century in the *Lebor na hUidre*, the Book of the Dun Cow.¹³⁵ It is within the *remscela*, the pre-*Táin* that we find descriptions of witchcraft and sorcerers.¹³⁶ In one of these tales a woman, Macha, places a curse upon the men of Ulster. Macha had been forced by the king of Ulster to race against his horses, despite the fact that she was pregnant and in labor to save her husband's life. Macha kept pace with the king's horse while enduring the "pangs" of labor. As she crossed the finish line, Macha cried out and gave birth to twins. As she did, she cursed the men of Ulster who had forced her to race regardless of her condition, that every man who heard her scream "would suffer from the same pangs for five days and four nights in their times of greatest difficulty."¹³⁷ This curse lasted for nine generations following that day and in Cuchulainn's time the warriors of Ulster were inflicted with "the Pangs" whenever danger threatened the kingdom of Ulster and were unable to act for five days.¹³⁸ Another of the *remscela* presents the sorcerous duel of two pig-keepers, who "were both practised in the

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Thomas Kinsella, trans., *The Tain: From the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), ix.

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Kinsella, *The Tain*, x. Kinsella notes that the translations of the *remscela*, from Gaelic to Latin, were about 400 years "younger" than that of the *Táin* and were recorded in the twelfth century in the *Book of Leinster*.

¹³⁷ Kinsella, *The Tain*, 7.

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Kinsella, *The Tain*, 8. Rather than being presented as evil, Macha's curse was portrayed as a just retribution for the cruelty of the men of Ulster.

pagan arts and could form themselves into any shape...”¹³⁹ Here we see the “Christian color” given to the literary text by the monastic scribes, as sorcery and shape changing were defined as pagan arts.¹⁴⁰ The tales of Cuchulainn that follow the Táin include an encounter between Cuchulainn and three old women who returned from England, where they went to study magic.¹⁴¹ Ultimately these witches tricked Cuchulainn into violating his gaesa, mystical “prohibitions”, which led to his death in battle while defending Ulster against the combined forces of the rest of Ireland.¹⁴²

In 1888, William Butler Yeats published an edited collection of personally collected Irish folktales that focused primarily on faerie lore but also included folk-lore about witches.¹⁴³ The majority of the witch tales originated in the English controlled regions of Ireland such as Laois or Queen’s County, so named for the Queen of England Elizabeth I; and County Donegal which was the site of an aggressive plantation program in 1609 where English and Lowland Scottish settlers, “brought their own traditions, their own institutions

¹³⁹ Kinsella, *The Tain*, 46.

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Kinsella, *The Tain*, ix. The reference to “pagan arts” is very similar to the perception of witchcraft expressed by Regino of Prüm in “The Canon Episcopi,” in *Witchcraft in Europe: 400 - 1700*, edited by Alan Kors and Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 60-3.

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L. F. Newman, “Some Notes on the History and Practice of Witchcraft in the Eastern Counties,” *Folklore* 57, no. 1 (Mar, 1946) 12-13.

¹⁴²

This story as it appears in Newman’s article was probably drawn from the *Aided ConCulainn*, the death of Cuchulainn, which Kinsella described as “a very different mode [than the earlier Táin], one that is characterized by high fantasy and a free recourse to the supernatural.” Kinsella, *The Tain*, xv. They were never-the-less part of Gaelic folklore, handed down by oral tradition before being collected in written form.

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William Butler Yeats, ed, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, reprinted as *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, foreward by Paul Muldoon (New York: The Modern Library, 2003) and in *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland, with a Foreward by kathleen Raine* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1973). *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* actually includes both *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* and *Irish Fairy Tales*, which is a second collection of Irish faerie folk lore and includes a “Classification of Irish Fairies.”

and their own familiar way of life.”¹⁴⁴ The witches presented in the folk tales are typically depicted as more of a nuisance than frightening or threatening, easily undone by a priest’s blow of the counter-spell of a “charmer.”¹⁴⁵ The tale of the “Witch Hare” and “Bewitched Butter (Queen’s County)” have similar elements and demonstrate the interchange of witchcraft beliefs between Ireland and Scotland. In the “Witch Hare” a man shot a witch who had transformed herself into a hare, when he tracked the blood trail to the witch’s house the woman claimed to have injured herself while cutting wood.¹⁴⁶ In “Bewitched Butter (Queen’s County)” the witch transformed herself into a hare so she could steal milk from the victim’s cows. The farmer waited in his pasture one night along with a friend and some dogs. When the hare appeared in the pasture and began suckling his cows, the farmer set the dogs upon the hare. The dogs injured the hare, which the man chased to a neighbor’s house and found the witch, now a woman, laying on the floor in her bedroom bleeding from a wound in the same leg the dog had bitten.¹⁴⁷

These two Irish tales bear striking resemblance to three Scottish tales. There were reports of a witch in Galloway in the mid-eighteenth century who transformed herself into a hare to steal milk by sucking it from cows. The witch was reputed to mutter her

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Aidan Clarke, “The Colonization of Ulster and the Rebellion of 1641, 1603-60,” *The Course of Irish History*, 4th Edition, ed., T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 153.

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Yeats, ed. “A Queen’s County Witch” and “Bewitched Butter (Queen’s County),” *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 167 and 173-7. “Charmer” is term usually applied to a practitioner of beneficial and traditional magic in England and Wales who would not accept monetary payment. In “Bewitched Butter (Queen’s County)” the “charmer” seems to actually be more of a “cunning-woman” as she uses counter charms to foil a witch, though behaviorally she resembles a “charmer” in that she refused payment from the family she helped.

¹⁴⁶ S. C. Hall, “Witch Hare,” *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, ed Yeats, 168-9.

¹⁴⁷ Yeats, ed. “Bewitched Butter (Queen’s County),” *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 176-9.

incantations in Gaelic, which was not used in that region of Scotland.¹⁴⁸ In the 1720s or 1730s, Edmund Burt was told of a highland laird who suspected that his wine was being stolen at night by witches. The laird went to his wine cellar after midnight one night and began laying about with a broadsword. He saw the eyes of several cats, but when he lit a candle there was only some blood on the floor. The laird went to the house of a woman nearby who was reputed to be a witch and found her laying in bed, bleeding, with her severed leg laying on the floor, under the bed.¹⁴⁹ The story of the highland laird was almost identical to the story of the stonemason in Scrabster that allegedly took place in the later seventeenth century. The stonemason's house had become infested with cats until he killed two with a sword and injured others. Though there was no blood on the floor, the sudden illness of Margaret nin-Gilbert, who later lost her leg, led to her accusation and confession to witchcraft and transformation into a cat.¹⁵⁰

One of the more interesting witch tales in Yeats's collection was "The Horned Women" as told by Lady Wilde from *Ancient Legends of Ireland*. The twelve "witches" presented in this tale were decidedly more fearsome than the witches in the other stories. The "horned women" drained the blood from the sleeping bodies of a "rich woman's" family to make cakes. The horned women spoke only in "Irish" and were identified as "Fenian Women" by the spirit in a well that aided the rich woman.¹⁵¹ The word "Fenian"

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Lizanne Henderson, "Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*," *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, ed, Julian Goodare, Luaren Martin and Joyce Miller, 111.

¹⁴⁹ Henderson, "Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*," 112-3.

¹⁵⁰

Edward Cowan and Lizanne Henderson, "The Last of the Witches? The Survival of Scottish Witchcraft Belief," *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed Julian Goodare (Manchester: manchester University press, 2002), 207.

¹⁵¹ Lady Wilde, "The Horned Women," *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* ed. Yeats, 181-2.

refers to the Fianna, the Gaelic warriors led by Finn mac Cumhaill and seems to imply a connection to Gaelic, pagan supernatural creatures rather than diabolical witches. The Devil was never mentioned in this legend and the voice from the well is best understood as a spirit opposing the horned women in some sort of ongoing conflict.

Clearly, Irish folklore contained stories of witches and witchcraft. The question then becomes, does the presence of witchcraft in traditional folklore equal belief in witches and witchcraft by the general population? In the case of Ireland there is clear, and tragic, evidence that at least a portion of the population continued to believe in the traditional, supernatural elements of Gaelic folklore well into the nineteenth century.¹⁵² Given that some people still believed in fairies and faerie magic in the 1890s, it seems reasonable to assume that such beliefs were also more or less common in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. If we apply Joseph Glanvil's arguments in defense of the reality of witchcraft in reverse, that belief in one aspect of the supernatural leads to belief in all things supernatural, we can safely conclude that the general population in Ireland did, in fact, believe in the existence of witches and witchcraft.¹⁵³

The credulity of the dominant Gaelic elite is demonstrated by the presence of specific references to witchcraft and sorcery in the Brehon Law texts. The Brehon Law

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Byrne, *Witchcraft*, 56-68. In 1894, Bridget Cleary was burned to death by her husband, Michael Cleary, Patrick Boland (her own father) and others who believed Bridget was really a faerie changeling. The concept of the changeling has its origin deep in Gaelic folklore. The fact that Michael Cleary and Patrick Boland actually believed that Bridget was such a changeling and killed her in their attempts to exercise the faerie spirit that "possessed" her is evidence of the continued belief in the supernatural by some members of Irish society.

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James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 245-6.

system was the functioning law of the Gaelic Irish before the coming of the Norman invaders in the twelfth century. With the socio-racial segregation of Ireland following the invasion and the denial of Gaelic Irish access to English Common Law in the English controlled areas, the Brehon system remained in force in the Gaelic controlled regions until the early decades of the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁴ Lapoint noted that the Brehon codes contained numerous references to witchcraft.¹⁵⁵ The vast majority of those references addressed witchcraft or “sorceresses” in relation to other types of crimes and criminals, particularly the *cáinte*, the illegal satirist.¹⁵⁶ The *Cáin Adomnáin*, an Old Irish law Text reputedly brought to Ireland in 697 by Adomnán, the Abbot of Iona, addressed the crime of *duinetháide*, “secret killing.”¹⁵⁷ Secret killing, accomplished either by concealing the body or the identity of the murderer, was considered far more serious than a publically acknowledged killing in early Irish society.¹⁵⁸ The *Cáin Adomnáin* regarded *duinetháide* as equally as serious a crime as murder through the use of spells.¹⁵⁹ The Brehon Law texts demonstrate that the Gaelic ruling elite believed in harmful magic and witchcraft. It seems, however, that witchcraft was not perceived as being more serious than other crimes in Gaelic society. Witchcraft may have been dangerous, but it was not the worst crime imaginable in Gaelic society. Some of the reasons for this will be addressed in the subsequent chapters.

¹⁵⁴ MacLysaght, *Irish Life*, 5; Lapoint, “Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting,” 81

¹⁵⁵ Lapoint, “Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting,” 81.

¹⁵⁶ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 50.

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Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 281 for the history of the *Cáin Adomnáin*, and 128 for the crime of secret murder.

¹⁵⁸ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 128. This was actually typical of most early societies.

¹⁵⁹ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 128. *Cáin Adomnáin* 30 §46.

Witchcraft Beliefs of the Anglo-Irish and the English Protestant Ruling Elite

Belief by the general population and Gaelic elite would not have been sufficient to produce conditions favorable to witch-hunts in Ireland. The popular belief had to be bolstered by the beliefs of the Old English and Protestant English governing elites. Seymour asserted that there was a “prevalence of the belief amongst all classes of society...” but left it to the reader to find support for that statement within the passages that followed it.¹⁶⁰

There is evidence of the English ruling elite’s belief in witchcraft in an entry in a table of the contents of the 1544 “red council book of Ireland” which referenced, “A letter to Charles FitzArtur for sendinge a witch to the Lord Deputie to be examined.”¹⁶¹ The actual “red book” has been lost, so the contents of the letter remain currently unknown. What is clear is that the Lord Deputy of Ireland was examining a “witch” in 1544, indicating that the then Protestant English ruling elite in Ireland had a belief, and interest, in witches.

Ultimately it was the acceptance of the learned concept of witchcraft that drove the hunts in Continental Europe.¹⁶² The fact that this definition was never fully accepted in England is largely credited with “tempering” those hunts that did occur in England. In Scotland, however, the diabolical concept of witchcraft prevailed resulting in larger and more intense hunts in the northern kingdom than in England.¹⁶³ As with England, witchcraft

¹⁶⁰ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 17.

¹⁶¹ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 59.

¹⁶² Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 177.

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Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law Politics and Religion*, 1-2. Levack uses the estimation of 1500 women executed for witchcraft in Scotland between 1563 and 1685 compared to the approximately 500 executions in England during the same period. Based on the differences in population between England and Scotland these figures indicate that the hunts in Scotland were, proportionately, twelve times more devastating than the hunts in England.

in Ireland was primarily a crime of *maleficium*, with the diabolical, conspiratorial aspect of witchcraft being either understated or completely absent. There have been assertions that the witches' animal familiars documented in witchcraft trial records implied a diabolical pact with the familiar acting in the role of the Devil or a demon.¹⁶⁴ While there may be some correlation between the English witch's familiar and the demonic elements of the diabolical concept of witchcraft, it is clear that the Devil was a far less prominent figure in England than in Scotland. In her analysis of the appearance of the Devil in Scottish witchcraft trials, Joyce Miller found that the Devil most often appeared as "black man" or a man dressed entirely in black.¹⁶⁵ As noted in Chapter One, the image of the Devil as black man or a man in black clothing was typical of the demonological concept of witchcraft in early modern Europe. Narcissus Marsh, the English born and educated Anglican archbishop of Cashel, 1690, described a dream he had in 1661 wherein he encountered a man dressed entirely in black who named him the "Bishop of Granada."¹⁶⁶ Marsh's recollection of this dream includes musings that he might become a papist, but does not recognize the man in black clothing as diabolic in any way. Rather than interpret this dream as a diabolical offer of power in exchange for service, the Pact, Marsh chose to view it as prophetic in 1690. Marsh's education at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, indicates an English Puritan influence on his religious training. Marsh's failure to attach any diabolical significance to this dream

¹⁶⁴ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 28-9.

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Joyce Miller, "Men in Black: Appearances of the Devil in Early Modern Scottish Witchcraft Discourses," *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Julian Goodare, Luaren Martin and Joyce Miller (Houndsmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 149.

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Raymond Gillespie, ed. *Scholar Bishop: The Recollections and Diary of Narcissus Marsh, 1638 - 1696* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), 27. This text is the publication of Marsh's personal diary as well as two letters written by Marsh.

demonstrates an educated elite unconcerned with the diabolical Pact. Given the evidence presented by Miller, it is certain that the figure in Marsh's dream would have had decidedly different significance in seventeenth century Scotland.

As mentioned earlier, the trial of Alice Kyteler in Kilkenny, 1324, is an exception to the general rule in Ireland. The witchcraft trial in 1711 on Island Magee in County Antrim, Ulster province, also provides an exception to the trend of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witchcraft beliefs in Ireland. The Island Magee case also demonstrates the pronounced distinction between Irish and English witchcraft beliefs and Scottish witchcraft beliefs as heavily influenced by the demonological concept of the Pact. The community of Island Magee in the eighteenth century was predominantly Scottish Presbyterian; the bewitched victim was, in fact, the widow of a Presbyterian minister. The description of the bewitchment and accusations consisted of direct assertions of the diabolical pact and transformation of the "apparition" of a boy into various animals through the power of the Devil.¹⁶⁷ The Island Magee case is temporally beyond the scope of this study, but its inclusion here should demonstrate that there were differences between the Scottish and English concepts of witchcraft and that the English "model" prevailed among the recorded trials in Ireland.

Laws and Judicial Procedure

Witchcraft laws and trial procedures not only demonstrate the prevailing witchcraft concept in an area, but, along with the exercise of "extralegal" steps, provide additional conditions necessary for the development of witch-hunts.¹⁶⁸ The Kyteler trial, in addition to being the first time that a woman was burned for heretical witchcraft rather than other

¹⁶⁷ Byrne, *Witchcraft in Ireland*, 38-9.

¹⁶⁸ Levack, *Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe*, 177-8.

heresies, was also the first and only documented time that torture was used to obtain a confession in a witchcraft trial in Ireland.¹⁶⁹ Ledrede's use of "judicial" torture and the execution for heresy of Petronilla, Dame Kyteler's maid, was certainly an extralegal step. Judicial torture was prohibited by English Common Law, but allowed under Canon Law; however, Canon Law at the time required that heretics and witches be handed over to the secular authorities for punishment. English Common Law did not contain a provision for the execution of heretics until 1401.¹⁷⁰ Ledrede's exploitation of Canon Law was certainly involved in his dispute with the secular authorities in Kilkenny, the Seneschal, le Poer, and acting justiciar, Outlaw. Indeed this trial was something of an aberration in that it was the only trial in Ireland conducted under Canon Law. After 1533 Canon Law would have no jurisdiction in either England or the Anglicized regions of Ireland.

The witchcraft laws that did hold jurisdiction in Ireland and the Statute Rolls of the Irish Parliaments provide a surprising contradiction to Levack's argument that, "In order for such hunts to begin it was necessary for the courts...to have possessed both a clearly defined jurisdiction over the crime of witchcraft and the procedural tools necessary to prosecute witches successfully."¹⁷¹ In 1578, Ireland had no existing statutes specifically criminalizing witchcraft. This did not prevent the County of Kilkenny from trying and convicting two women of witchcraft. The only surviving documentation of this trial, however, was in a letter from the Lord Justice Drury and Sir Henry Fitton to the Privy Council on November

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L. S. Davidson and J. O. Ward, editors, *The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler: A Contemporary Account (1324) Together with Related Documents in English Translation, With Introduction and Notes* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1993), 1.

¹⁷⁰ Davidson, *Kyteler*, 9n.

¹⁷¹ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 177.

20 that there “were executed...two witches by natural law, for that we find no other law to try them by in this realm.”¹⁷² The court in Kilkenny at this time would have been an assize court accustomed to operating under English Common Law and so the jurisdictional requirement was satisfied, but the laws that Lord Justice Drury and Sir Fitton were endeavoring to enforce in Ireland were those of the Anglicized regions of Ireland, which lacked the legislative tool specific for prosecuting witches. This legal deficiency was remedied in 1586 when the Irish Parliament passed a Statute that specified the crimes of witchcraft.¹⁷³ Following the model of the 1562 English Statute, the Irish Statute contained no provisions authorizing judicial torture and listed only the commission of murder by witchcraft, or a second conviction of injuring another by witchcraft as capital offenses, whereby the convicted “shall suffer the pains of death as a felon or felons...”¹⁷⁴ Additionally the diabolic aspect of the crime of witchcraft was particularly watered down as witches were described as, “fantasticall and devilish persons [who] have devised and practiced invocations and conjurations of evill and wicked spirites and have used and practiced witchcraft”¹⁷⁵ The prohibition of judicial torture and the absence of the diabolic aspect of witchcraft typical of the continent and Scotland had significant mitigating effects on the witch-hunts in England.¹⁷⁶ The prohibition of judicial torture notwithstanding, the 1562 and 1604 witchcraft statutes facilitated the witch-hunts in England.¹⁷⁷ Enactment of the Irish Statute,

¹⁷² Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 60; Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 221.

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Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 61-5. Includes some of the specific language of the Statute as well as the particular provisions.

¹⁷⁴ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 63.

¹⁷⁵ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 62.

¹⁷⁶ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 178, 218-9; Sharpe, *Instruments*, 214-5.

¹⁷⁷ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 177.

however, failed to produce a notable increase in witchcraft prosecutions.¹⁷⁸

In 1634, the Irish Parliament passed another Statute addressing the crime of witchcraft. This time, however, witchcraft was not the central issue and was included in a Statute regarding the trial and punishment of various types of murder, which included the use of witchcraft in one county and a resultant death in another.¹⁷⁹ The governing, Protestant and English elite of Ireland clearly believed in witches enough to enact legislation that criminalized witchcraft and established judicial procedure for the prosecution of this crime. The English government in Ireland provided the assizes in Ireland, via those same Parliamentary Statutes, the jurisdiction and legislative tools required to prosecute witchcraft cases, and yet, the absence of witchcraft trial records indicates that the Irish authorities did not take legal action against witches very often.¹⁸⁰

Crisis Mentality

The third condition necessary to produce an environment conducive to witch-hunts was a “crisis mentality that heightened the fear of witchcraft” present in both the general population and the ruling elite.¹⁸¹ This can also be described as “a pervasive sense of insecurity at all social levels.”¹⁸² Was there, then, the potential for a “crisis mentality” in early modern Ireland? The heightened fear of witches and witchcraft was established and exacerbated by a “public discussion of witchcraft” usually through sermons on the evils and

¹⁷⁸ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 221.

¹⁷⁹ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 66-7.

¹⁸⁰ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 221.

¹⁸¹ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 178.

¹⁸² Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 294.

dangers of witchcraft.¹⁸³ Lapoint referenced *Collections of Irish Church History* volume I, *Irish Archbishops*, as containing evidence of sermons against the evils of witchcraft and superstitions of the Gaelic Irish.¹⁸⁴ These sermons appear to have been individual incidents rather than part of a wider campaign against witchcraft. Perhaps one reason for this was that, by the early 1500s, the priests and bishops who would have held these sermons had become so “preoccupied with secular and military affairs” that the traditional, institutional churches in Ireland had largely fallen into disuse and disrepair.¹⁸⁵ English bishops appointed to Gaelic Irish dioceses were typically absentee bishops. Both the Anglo and Gaelic Irish treated bishopry as an office for members of influential or noble families. In the Gaelic instance the ecclesiastic office had become an almost hereditary position.¹⁸⁶ The continuation of the Church in Ireland became largely dependant upon the monastic friars.¹⁸⁷ Add to this the fact that Henry VIII declared his break with Rome in 1533 and began establishing the Church of England, it would seem that the friars who actually ministered to the Irish had more important matters to address than witchcraft, namely the preservation of Catholicism in Ireland. Subsequent violent religious conflict between Irish Catholics and English Protestants and the popular revolts that grew out of the ethno-religious tensions in Ireland were far more important to the ruling elite, and likely the general population as well,

¹⁸³ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 178.

¹⁸⁴ Lapoint, “Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting,” 81.

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Art Cosgrove, “The Gaelic Resurgence and the Geraldine Supremacy: c. 1400-1534,” in *The Course of Irish History*, ed. T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2000), 137.

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Nicholas Canny, “Early Modern Ireland: c. 1500 - 1700,” In *The Oxford History of Ireland*, Ed. R. F. Foster (Oxford: University Press, 1989), 95.

¹⁸⁷ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland,” 95.

than fears of malefic witchcraft.¹⁸⁸

Another source of “public discussion” was popular literature such as “pamphlets or treatises discussing witchcraft cases.”¹⁸⁹ Historical records demonstrate an almost complete absence of this kind of literature in Early Modern Ireland, which past historiographers of witchcraft in Ireland have presented without explaining the actual significance of this fact.¹⁹⁰ The production of pamphlets and treatises required the printing press; and while printing was fairly widespread on the Continent by the end of the fifteenth century, the first printing press did not arrive in Ireland until late in the sixteenth century, possibly even as late as the seventeenth century. The first printed book in Ireland was *The Booke of Common Praier*, which was financed by Elizabeth I and most likely published in London.¹⁹¹ The first book to use an Irish character was *Aibidil Gaoidheilge agus Caiticiosma* in 1571, the actual publisher of which is unknown, but was probably published in Dublin.¹⁹² The first documented printing press in Dublin was in 1618 and it printed government documents, exclusively. The printing press did not spread out from Dublin until the 1640s and that was southward into the Anglicized regions of Ireland such as Kilkenny in 1646 and Cork in

¹⁸⁸ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 405.

¹⁸⁹ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 179.

¹⁹⁰ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 11-12; Byrne, *Witchcraft in Ireland*, 11.

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The National Print Museum in Ireland, <http://www.iol.ie/~npmuseum/irishprinting.html> (Accessed March 5, 2008).

¹⁹²

The National Print Museum in Ireland, <http://www.iol.ie/~npmuseum/irishprinting.html> (Accessed March 5, 2008); T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin, *The Course of Irish History* (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishing, 2001), 403. Moody and Martin maintain that this work was published in Dublin in their time line, while the National Print Museum notes only that the actual publisher was unknown.

1649.¹⁹³ The presence of a printing press in Cork does make it surprising that documentation of the trial of Florence Newton in Youghal in 1661 appeared in London but not in Ireland.¹⁹⁴

There was printed material on the subject of witchcraft and witch-hunts available in both England and Scotland, however. Those two kingdoms, though politically separate before the seventeenth century were not isolated from each other in terms of information. *Newes from Scotland* provided a sensationalist account of the North Berwick witch trials to an English reading audience in 1591 or 1592.¹⁹⁵ While *Newes from Scotland* was the only English pamphlet on Scottish witch-hunts until the late seventeenth century, it does demonstrate the communication of information and propaganda between the northern and southern kingdoms.¹⁹⁶ The Gaelic and Catholic Irish's awareness of the troubles facing Charles I and the politico-religious conditions in England in the 1640s demonstrates a similarly ready flow information between Ireland and England. Additionally, the fact that governance of Ireland was handled by English appointees and Protestant, New English, settlers with direct ties to England indicates that the absence of a native Irish print industry does not necessitate the absence of printed demonological and witchcraft treatises in Ireland, particularly texts such as *The Discoverie of Witches* by Reginald Scot, and *Daemonologie* by James VI. The lack of printed material on the subject of witchcraft in Ireland seems more the result of the combined absences of an indigenous printing industry and the absence of

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National Print Museum in Ireland, <http://www.iol.ie/~nprintmuseum/irishprinting.html> (Accessed on March 5, 2008.) Preceding two sentences.

¹⁹⁴ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 12.

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Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's Deomonology and the North Berwick Witches*, 290-1 & 295-7.

¹⁹⁶ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 290.

native source material. The lack of available printed material may have helped to suppress witch-hunts in Ireland by inhibiting the dissemination of witchcraft related information throughout the country, which was reinforced by the continued absence of local trials about which to produce pamphlets and treatises. These two conditions may have become mutually reinforcing and perpetuating. However, the readily available points of informational exchange with England and Scotland through the political center of Dublin and trade centers such as Youghal and Cork may just as easily indicate the absence of a market for the consumption of such published works.

Economic conditions also contributed to the general sense of anxiety that facilitated the witch-hunts in Continental Europe and England. Although only one of many factors, the dramatic loss in revenue from unfinished wool products in East Anglia in the last decades of the sixteenth century definitely contributed to the environment that produced and facilitated the witch-hunting efforts of Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne during the English Civil War.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, on the Continent, rampant inflation and over population ultimately resulted in a severely depressed market and a significant decline in general living conditions, reaching an all time low in 1590, which contributed to the overall sense of anxiety throughout Europe in the seventeenth century.¹⁹⁸ The situation in Ireland was only slightly different. The political fragmentation in Ireland at the beginning of the sixteenth

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This is a complicated situation in and of itself, and is presented here as a demonstration of the impacts of sudden economic hardships on general sense of security, or lack thereof, in a region. To be sure there were other factors involved in appearance of Hopkins and Stearne, not the least of which was the Civil War itself, but the economic and attendant social impact economic center of the English wool industry shifting from East Anglia to the Cotswolds and the subsequent closure of all European wool markets at the end of the 16th century are also not to be minimized.

¹⁹⁸ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 289 & 292.

century had significant impact on civilian life by passing on the costs of maintaining standing armies to the farmers and peasants.¹⁹⁹ The rural, Gaelic Irish farmers, like their Continental counterparts, lived at something fairly close to subsistence level, their houses were of poor and transitory quality and their clothing was largely the product of domestic manufacturing. The Gaelic Irish were pastoral farmers relying primarily on the spade for cultivation and were typically semi-nomadic, moving across the unenclosed areas of the Gaelic regions with their herds.²⁰⁰ The farmers in the “Old English” regions were more settled, made use of the plow to cultivate fields and lived in established communities; which left them more subject to disruption by an invading army. The Irish living in the Anglicized towns were not significantly better off than their rural, Gaelic cousins, despite greater access to foreign trade. Whatever profits the Old English merchants might have made were undermined by the heavy impositions of the Gaelic Irish lords.²⁰¹

Population growth in Ireland, however, was significantly different than elsewhere in Europe. While the rest of western Europe nearly doubled in population by the end of the sixteenth century, Ireland’s population levels remained relatively static throughout the country. The destruction of most of the population in Counties Ulster and Munster during the wars of the 1580s and 1590 was sufficient to compensate for the growth of the population elsewhere in Ireland.²⁰² Despite the relative stability in population size, Ireland may have faced problems of food shortages in the mid to late sixteenth century as a result

¹⁹⁹ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland,” 91-2.

²⁰⁰ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland,” 92-3.

²⁰¹ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland,” 95.

²⁰² Canny, “Early Modern Ireland,” 93-4.

of Lord Deputy Henry Sidney's response to the first Desmond Rebellion of 1568 to 1573. In an effort to subdue the rebellion in southern Ireland, Sidney "...burned and spoiled villages and fields..." on his way to the city of Cork, Munster province, and as he marched through the lands of the earl of Clancare.²⁰³ Additionally, Sidney notes the outbreak of "pestilence" in Dublin during September 1575, "whereof there many died daily."²⁰⁴ It is possible that reduced consumption in Dublin ameliorated any reduced harvests following the Desmond Rebellion. The outbreak of a sudden and deadly illness is also noteworthy in that it did not seem to have prompted an increased fear of the Devil's power on earth, such as resulted from the outbreak of the Black Death in the fourteenth century. The conditions in Ireland at the end of the sixteenth century were such that the country did not seem to have suffered the anxiety associated with the socio-economic pressures of overpopulation and food shortage that were so problematic for the rest of Europe.

While the economic conditions in Ireland seem to be no better or worse than the rest of Europe in the late sixteenth century, the primary differences appear to have been the underlying circumstances. Clearly, overpopulation was not a factor since Ireland did not experience a significant population growth during the sixteenth century. The Gaelic Irish farmers, as well, do not appear to have undergone a noticeable change in lifestyle. They were still relying on traditional farming methods, not to mention traditional tools, so their subsistence, migratory existence was probably not a source of anxiety. The Old English in Ireland, however, seem to be the portion of the population that experienced the most

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Ciaran Brady, ed. *A Viceroy's Vindication? Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir of Service in Ireland, 1556 - 78* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), 70.

²⁰⁴ Brady, *A Viceroy's Vindication*, 80.

significant change in lifestyle. The resurgence of the Gaelic lords, the political fragmentation and the series of internecine wars in sixteenth century Ireland would have affected the Old English more than any of the other Irish. As noted before, the very nature of the Old English farming communities left them more subject to the disruption of the internecine wars of the late 1500s. The Old English regions of Munster suffered the greatest population losses during these wars.²⁰⁵ It is not surprising, then, that those witchcraft trial records that do exist are from areas that were predominately under English control.

The other causative factors that influenced, or facilitated, a crisis mentality, were wars, political upheaval and religious crises.²⁰⁶ Every one of these situations were present in early modern Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Ireland, however, unlike in England, Scotland or the Continent, the features of these situations that enabled the increase of anxiety and suspicion were absent due to the particular nature of the almost constant ethno-religious and political conflicts. As the following sections will demonstrate, the existence of dual and competing Protestant and Catholic confessionalisations in Ireland and the bloody and violent wars that accompanied and attended them created an environment of almost constant open political, ethnic and religious conflict such that the fear of witchcraft and the motivation for witchcraft accusations and prosecutions were sublimated to ethno-religious hostilities.

²⁰⁵ Canny, "Early Modern Ireland", 93.

²⁰⁶ Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 179.

Part II

Filid, Faeries and Faith:

The Particular Conditions in Ireland that Suppressed Witchcraft Accusations and Trials

The population of early modern Ireland was essentially divided into three separate ethno-religious groups: the Gaelic Irish, the descendants of the Anglo-Norman and Cambrio-Norman invaders of the twelfth century who became known as the Old English, and the New English. The Gaelic Irish were traditionally and predominantly Roman Catholic, though Reverend Narcissus Marsh named two or three prominent Gaelic Irish Protestant converts in his memoirs.²⁰⁷ The Old English were also predominantly Roman Catholic, stubbornly retaining their traditional religion while attempting to maintain political loyalty to the English Crown. Many of the Old English had been considerably “gaelicized” in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries so that they considered themselves more Irish than English such as the FitzGerald earls of Kildare. The New English Protestants had rapidly become the dominant elite despite their minority status in Ireland. They had come to Ireland with the plantation program of Lord Deputy Henry Sidney in Counties Munster and Leinster under Elizabeth I.²⁰⁸ Their adherence to the Anglican church following the Henrician Reform and subsequent religious reforms under Edward VI and Elizabeth I ensured their political dominance over the Catholic Gaels and Old English. James I and VI’s Ulster Plantation program of 1608 added Scottish Presbyterians to the ranks of the Protestant Ascendancy. As we will see, however, the introduction of a competing Protestant

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Raymond Gillespie, ed., *Scholar Bishop: The Recollections and Diary of Narcissus Marsh, 1638 - 1696* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003).

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Lord Henry Sidney served a Lord Deputy of Ireland on three occasions under Elizabeth I. The office of Lord Deputy was a viceregal position, wherein Henry Sidney directly represented the English Crown in Ireland. In efforts to pacify Gaelic and Anglo-Irish resistance to the assertion of his version of royal authority in Lord Sidney established English plantations and provincial councils in County Munster. The provincial councils were known as “presidencies” and were composed of Protestant English settlers who were hostile toward the Catholic, Gaelic Irish. While Elizabeth ended Sidney’s program in 1570, the settlers remained in Ireland.

confessional faith created internal tensions amongst the Protestants in Ireland that prevented religious, if not political, Protestant hegemony.

The division of Irish society began with the Norman invasion of 1169 which ultimately failed to establish complete English control over Ireland. By the fourteenth century English control was limited to the Pale area around Dublin and the various “Liberties” in the south of Ireland. The rest of Ireland remained under the control of the original Gaelic kings. The actual extent of the Pale area fluctuated over the years, occasionally shrinking to little more than the city limits of Dublin itself. The Liberties were regions under the direct control of Anglo-Norman lords who owed feudal allegiance to the English Crown. English law was enforced within the Liberties, including the juridical system of assize courts. Beyond the Pale and the Liberties, the traditional, Gaelic, Brehon law endured until the sixteenth century and informed Gaelic attitudes and ideology into the seventeenth century.

The Norman invasion of Ireland was, clearly, never a complete conquest. While certain territories fell under control of the Anglo-Norman lords, the majority of the Gaelic population retained their traditional culture and folk beliefs. Rather than imposing English or Norman culture upon the Gaelic Irish, the Anglo-Normans actually began to assimilate Gaelic culture themselves. By the fourteenth century this reverse acculturation, or “gaelicization” had become fairly widespread among the descendants of the original invaders. This group, which would become known as the Old English with the coming of the New English Protestants, were also known as the Anglo-Irish; had absorbed Gaelic culture thoroughly. The gaelicization of the Anglo-Irish became such a concern for the

English government that the justiciar, Lionel, duke of Clarence and the son of King Edward III, called a parliament in Kilkenny in 1361 and issued a series of statutes intended to halt and reverse the Gaelicization of the Norman lords. The “Kilkenny Statutes” prohibited the use of the Gaelic language and Gaelic names by the Norman lords, as well as marriage into Gaelic families and the adoption of Gaelic children resulting from the now illegal marriages. The problem of Gaelic acculturation had become perceived as such a threat to the English crown that violation of the Kilkenny Statutes carried both penal and ecclesiastical penalties.

Lionel’s reaction to the Gaelicization of the Anglo-Irish demonstrates the endurance and dissemination of Gaelic culture and its associated folklore in Ireland through the Middle Ages and into the early modern era. The survival and proliferation of Gaelic culture combined with the juridical segregation of Ireland and survival of Brehon law among the Gaelic Irish resulted in the survival of two particularly Gaelic conditions that inhibited the spread of even the English model of witchcraft belief into the Gaelic regions: the social and legal office of the Irish Poet and the persistence of belief in faeries. The Poet embodies a concept of legalized, male gendered magic that may not be dissimilar to the concept of shamanism as demonstrated in Iceland; while faeries provided an alternative source of misfortune and agency to witchcraft. Additionally, faerie belief in Ireland was not subjected to the same religious reinterpretation as it was in Scotland, where Gaelic culture was more influenced by Calvinism and the kirk sessions and presbyteries than in Ireland.

The societal distinction between Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Norman, or Anglo-Irish, was further complicated by the Henrician Reform of the Church *of* England in the mid sixteenth century and the imposition of a new state religion. Initially, the religious changes of the

English Reformation were relatively minor. Under first Edward VI, then Elizabeth I and finally the Cromwellian Protectorate, English Protestantism became further and further removed from the Roman Catholic Church and the Roman Catholicism of the Gaelic Irish and Old English perceived as a greater and greater threat to the government of England and the governance of Ireland. This was especially true during the mid seventeenth century era of the English Civil War and the Irish Confederacy. The anti-Catholic programs of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland succeeded in uniting, if not unifying, the Gaelic Irish and Old English against the Protestant controlled Parliament during the 1640s. This unity also meant that both groups were identified as a Catholic threat by Oliver Cromwell when his Puritan Army invaded Ireland in 1649.

Even before the English Civil War, social division had shifted to religious lines rather than ethnic or racial lines. It became preferable to marry within one's religious group rather than with one's "racial" group. If the Protestant Ascendancy of the New English formed the culture of the ruling elites in Ireland, then Irish Catholicism, particularly Gaelic Irish Catholicism, became a kind of counter-culture; one that successfully endured, and was revitalized in the twentieth century under the Gaelic League, to assert independence for the Republic of Ireland. These competing "religious cultures," essentially competing Confessionalisations, and the attendant politico-religious wars suppressed the tendency toward witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts that occurred elsewhere in Europe. The effects of Confessional conflict in Ireland were similar to the effects of Roman Catholic confessionalisation in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in the seventeenth century where witch-hunting rapidly gave way to the extirpation of Protestant and converso heresies. The

lack of religious unity with the Protestant sector of Irish society further prevented the spread of Protestant ideology into the Catholic communities. Ideological conflict between Presbyterian and Anglican Protestants undermined any efforts toward religious hegemony by the ruling elites which, in turn, prevented the demonization of Gaelic Irish faerie beliefs such as occurred in Scotland. Failure to demonize faeries prevented those who claimed contact or relations with faeries from being identified as diabolic witches.

Chapter IV
Filid:
The Role of the Poet in Suppressing Fear of Witchcraft in Gaelic Culture

In Gaelic Irish culture the Poet was, and remains, a figure of particular importance. Directly connected to the Irish concept of honor and respectability, the poet possessed considerable power to effect a person's reputation within the community or *túath*.²⁰⁹ In fact, no Gaelic *túath* could be established without the presence of the three *nemed* persons within the community.²¹⁰ The term *nemed* can be loosely understood as "privileged," but has its origins as "sacred" or "holy" indicating that rank and privilege were based on religion as well as on wealth and power.²¹¹ The Poet was the only lay professional with full *nemed* status in Gaelic Irish society, giving him all the rights and privileges of a king, rights that extended beyond the Poet's own *túath* just with kings and priests.²¹² No other member of a *túath* had any recognized rights outside of his or her own community. There were two classes of Poets in Gaelic Irish society, the *fili* and the bard, with the bard being of lesser status than the *fili*. The highest rank among the *filid*, plural for *fili*, was the *ollam*.²¹³

The Poet's ability to satirize those who offended him could be literally deadly, so people, even in the twentieth century, went to great lengths not to offend a Poet.

²⁰⁹

Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 3,4 & 43. The basic territorial unit of early Irish society was the *túath* or "petty kingdom," within which the Poet and the artist occupied special places. The Poet in particular was the only lay professional with full named status in Irish society and retained his rights outside of his original *túath*.

²¹⁰

D. A. Binchy, ed. *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin, 1978), quoted in Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, 9n. §2225.7 of the *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* states: "*ní tuath cin tri saornembthib samuidter, eclais eclais flaith file*, no *túath* is established without three noble *nemed*s: churchmen, king/lord, poet."

²¹¹ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 9.

²¹² Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 4-5 & 46.

²¹³ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 46-8.

Additionally, Poets were possessed of secret knowledge and believed to be able to divine the future. The endurance of Brehon Law among the Gaelic Irish, and later, the failure of Protestantism to make significant inroads into Gaelic society, prevented the demonization of these powers of the Poet. While the rest of Europe labeled divination and access to secret knowledge diabolical witchcraft, the Gaelic Irish recognized these abilities as simply the results of training for, and inherent in, the office of the Poet.

The Poet's power to satirize was codified in the Brehon Law system of the Gaelic Irish. The Brehon Laws originated in the seventh and eighth centuries, but survived "incompletely and corruptly" into the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.²¹⁴ Following the Norman invasion in 1170, the Gaelic Irish were systematically denied access to the English system of justice and English law. Within the English Pale around Dublin and the Liberties, English law and the English system of justice were established for English subjects of the Crown only. The Gaelic Irish, especially those living outside of the areas of official English control continued to rely on their traditional system of law, the Brehon Law. Even those Gaelic Irish within the lands controlled by English, or Norman, lords in the years following the Norman invasion, were denied access to English Common Law.²¹⁵

Satire and Prophecy: The Power of the Poet

The power to satirize was one of the Poet's most important powers. Early Irish literature records several instances of facial blemishes appearing upon the recipients of a Poet's satirical verse.²¹⁶ The literal as well as figurative loss of "face" demonstrated the

²¹⁴ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 1.

²¹⁵ Corish, *Irish Catholic Experience*, 38.

²¹⁶ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 44.

importance of both the Poet and reputation in Gaelic Irish society. The Poet's power was not simply a matter of legend, but was actually recorded in the Annals of Connacht and the Annals of Ulster. The Annals of Connacht record the death of Lord Lieutenant John Stanley as the result of a Poet's "spell."²¹⁷ The Annals of Ulster document that Cúán hua Lothcháinn, the chief Poet of Ireland, used a *firt filed*, or "poet's spell," to cause the bodies of his murderers to rot within an hour of his murder. Even English sources in the sixteenth century record the power of the Irish Poets to "rhyme to death" men and animals.²¹⁸ The *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* indicates that a Poet was justified in causing the death of a king who had offended the Poet by reciting satirical verse and piercing a clay effigy of the king with pins.²¹⁹ In this case the power of the Poet could be considered symbolic magic, killing the king by killing his reputation. While piercing a clay effigy seems to indicate an element of sympathetic magic, the heavy weight placed upon reputation and honor by the Gaelic Irish seems to be of principle significance in the Poet's ability to kill through satire. In either event, the Brehon Law system provided for a specific means by which a privileged and educated member of Irish society could legally kill an important member of Irish society via magic.

The Poet had two other particular powers. A Poet could protect a king from sorcery simply by remaining in the king's presence. This power itself indicates that the Gaelic Irish believed in *malefica* and the power of some to cause harm to others through magic different from the power of the Poet. Indeed, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, Irish

²¹⁷ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 44.

²¹⁸ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 44.

²¹⁹ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 44.

folklore demonstrates the belief in witchcraft and witches. The witches of Irish folklore were usually not the terrifying figures they seem to have been in the Continental imagination, however. The fact that the Poet's power to defend against sorcery is presented as a passive power, requiring only that the king remain in the presence of the Poet and requiring no direct action by the Poet himself to defend against the sorcery of another person, indicates the weakness of the sorcerer relative to the power of the Poet.

The third significant power of the Poet was power of prophecy used to describe and predict future events in verse. Poets divined knowledge of the future through three methods: *imbas forasnai*, "encompassing knowledge which illuminates;" *teinm láeda*, "breaking of marrow;" and *díchetal di chennaib*, "chanting from heads."²²⁰ It was the knowledge and use of these three skills that granted the Poet status in Gaelic culture. Irish folklore provides a demonstration of *imbas forasnai* exercised by a "woman poet of Connacht" named Fedelm, who had been "learning verse and vision in Alba."²²¹ The Poetess' name is clearly a reference to her profession rather than an actual name. Aillil and Medb, the king and queen of Connacht, encountered Fedelm as they were invading Ulster. The men of Ulster suffered under a curse at the time which caused them to experience the "pangs" of childbirth for nine days whenever their kingdom was invaded or endangered.²²² Medb anticipated an easy

²²⁰ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 44.

²²¹

Kinsella, *The Tain*, 60-1. The Táin Bó Cuailnge, the Cattle Raid of Cooley, was part of the "Ulster Cycle" of legends which recounted the exploits of Cu Chulainn and the Red Branch warriors. Cu Chulainn is perhaps the archetypal Irish hero and the stories about him are the most influential cycle of legends in Irish mythology. It is no coincidence that the statute memorializing the men of the 1916 Easter Rising in the Dublin General Post Office is a bronze carving of Cu Chulainn tied to the rock so that even in death he would face his enemies on his feet.

²²² Kinsella, *The Tain*, 6-8. For a more complete account of the Pangs of Ulster see Chapter 3, above.

victory and asked Fedelm, “Have you the *imbis forasnai*, the Light of Foresight?”²²³

Fedelm replied that she indeed possessed that skill and proceeded to prophesy the defeat and destruction of Medb’s army at the hands of Cu Chulainn:

I see him moving to the fray:
take warning, watch him well,
Cúchulainn, Sualdam’s son!
Now I see him in pursuit.

Whole hosts he will destroy,
making dense massacre.
In thousands you will yield your heads.
I am Fedelm. I hide nothing.

The blood starts from warrior’s wounds
— total ruin — at his touch:
your warriors dead, the warriors
of Deda mac Sin prowling loose;
torn corpses, women wailing,
because of him — the Forge-Hound.²²⁴

Fedelm did not engage in any ritual to invoke this power of prophesy, though it must be noted that all of her answers to Medb’s questions were in verse, even when the answer was a single line, there is a certain rhythm in the words. Fedelm also asserted that she was only reporting the truth of her vision without obfuscation or omission. Another point of interest in this account was the fact that Medb repeatedly addressed Fedelm as “prophetess,” *banfáith* in Gaelige, when Fedelm specifically identified herself as a “woman poet.”²²⁵ Clearly the power of prophesy and divination were nearly synonymous with the role of the Poet.

²²³ Kinsella, *The Tain*, 61.

²²⁴ Kinsella, *The Tain*, 63.

²²⁵ Kinsella, *The Tain*, 61, 60 respectively.

While the Roman Catholic Church does not appear to have successfully demonized the power of the Poet to prophesy, there were some ecclesiastical reactions to these practices. The ninth-century bishop-king Cormac macCuilannain recorded that Saint Padraig banned the rites of *imbas forasnai* and *teinm láeda* due to their pagan nature.²²⁶ While there was no particular ritual described in *The Tain* when Fedelm used *imbas forasnai* to prophesy the defeat of Medb's army, Cormac did describe a particular ritual attached to the rite of *imbas forasnai* wherein the Poet chewed on a piece of meat, either pig, dog or cat, then offered it to an idol. The Poet then placed his hands on his cheeks and went to sleep. The future was then revealed to the Poet as he slept.²²⁷ The sequence of paganism to superstition to Devil-worship seems to have been interrupted in Ireland relative to the prophesies of the Poet. Elsewhere in Europe divination and prophesy, even by educated magicians, was deemed heretical and diabolical.

Female Poets and Illegal Satirists

Fedelm's identification of herself as "poet" and her claim that she had just returned from being trained in Scotland, Alba, coupled with the obvious symbolism of her name indicates that she was a *fili*, legitimately so, and not a bard. Fedelm's unquestioned position as a woman poet indicates that the profession of Poet, while male dominated, was not exclusive to men. Indeed the *Annals of Inisfallen* include documentation of the death of Uallah nicMuinechán, the "banfili Érenn" or "woman poet of Ireland."²²⁸ While women could be trained and recognized as a full fledged and legal *fili*, this was probably rare. The

²²⁶ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 45. Here I use the Gaelic spelling of Patrick.

²²⁷ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 45.

²²⁸ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 49.

most likely occasion for the training of a *banfili* would be in case of *fili* having no male heirs, and only a daughter who demonstrated some aptitude for poetry and prophesy. More frequently, based on accounts in the law texts, women satirists were not legally Poets but were satirists who used verse for malicious purposes such as sorcery or witchcraft.²²⁹

There were serious legal sanctions for the unlawful use of satire, particularly for a female illegal satirist. The *Bretha Crólige* classified the *birach briathar*, “one who is sharp with words” with the female werewolf and a “vagrant woman.”²³⁰ The association of “vagrant woman” with the werewolf and “one who is sharp with words” may indicate that “vagrant woman” was a euphemism for witch. Even in Irish folklore the witch was frequently identified as a woman who had moved into, but was not originally from that community implying a certain transience for the witch.²³¹ Additionally, by the time of their denouncement to the authorities, the witch was often a poor older woman who may have been homeless. It should also be noted that the Gaelic words for “to satirize” were *aérad* and *rindad* which basically meant “to strike” and “to cut,” representative of the harmful and destructive nature of satire. This seems to also imply that satire uttered by someone who was not legally a *fili* could be just as injurious as the satire of the legitimate Poet. Additionally, there was deep hostility toward the illegal satirist in the religious texts. The

²²⁹ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 49.

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Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 50. The *Bretha Crólige* was one of the law texts of the Brehon system. Translating to “judgements of blood-lying”, the *Bretha Crólige* addressed the obligations of a person who unlawfully injured another and was translated in 1938 by Binchey.

²³¹

William Butler Yeats, *Irish Faerie and Folk Tales*, 167. In describing Sarah Kennedy, the ‘Queen’s County Witch,’ Yeats noted that she “had long been a resident in that neighborhood, but still she was a stranger, and came there no one knew from whence.”

Fís Adomnán decreed that the *cáinte*, or illegal satirist, was doomed to spend “eternity up to his waist in the black quagmires of hell with sorceresses and preachers of heresy.”²³² While the inclusion of both heretics and sorceresses in the same punishment in a religious law text seems to imply a connection between witchcraft and heresy, the two remain separate groups within this code. The Fís Adomnan specifically ascribed a male gender to the *cáinte*, implying that not just women could be illegal satirists. Alternatively, there were legitimate uses of satire, even by someone who was not a Poet. In these cases the legal use of satire was intended to put pressure on a wrongdoer, compelling him or her to obey the law or to compel that person to honor an obligation to the woman satirist.²³³

The codification of penalties for the illegal satirist and the sorceress (the word “witch” seems never to have been used) provides both the ruling elite and the peasantry with a particular form of agency in addressing malefic magical acts. Certainly, the witchcraft statutes of England, Scotland and the continent were accessible to most of the population in those countries. The Brehon system, however, addressed all crimes in terms of “honor-price, blood-price” and physical penalties. Since everyone had a specific “honor-price” by which compensation for injury or death was calculated, penalties for witchcraft were demystified. The measurable and comprehensible injuries were the focus, rather than the abstract concept of Devil-worship. *Maleficia* became just another crime, along with illegal satire, in Gaelic Ireland.

²³²

Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 51. The Fís Adomnán was one of the religious law texts recorded in the *Lebor na hUidre*, the Book of the Dun Cow and addresses ecclesiastic sanctions against proscribed behaviors.

²³³ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 49, 51.

Ollam and Druidic Traditions

The *filid* were directly linked to the pre-Christian *druid*, plural for *druí*, in early Irish society. Patrick Ford's studies of Welsh epic poetry, including the Mabinogi and Taliesin cycles, "...examin[ed]...in the light of the tales that survived in th medieval repertory of a sister Celtic country, Ireland," demonstrated a correlation between the Welsh Celtic Poet and the Irish Gaelic Poet.²³⁴ Ford found that there were significant similarities between the poem "Cad Goddeu" by Taliesin and the poetry of Amorgin of Ireland, both of which included elements of prophesy and transmigration of the soul.²³⁵ Amorgin as presented in the quasi-historical *Lebor Gabála* is the archetypal Gaelic Poet whose power included divination and prophecy, what Morton Bloomfield and Charles Dunn referred to as the "poet-seer."²³⁶

Ford points out that early Irish literature frequently obscures the distinction between the *druí* and the *fili* as "seer." In this context the concept of "seeing" indicates knowledge. The *filid* (plural for *fili*) were clearly the keepers of traditional lore, genealogies and historical information, and the confusion between the poet-seers and the druids was due to

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Patrick K. Ford, trans and ed., *The Mabinogi and Other medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); and Patrick K. Ford, trans and ed., *The Poetry of Llywarch Hen* (Berkeley: University of Californai Press, 1974), xi.

²³⁵ Ford, *The Mabinogi*, 18 & 183; and Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 59 -60.

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Ford, *The Mabinogi*, 18; Morton W. Bloomfield and Charles W. Dunn, *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), 37. The *Lebor Gabála*, or *The Book of Conquests*, contains the traditional origins of the *Gaoidhil*, or Gael, and details the successive conquests of Ireland culminating in the Gaelic invasion. "With its elaborate portrayal of the evolution of Gaelic ascendancy, it constituted the central historiographical component of bardic [poetic, *filid*] ideology." Marc Caball, *Poets and Politics: Reaction and Continuity in Irish Poetry, 1558-1625* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 4-5. The *Lebor Gabála* includes the origin mythology of the Gaelic people which was later adapted into Christian, Creation traditions and, later still, manipulated by Gaelic Poets into political propaganda to "justify their political and social hegemony over Ireland."

their overlapping functions such that the *fíli* emerged as representatives of several offices usually ascribed to bards, druids and seers.²³⁷ Early Irish treatises, which pre-date other European texts on poetry, provide elaborate regulations regarding the role of the Poet. The *fíli*, as noted above, was the higher class of poet-seer in Gaelic Irish society and underwent rigorous training that required the memorization of intricate meters, myths, legends, genealogies, place lore and the comprehension of the traditions of law.²³⁸ The *fíli*, thus, had to produce poetry, recall the past, interpret the present and predict the future.²³⁹ The number of stories a *fíli* was required to memorize was based upon his ranking within the hierarchy of the Poet class; the *ollam*, as the highest ranked *fíli* was expected to memorize 350 tales.²⁴⁰

There is a strong etymological link between the Irish *druid* and the Welsh *derwydd* that extends to the Irish *fíli* and *faith*, or prophet. The Gaelic word “*faith*” is closely linked to the Welsh *gwawd*, poetry. Additionally, *aí*, the Gaelic word for “poetic art,” is etymologically related to the Welsh *awen*, poetic inspiration. In this instance the word “inspiration” has the literal connotation of “breathing in” by the Poet, *fíli* of his unique vision, resulting in his special knowledge.²⁴¹

With the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, “the role of the druid evaporated.”²⁴² While Bloomfield and Dunn argue that the role of the poet-seer also diminished, it would seem, rather, that the role became more consolidated and the paganistic religious aspects

²³⁷ Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 6-7.

²³⁸ Bloomfield and Dunn, *The Role of the Poet*, 48; Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 47.

²³⁹ Bloomfield and Dunn, *The Role of the Poet*, 48.

²⁴⁰ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 47.

²⁴¹ Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 7-8.

²⁴² Bloomfield and Dunn, *The Role of the Poet*, 49.

more covert and hybridized into Christian concepts. This was true in both Irish and Welsh poetry. The “Graves of Clonmacnois” was essentially a “praise poem” typical of pre-Christian Irish traditions, wherein the Poet exalted an ancient cemetery and the local religious community over the rest of Ireland. “Graves” bound the pre-Christian cemetery with the genealogy of the local Abbots and royalty.²⁴³ Similarly, “*Englynion y Beddau*”, “Stanzas of the Graves,” a pre-Christian Welsh poem associated the sites of various Welsh standing stones with heroic traditions and demonstrates a similar, if not identical, attitude toward royal genealogies and history.²⁴⁴ Additionally, the poem of Cad Goddeu, written by the real Taliesin, presents concepts of transmigration of the soul and a very animistic concept of continuous reincarnation:

I was in many shapes before I was released:
 I was a slender, enchanted sword - I believe that it was done.
 I was rain-drops in the air, I was the stars’ beam;
 I was a word in letters, I was a book in origin
 I was lanterns of light for a year and a half;
 I was a bridge that stretched over sixty estuaries;
 I was a path, I was an eagle, I was a coracle in the seas;
 I was a bubble in beer, I was a drop in a shower;
 I was a sword in hand, I was a shield in battle.²⁴⁵

A traditional Irish poem by Amorgin, printed in the *Lebor Gabála* contains similar transmigratory and reincarnative imagery:

I am the wind which blows o’er the sea;
 I am the wave of the deep;
 I am the bull of seven battles;
 I am the eagle on the rock
 I am a tear of the sun;

²⁴³ Bloomfield and Dunn, *The Role of the Poet*, 51.

²⁴⁴ Bloomfield and Dunn, *The Role of the Poet*, 51.

²⁴⁵ Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 59-60; and *The Mabinogi*, 184.

I am the fairest of plants;
I am a boar for courage;
I am a lake in the plain;
I am the word of knowledge;
I am the head of the battle-dealing spear
I am the god who fashions fire in the head.²⁴⁶

Both of the above poems contain assertions by the author-poet, who is presumed to be speaking through the mouth of the performing poet, that he previously manifested on earth as an act of nature, a natural element such as a lake or a path, the source of knowledge and a weapon. The direct relation between Welsh and Irish poetic traditions becomes quite clear as does the mystical nature of the Gaelic and Celtic Poet. The Gaelic Poet's power of prophecy was similar to that attributed to the druids, further linking the *fili* to the *druí* in Gaelic society.²⁴⁷ Thus, through the *filid*, certain aspects of the druid were preserved in Gaelic Irish society.

***Filid* and Shamans: Similar Social Functions, Similar Societal Effects?**

The legally defined and culturally accepted magical power of the Poet in Gaelic Irish society seems to have had a similar impact upon witchcraft beliefs as the shaman seems to have had on Siberian culture. Hutton noted that Siberia was the geographically largest witch-free region in the inhabited world, which he attributed to the influence of shamanism.²⁴⁸ While the vast expanse of Siberia is populated by approximately thirty-five ethnic groups, all of them have a similar social office which has come to be recognized as the shaman. Among the various traditions of the indigenous Siberian peoples, misfortune

²⁴⁶ Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 60.

²⁴⁷ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 44.

²⁴⁸ Hutton, "Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," 27.

was attributed to the work of either ancestral or nature-spirits. It was the shaman who possessed the power to appease or drive off these spirits by entering ritual trances, séances, which permitted him to enter the spirit world.²⁴⁹ The shaman performed the role of mediator between the spirits who inhabit the world, animating everything, and the people.²⁵⁰ The primary functions of the shaman, as spiritual mediator, were healing those afflicted by the spirits, defending the village against further afflictions and forms of prophesy.²⁵¹ The Gaelic Poet's power of divination and transmigration of the soul have been presented by Ford as directly related to the traditions of Siberian shamanism, as the poetry of Taliesin and Amorgin, above, evidence.²⁵²

While Hutton argues that the Siberian shamanic tradition was isolated from the majority of western Europe by the Ural mountains, Vladimir Basilov argues that shamanism was far more universal, probably arising in the Stone Age to address the needs of early peoples in confronting the power of the world around them which they explained as the work of powerful spirits.²⁵³ The shaman arose as a specialized profession within the clan system as a barrier between his people and these spirits.²⁵⁴ Increasingly complex social

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Hutton, "Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," 27-8 and "Shamanism: Mapping the Boundaries, *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* (Winter, 2006), 212.

²⁵⁰ Anna Reid, *The Shaman's Coat: A Native History of Siberia* (New York: Walker & Co., 2002), 4-5.

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Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, ed., *Shamanic Worlds: Rituals and Lore of Siberia and Central Asia* (London: North Castle Books, 1997), xv. Balzer notes that the only real agreement amongst shamanic scholars is the shamans' roles in medicine and healing. However, there seems to be a large consensus on the shamans' propensity for offering prophetic vision, especially as to who will be struck ill by the spirits next.

²⁵² Ford, *The Mabinogi*, 18 & 183; and Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 59-60.

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Hutton, "Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," 28; Vladimir Basilov, "Chosen by the Spirits," in *Shamanic Worlds*, ed. Balzer, 29-30.

²⁵⁴ Basilov, "Chosen," 29-31.

structures, such those that developed in western Europe and southern Asia, led to increasingly complex religious ideas with greater and greater distance between the deity and the people. The priesthood of these increasingly complex religions were frequently drawn, initially, from the ranks of the shamans. While Basilov points to the example of the early days of the Mongol empire to support this argument, it could also reasonably be applied to the development of the Celtic *druid* as a specific class of people with specialized knowledge.²⁵⁵ The powers attributed to the Celtic druid increased as Celtic society became increasingly complex, were fragmented between the *druí, fili* and *fáith* and then partially re-consolidated after the Christianization of Ireland in the office of the *fili*.

The central ritual of the Siberian shamanic tradition is the *séance*, the public performance of the shaman wherein he or she enters an ecstatic trance and communicates with various spirits in an attempt to identify the cause of a victim's illness and, thus, effect a cure.²⁵⁶ Within these trances, the shaman also receives prophetic visions and information from the spirits, often for the purpose of identifying the location or clan of the next person to be afflicted by the spirits.²⁵⁷ Central to, or in Kenin-Lopson's argument exclusive to, the shamanic ritual *séance* was the ecstatic state through which the shaman entered the spirit worlds and communicated with and sometimes battled the spirits.²⁵⁸ The shaman

²⁵⁵ Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 7.

²⁵⁶ Nikolai A. Alekseev, "Shamans and Their Religious Practices," in *Shamanic Worlds*, ed. Balzer, 49.

²⁵⁷

Alekseev, "Shamans and Their Religious Practices," 59; Mongush B. Kenin-Lopson, "Tuvan Shamanic Folklore," in *Shamanic Worlds*, ed., Balzer, 118.

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Kenin-Lopson, "Tuvan Shamanic Folklore," 107; Basilov, "Chosen by the Spirits," 16; Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 58, the shaman is "preeminently an ecstatic."

experienced transmigration of the soul and shape shifting during the séance and trance. The trance and séance effectively ended when the shaman returned from the “ritual-journey.”²⁵⁹

Giraldus Cambrensis, Gerald of Wales, noted a similar ecstatic trance-like state among the Welsh Poets, *awenydd* in the twelfth century. Giraldus recorded that the Poets entered a trance wherein their, “bodies [were] taken over by some force that apparently speaks through them.”²⁶⁰ Welsh and Irish poetic traditions are replete with examples of the deceased speaking through the mouth of the performing poet. In Ireland, the discovery of the *Táin Bó Cuailgne* occurred when Senchas and his son were at the grave of Fergus who appeared to them after they effectively summoned his spirit. Fergus then recited the *Táin* to Senchas.²⁶¹ In the Welsh poetic traditions, the performance of the poems of Llywarch Hen seemed to imply that the poet summoned the spirit of Llywarch, who then speaks through him from the realm of the dead.²⁶²

The Siberian shaman narrates his or her journey through the spirit worlds during the séance through the poetic chanting that accompanies the ecstatic state and serves to present the dialogue between the shaman and the evil spirits to those watching and participating in the séance.²⁶³ Indeed all of the various spirits encountered by the shaman speak through him or her, the helper spirits that report back to the shaman regarding the nature of the victim’s illness and the evil spirit afflicting the victim. The performance of the séance is essentially

²⁵⁹ Alekseev, “Shamans and Their Religious Practices,” 70.

²⁶⁰ Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 58.

²⁶¹

Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 58. The *Táin Bó Cuailgne*, the Cattle Raid of Cooley, is the cycle of legends about the hero Cú Chulainn and the invasion of Ulster by the armies of Connacht.

²⁶² Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 59.

²⁶³ Alekseev, “Shamans and Their Religious Practices,” 55-6.

a dialogue between the shaman and the people gathered in the yurt to attend the séance. The poetic components and forms of the séance mirror the forms and functions of Celtic poetry, which was also intended to be performed, occasionally as a dialogue with the audience.²⁶⁴

From prophecy to the public, interactive performance of poetic verse to the “channeling” of spirits from other worlds, it is clear that the Siberian shaman and Celtic Poet exercised similar power and filled similar functions within their respective cultures and societies. The source of those poetic, prophetic and ritual abilities seem, in some cases to have similar origins. The shaman was a hereditary calling, just as the *fili*; however, the spirits were also known to have selected specific individuals to fill the role of shaman when the office became vacant. Irish Poets were often believed to have been touched by the faeries, a connection that provided them with their special talents for poetry and verse. Yeats noted that a particular faerie, the *Leannán-sidhe*, or faerie mistress, had attached herself to the great poets of Ireland from Oisín to those of the nineteenth century.²⁶⁵ The *Leannán-sidhe* fed from the life of the poet to whom she was attached while providing artistic inspiration, causing her “lovers” to waste away and die young.²⁶⁶ The “peasant poets” as well received their inspiration and talent from the touch of the faeries known as the *Sidheog*, or little faerie, such as Carolan, who “gathered his tunes while sleeping on a faerie rath.”²⁶⁷ The Gaelic faerie is anthropologically speaking a “land spirit.”²⁶⁸ While Oisín and Carolan may be exceptional examples of Poets in Irish history, the folkloric

²⁶⁴ Ford, *Llywarch Hen*, 56-7.

²⁶⁵ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 159; and *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 385.

²⁶⁶ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 385, and *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 159.

²⁶⁷ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 383.

²⁶⁸ Hutton, “The global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 32.

traditions described by Yeats certainly indicate that the Poet had a special relationship with the fairies not dissimilar to the shaman's relationship with the spirits.

When witches did appear in Siberian legends and folklore, they are typically supernatural females who serve as a foil to the mythical hero, who invariably defeats them.²⁶⁹ The Fennian cycle of legends about the Irish hero Finn MacCumhail demonstrate similar characteristics. In the tale of "The Cave of Ceiscoran," Finn and his warriors, the Fianna, were captured by three "hags" who wound them in magical hanks of yarn that stole strength and courage. The hags would have killed Finn and his warriors but for the timely arrival of Goll, son of Morna, who slew two of the witches. The third was compelled to beg for Goll's "protection" in order to save her own life and promised to release the Fianna. While Goll is not a Poet himself, there were two Poets among the Fianna, "Fergus of the True Lips," whom Goll ordered released first, and Oisín. Upon his release, Fergus "made great praises" of Goll for defeating the witches and rescuing the Fianna.²⁷⁰ In later folklore, as collected by William Butler Yeats, the witch remains a far less frightening figure than she was on the continent. In some instances, she is almost comical in appearance despite her express pact with the Devil. The legend of "A Queens County Witch" depicts the witch as the legs of a man from the waist down running down the lane away from a herd of cattle, which fell over and began leaking milk after being struck by a Catholic Priest. The legs turned back into the form of Sarah Kennedy, a reputed witch, who thus died in agony for having failed in the task assigned to her by the Devil.²⁷¹ While the Poet's role in each of

²⁶⁹ Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," 27.

²⁷⁰ Gregory, *Irish Myths*, 240-2.

²⁷¹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 164-7.

these particular legends is, admittedly, minor at best, the figure of the witch and concepts of dangerous magic seem as much influenced by the cultural tradition of the Poet in Ireland as these concepts were by shamanic tradition in Siberia. The Poet, then, seems to have had a similar, though not identical, impact on Gaelic culture as the shaman seems to have had on Siberian culture in suppressing witchcraft fears and accusations.

Conclusion

The legally defined and accepted magic of the Poet in Gaelic Irish society provided an alternative conception of magic that was not derived from demonic or diabolical sources. While the Poet's power of divination was declared to be a pagan ritual by Saint Padraig, there does not appear to have been any subsequent demonization of the Poet by the Church in Ireland. Religious invectives against the illegal satirist in Brehon Law relate primarily to the actual harm caused by the "misuse of the magic power of satire" that the authors of the law texts sought to punish.²⁷² The *Bretha Cóligne* reduced the status of a *cáinte*, illegal satirist, on the grounds that it was "more proper in the sight of God to repudiate [him] than to protect" him when he was injured or ill.²⁷³ These sanctions were based on the misuse of the legitimate power of the Poet and the wrongful injury to another person's reputation and honor, not because of the use of diabolical magic.

In areas beyond the English Pale the Brehon laws endured into the seventeenth century; and, while the Poet's power to kill through satire seems to have waned by this time, his remained the most respected profession in Gaelic Ireland. Satirical condemnation of the English ways of "purse-proud upstarts" were common in seventeenth-century Gaelic poems;

²⁷² Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 49-50.

²⁷³ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 50.

and the recitation of verse continued to be the means of educating the illiterate peasantry.²⁷⁴ Though no longer magical, ridicule by a Poet could still destroy the reputation of a Gael even in the twentieth century.²⁷⁵ The endurance of prestige of the Poet demonstrates the continuation of the Brehon tradition, which would, therefore, have continued to inform the popular concept of witches and witchcraft among the Gaelic Irish. Despite the ecclesiastical concern with witchcraft, the Gaelic Irish appear less frightened of the witch and witchcraft than other Europeans.²⁷⁶ Folkloric records of witches, as collected by Yeats portray the witch as more of a nuisance than frightful figure.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 4-5, 34.

²⁷⁵

Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 43-4. Kelly notes that the characteristics of the Poet recorded by Sanhurst in the sixteenth century persisted into the twentieth century when Tomás O’Crionhthainn reported that he left work to listen to a Poet rather than risk being ridiculed by him.

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Elwin Lapoint, “Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting,” 81. Lapoint cites Reverend Laurence Renehan, *Collections of Irish Church History*, vol I, *Irish Archbishops*, ed. Rev. D. McCarthy (Dublin: C.M. Warren, 1861), 161, 502, to demonstrate that the Catholic clergy sermonized against the evils of witchcraft sorcery and demonic divination.

²⁷⁷ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 164-8, 176-9

Chapter V
Faeries:
The Endurance of Gaelic Irish Fairy-Faith as an Alternative to Witchcraft Belief

While the Poet in Gaelic society provided a culturally acceptable alternative to the malefic magic of diabolical witches, faeries served as an alternate cause for the misfortunes typically attributed to witches in early modern Europe. Faeries were blamed for unexplained injuries to animals, loss of milk from a cow, the failure of butter to churn and the theft and death of children. Gaelic belief in faeries endured into and beyond the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and actually into the twentieth century. In 1959, the County Mayo Road had to be redesigned and rerouted because the construction crew refused to continue along the originally designated route. The crew refused to continue construction because doing so would require the destruction of a “faerie fort.”²⁷⁸ Similarly, one year earlier the residents on Mullet Peninsula in western County Mayo refused to string a fence across a faerie rath creating such an uproar that a representative of the Dail Eireann was obliged to personally respond to the region to resolve the matter.²⁷⁹ A far less charming demonstration of faerie faith took place in Clonmel in 1895 when Michael Cleary, convinced that his wife, Bridget, had been replaced by a faerie changeling, burned Bridget to death in an attempt to drive the changeling faerie out through their chimney.²⁸⁰ Clearly the rural Irish, particularly the Gaelic Irish, maintained a strong belief in the existence and power of faeries, or *sidhe*;

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Thomas McGrath, “Fairy Faith and Changelings: The Burning of Bridget Cleary in 1895,” *Studies* 71 (Summer, 1982), 178. A faerie fort, or faerie rath is usually the remains of an ancient ringfort, which may have eroded to little more than a circular mound on a hill. These ruins are believed to be sacred to the faeries who use them for gatherings and festivals. In some cases they are believed to provide access to the faerie lands.

²⁷⁹ Ed Cray and Francis D. Adams, “Fairy Rath,” *Western Folklore* 17 no. 4 (October, 1958), 282.

²⁸⁰ McGrath, “Fairy Faith and Changelings,” 181.

a belief that was also extant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The historical identity of the Irish faeries is problematic as there are several schools of thought regarding the matter. Some believe the faeries to be the remains of the Tuatha de Dannan, the pre-Christian gods of Ireland and that their gathering places, the faerie raths, are the old Dannan burial grounds.²⁸¹ The Tuatha de Dannan, “the People of the goddess Danu,” were conquered by the Milesians, the first Celts to invade Ireland. Others believe that the faeries are fallen angels, cast out of heaven *not* with Satan and his demons, but for the separate transgression of arrogance, or perhaps selfishness. Having thus fallen to earth, they became the faeries, given to self indulgent activity and caprice; whether angel or pagan god, the faeries’ common appearance as diminutive creatures was nothing more than artifice as even their physical size was capricious.²⁸² Despite being fallen angels, faeries are distinct from the demonic agents of the Devil even when working mischief and should not be conflated with the diabolism of witches, “because their evil was wholly without malice.”²⁸³

Faerie Mischief versus Diabolical Witchcraft in Ireland

In an effort to understand otherwise inexplicable events, misfortunes and tragedies, early modern Europeans turned to witchcraft as an explanation. Sudden animal illnesses, especially those upon which the rural population relied for survival, were frightening mysteries. Even more so was the sudden decline in dairy production of normally productive livestock or the unexpected dearth of butter in the churn.²⁸⁴ All three of these were

²⁸¹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 3; and Paul Muldoon, “Forward,” *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, x.

²⁸² Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 4.

²⁸³ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 3.

²⁸⁴ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 86-87.

explained as the effects of diabolical witchcraft by continental Europeans, as well as the early modern English and Scottish. The timing of these misfortunes was usually found to coincide with a quarrel between the victim and a member of the community with a reputation for witchcraft.

Witches attacked their victims' livestock, dairy production, even the victims and their families themselves out of envy, malice and vengeance.²⁸⁵ Witches magically stole milk from cows and butter from churns in effort to boost their own productivity and income or, more commonly, to undermine the productivity of a rival. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were periods of financial hardship for many Europeans. Under these conditions the witch fared particularly poorly and developed resentment toward those financially better off than herself. The witches' magical recourse typically operated in the negative only, detrimental to her victims, but rarely beneficial to herself.²⁸⁶ The Devil after all lied when he promised to provide the witch with wealth in exchange for her service. There were occasions where neighbors became suspicious of the particular good fortune of others, especially when that good fortune seemed to be excessively consistent, and blamed the unusually high level of domestic production on diabolical witchcraft that actually served to enrich the practitioner. For the most part, however, witchcraft only ever resulted in misfortune to others and not the to advancement of the witch. Malefic witchcraft was thus the product of the witch's longstanding envy over the victim's previous successes. Previous expressions of aggression and resentment by the witch toward the victim only served to

²⁸⁵ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 84.

²⁸⁶ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 93.

reinforce this belief.²⁸⁷

Identification of the witch as the cause of these misfortunes provided both a source of comfort for the victim *and* a potential solution. Identification of the human agent responsible for the misfortune made what was otherwise inexplicable, a comprehensible event. Knowing who the witch was, and possibly concluding the source of her resentment, also provided a solution to the problem. The witch could be appeased or threatened into removing the curse, once again demonstrating human agency over naturally occurring disasters. Resolution of the previous quarrel could cause the witch to voluntarily lift the spell afflicting an animal or person. Alternately, failing that resolution, the witch could be forced to remove the curse or risk public denouncement and an official trial. Public denouncement could exert enough societal pressure to coerce the witch into undoing the malefic enchantment. Failing the normal mechanisms of social conflict resolution, official denouncement and prosecution was also believed to alleviate the problem in that the death of the witch would end the power of her spells.²⁸⁸

The patterns and importance of dairy production in Ireland were consistent with those in England and on the continent. The care of milking cows and feeding calves was primarily women's work, and milk and milk products provided the primary food source among the Gaelic peasantry, which was supplemented, though not replaced, by potatoes.²⁸⁹ Supernatural attacks on dairy cattle and food producing livestock in seventeenth century Ireland were no less devastating than those same attacks were in the rest of early modern

²⁸⁷ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 93-94.

²⁸⁸ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 95.

²⁸⁹ MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 176.

Europe. The Gaelic Irish, however, identified faeries rather than witches as the source of inexplicable, seemingly magical, misfortunes in dairy production and developed protective practices to ward off mischievous attacks by the faeries. Many of these old farmer practices and habits had their roots in pagan practices and rituals which continued into the seventeenth century and beyond.²⁹⁰ The Irish were notoriously superstitious and it was not until the twentieth century that the Catholic Church finally succeeded in suppressing the “pagan” practices of the Irish to the point that these “ceased to be commonplaces of daily life.”²⁹¹

In the seventeenth century, and beyond, rural Gaelic farmers not only believed in the genuine existence of faeries, but believed that dairy production and livestock were particular targets for faerie mischief.. In mid-summer, the Irish lite fires on St. John’s Eve to ward away passing faeries. On May Day milking pails were adorned with flowers and rings of mountain ash were attached to cows’ udders to protect them from the malicious spells of faeries.²⁹² These two holidays coincided with what were believed to be two of the three major festival days in the faerie calendar; the third being November Eve, Halloween, when the faeries were at their most gloomy.²⁹³ Lapses in courtesy were also believed to allow faeries access to a person’s home to work mischief. The seventeenth century practice of taking a turn at the churn when entering a home where butter was being churned derived from the belief that failure to do so would allow “some supernatural agency” to cause the

²⁹⁰ MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 177.

²⁹¹ MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 41, 177.

²⁹² MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 177-78.

²⁹³

Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 4-5. November Eve, according to the old Gaelic calendar was the first night of winter.

butter to disappear.²⁹⁴ That supernatural agency would have been the faeries.

Belief in faeries was not confined to the rural Gaelic peasantry. The Gaelicization of the Anglo-Norman settlers following the invasion of Ireland in 1169 by the Earl of Pembroke and his followers resulted in the diffusion of Gaelic folk belief and superstitions amongst the descendants of the original invaders. Those descendants later became known as the “Old English” or the Anglo-Irish. The Anglo-Irish and Gaelic aristocracy maintained a persistent belief in at least one particular faerie, the banshee or *bean-sidhe*, the woman faerie. The banshee was said to mourn the death of the members of the particular noble houses to which she was attached. Perhaps once a sociable faerie, she had grown solitary through sorrow.²⁹⁵ In Leinster the banshee is known as the *bean-chaointe*, the keening woman, whose wail is so piercing as to shatter glass.²⁹⁶ In eastern Munster the banshee was known as *badhbh*, one of the three aspects of the Morrigan or *Mórrígu*, the Gaelic goddess of war and fertility.²⁹⁷ *Badhbh* appeared in the Ulster cycle of Irish myths wherein she flew, shrieking, over the invading army of queen Meadhbh, creating chaos and literally frightening some of the soldiers to death.²⁹⁸ This correlation between the banshee and the Morrigan seems to support the belief that the faeries are the remains of the old Tuatha de Dannan

²⁹⁴ MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 177.

²⁹⁵ MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 179; Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 99 & 386.

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“Irish Fairies: The Banshee,” Irelandseye.com,
<http://www.irelandseye.com/animation/explorer/banshee.html/> (Accessed 8 December 2009).

²⁹⁷

Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 388; Muldoon, “Forward,” xv; Richard P. Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife: A Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000), 25 & 235. Yeats has the name spelled “badh” while Parker has it spelled “badhbh.” The second spelling is more consistent with one of the aspects of the Morrigan.

²⁹⁸ Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife*, 235.

gods.

Livestock were not the only victims of the faeries' attacks. People were also subject to malicious magical attacks by faeries, commonly known as a "faerie blast" or a "faerie stroke." Victims of the "faerie blast" suffered from the development of tumors or paralysis.²⁹⁹ On the continent the "sudden" onset of paralysis, lameness, blindness and other "various infirmities," was blamed on the *maleficia* of diabolical witches.³⁰⁰ In Ireland angry faeries were believed to paralyze men and cattle by shooting darts at them.³⁰¹ The songs of joyful faeries were also dangerous: when over heard by young girls, the music could inspire a longing for the faerie songs that caused the girls to pine away and die, "for love of that singing."³⁰² Lingering illnesses and strange behavior in young women were often associated with bewitchment.³⁰³

Faerie Changelings versus Infanticide

Of all the crimes of which the witch was accused in early modern Europe, perhaps the most threatening was infanticide. By the seventeenth century a variety of horrific elements had been attached to the murder of children and infants by diabolical witches, including cannibalism, sacrifice and the use of the children's body parts in the making of various spells and poisons. A high percentage of witchcraft accusations in early modern

²⁹⁹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 159-60.

³⁰⁰ Kramer, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 139.

³⁰¹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 5.

³⁰² Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 5.

³⁰³

Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 73 & 80; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 2. Boyer and Nissenbaum noted various "strange" behaviors on the part of the "bewitched girls in Salem, including "odd postures," "distempers" and "fits" with some girls acting out in strange and inappropriate ways.

Europe involved infant illness and/or death.³⁰⁴ Children and infants were subject to the same array of sudden and lingering illness that witches inflicted on adults. The death of children threatened the perpetuation of the family and property in ways that not even the loss of dairy production could approximate. Additionally, contrary to previously held perceptions, early modern parents placed emotional value on their children similar to, if not identical to, the emotional attachment of modern parents. Witchcraft prosecutions involved considerable expense which would not have been borne by parents motivated by strict practicality.³⁰⁵

In Ireland it was faeries, not witches who were responsible for the disappearance and observed death of children. Faeries were believed to steal human children and replace them with ancient withered faeries, enchanted pieces of wood or sickly faerie children.³⁰⁶ Inevitably these replacements, known as “Changelings” wasted away and died. While the faerie practice of stealing and replacing children was described as the one malicious habit of an otherwise good if capricious people, the resultant infant and child deaths were rarely if ever blamed on the malefic magic of diabolical witches by the Gaelic Irish or Anglo-Irish.³⁰⁷ Indeed, of the few recorded witchcraft trials originating in the Protestant controlled areas, none included accusations of infanticide. Child stealing was the particular province of faeries with suspicious deaths being thus attributed to replacement of human children with faerie changelings who withered and died.

³⁰⁴ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 78.

³⁰⁵ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 78.

³⁰⁶ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 53; and *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 387.

³⁰⁷

Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 387. Yeats describe the act of replacing a stolen human child with a faerie changeling as “a habit worthy of the witch,” demonstrating the evilness of this act.

Humans had certain power in both attracting the attention of faeries toward children and in driving away the changeling and recovering the stolen child. If a person should “‘over look a child,’ that is look on it with envy, the faeries have it in their power.”³⁰⁸ Looking upon the child of another with envy or jealousy would seem to both attract the attention of the faeries and provide them with opportunity to steal away the child. Yeats’ citation of the expression “over look” actually casts new light on the 1661 confession of Florence Newton. When pressed by the assize as to whether or not she had bewitched Mary Longdon, Newton confessed that she “may have over looked” Longdon and insisted that there was a difference between bewitching and overlooking.³⁰⁹ Given the information presented by Yeats, it seems likely that Newton was concerned that her jealousy toward Longdon brought the malicious attention of faeries upon her.

Once the sickly wasting child was identified as a changeling, certain steps could be taken to drive the faerie away which would compel the return of the real child. Fire was believed to be the bane of faeries and, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, “every sort of phantom.”³¹⁰ Folkloric tradition demonstrates that faeries were so afraid of fire that the earnest threat of burning was enough to drive away changeling and procure the immediate return of the stolen human child.³¹¹ In other cases, expulsion of the changeling required

³⁰⁸ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 53.

³⁰⁹

Byrne, *Witchcraft in Ireland*, 31; Seymore, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 120; O’ Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 57.

³¹⁰ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 53.

³¹¹

Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 56-57. Yeats recounts a tale he called “The Brewery of Egg-Shells” as told to him by T. Crofton Croker, in which a woman discovered that her child had been replaced by a wizened old faerie. Following the advice of a wise woman, she attempted to drive the creature away by attacking it with a red hot fire poker, but she tripped and dropped the poker on her way to the cradle. When

actual exposure to flames. According to Lady Francesca Speranza Wilde, one certain method to determine if a child is a changeling was to place it on the fire and recite the phrase, “Burn, burn, burn - if of the Devil, burn; but if of God and the saints be safe from harm.”³¹² There seems to be significant Protestant, perhaps Presbyterian, influences in Lady Wilde’s presentation of this tradition; as will be demonstrated below, the Scottish Calvinist kirk took a decidedly demonic interpretation of faeries. This method of exposing the changeling was believed to result in the faerie escaping the flames by flying away through the chimney, the stolen child would then be returned, the deception having been exposed.

Sadly, the belief in faerie changelings seems to have been a prevalent Irish belief, enduring through the nineteenth century. In Clonmel in 1895 Michael Cleary became convinced that his wife Bridget had been abducted and a faerie changeling left in her place. Cleary sought the advice of a fairy-doctor, knowledgeable in herbal remedies and faerie lore, who provided Cleary with an herbal concoction intended to drive out the changeling and restore the real Bridget to her husband.³¹³ When this “cure” failed and previous modern medical efforts had failed, Cleary initially turned to the local priest then took matters into his own hands by relying on the folkloric tradition of setting the changeling in the fireplace. Unfortunately for Bridget, Cleary was so convinced that his wife was a changeling that he waited to see the faerie flee up the chimney and Bridget burned to death. Cleary’s belief that Bridget had been replaced with a changeling was so strong that after her death he spent the following three days waiting at the faerie rath on Kylenegranagh Hill fully expecting that the

the woman stood up she discovered that her own child had been restored to her in perfect health.

³¹² Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 53.

³¹³ McGrath, “Fairy Faith and Changelings,” 178.

real Bridget would be restored to him.³¹⁴

Folkloric precedent does exist for Cleary believing that a grown woman could become the victim of faerie abduction. A folk tale from Donegal describes the abduction, by faeries, of a wealthy young woman from Dublin one November Eve. This tale seems to attribute the faeries most of the characteristics normally associated with witches on the continent. The faeries were known to gather every November and May Eves in the ruins of an old castle, a faerie rath, to sing and dance. On the night in question their revel was interrupted by Jamie Freel, a young man with a reputation for hard work and responsibility. Freel was welcomed by the faeries and he rode out with them that night on a flying horse to “steal a young lady.”³¹⁵ The young woman, clearly an adult, was replaced with a stick that magically assumed the woman’s shape and appearance. When Freel attempted to take the woman away from the faeries they transformed her into various shapes, finally a female faerie sprinkled something over the woman rendering her deaf and mute, but Freel escaped to his home where the faeries do not follow.³¹⁶ November Eve the following year, Freel returned to the faerie revel where he was able to steal a potion from the female that would restore the woman’s power of speech and hearing.

The faeries in this tale could easily have been replaced with witches. Their November Eve, or Halloween night, revel can be seen as a parallel to the witches’ sabbath.

³¹⁴ McGrath, “Fairy Faith and Changelings,” 181-82.

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Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 58-59. Yeats recounts a folk tale known as “Jamie Freel and the Young Lady,” as told to him by Miss Letitia MacLintock. The night of the faerie revel and abduction is identified as “Halloween” in the tale, but the designation of November Eve provides greater understanding of the faeries’ behavior relative to their calendar of festival night. November Eve was when the faeries were at their most disagreeable.

³¹⁶ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 60-61.

Their night flight and use of magical powders and potions, the latter used to undo their prior mischief, were also consistent with continental witchcraft beliefs. While faeries could have been conflated with diabolical witches or even demons, it is significant that, even in Donegal where Scottish Presbyterian influence seemed to inform other witchcraft folk lore, they remained typical faeries. Even more important to the understanding of Irish faerie faith was the reaction of the young woman's parents when Freel took her home to Dublin. Neither the woman's father nor mother were willing to acknowledge that she was their daughter. They insisted that their daughter had died the previous year. There was no mention of witchcraft or suspicious illness, just the matter-of-fact statements that her parents believed the young woman had been buried after the enchanted stick appeared to perish.³¹⁷ Clearly, in Ireland, especially among the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish, faeries frequently engaged in activities and demonstrated behaviors that were usually associated with witches in Scotland and on the continent. The Gaelic and Anglo-Irish had faeries to explain sudden animal illness, failing dairy production and sudden infant illness and death. They did not need to turn to diabolical witches to explain these misfortunes.

Fairy Doctors, Charmers and Witch Doctors

In early modern Europe the diagnosis of witchcraft as the source of maladies and misfortune was frequently provided through consultation with a "witch doctor," someone whose expertise lay in identifying witches and witchcraft.³¹⁸ The witch doctor was a highly specialized type of folk healer who served primarily to confirm the expectation that an illness was the result of witchcraft. People went to witch doctors when the illness in

³¹⁷ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 64-65.

³¹⁸ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 72.

question had resisted the efforts of lesser folk healers and so they already suspected witchcraft as the cause. The witch doctors' diagnoses typically included herbal remedies as well as instructions for confirming the identity of the suspected witch. The belief was that once the witch had been positively identified, she would remove the spell and malady and the victim would recover.³¹⁹ On the continent witch doctors often became targets of witchcraft accusations themselves as their practices were either found to contain magical elements or to involve diabolical pacts.³²⁰ Briggs notes that witch-doctors seemed to flourish in the Lorraine region which experienced significant witchcraft prosecutions and witch-hunts, while witch doctors were far less common in the Netherlands, where witchcraft prosecutions ended early in the seventeenth century.³²¹

In England and Scotland witch doctors remained undistinguished from the general population of "cunning-folk" or folk healers, whose practices were more often viewed as superstition than witchcraft.³²² Cunning-folk were essentially professional folk healers whose services included: love-magic, theft detection and un-bewitching, in addition to herbal cures and petty healing rituals.³²³ "Charmers" by contrast typically refused payment of any kind and had a more restricted knowledge base, limited to oral tradition and simple

³¹⁹ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 174-75; Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," 19.

³²⁰ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 176-77; Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt" 20.

³²¹ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 186.

³²²

Owen Davies, "A Comparative Perspective on Scottish Cunning-Folk and Charmers," *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* ed. Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin and Joyce Miller (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 185-86.

³²³ Davies, "A Comparative Perspective," 187.

cures for natural illnesses.³²⁴ In Scottish historiography the charmer and the cunning-person have been somewhat conflated making distinction occasionally difficult, but some distinctions do exist. The “charms” used to treat sprains frequently involved the recitation of poems that referenced Christ, though poems recited in Gaelic occasionally substituted St. Columba.³²⁵ The use of poetic verse in folk healing rituals seems to be indicative of the belief in the power of poetry, which may also serve to explain the power attributed to the Gaelic Poet noted above. The people of Ireland and the Scottish Gàidhealtachd shared a common Gaelic heritage and thus foundational belief system that experienced regional variations as the two groups progressed in their respective environments.³²⁶ Some similarities did remain, however.

In Scotland and England, Charmers and some cunning-folk claimed faeries as the source of their knowledge. In Scotland women were more likely than men to credit faeries as the source of their knowledge, though Andrew Man in 1598 claimed to have received his power directly from the Faerie Queen.³²⁷ Others claim to have been taken away by the faeries and returned to share their knowledge with their neighbors and community members. Under the influence of the Protestant emphasis on literacy the concept of legitimate

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Davies, “A Comparative Perspective,” 186. This distinction is important differentiating the “charmer” as someone working for the benefit of his or her community, in contrast with the “cunning-person” attempting to make a profit by exploiting the existing belief system. Given the low frequency of prosecutions against charmers for witchcraft versus those against cunning-folk, it would seem this distinction was not lost on the authorities.

³²⁵ Davies, “A Comparative Perspective,” 187-88.

³²⁶

Lizanne Henderson, “Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the Gàidhealtachd” *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* ed., Goodare, Martin and Miller, 97. Henderson identifies the Gàidhealtachd as a linguistic, thus cultural, regional designation rather than one of strict geography.

³²⁷ Davies, “A Comparative Perspective,” 199.

knowledge combined with the development of the print industry to emphasize “book magic’ over “faerie magic.” Thus, in Scotland, it was primarily illiterate women healers who relied on faeries as the source of their healing knowledge and power. Folkloric traditions in Scotland, however, demonstrated a consistent belief in faeries, attributing to them the power to inflict illnesses and power of people to counter such faerie magic.³²⁸

The early-modern Irish identified those people with the power to counter faerie magic as ‘fairy doctors’ who served a similar function to the continental witch doctor. Folkloric tradition, as well as the case of Bridget Cleary, demonstrates the persistent Irish belief in the power of faeries and the ability of certain individual to provide remedies for the harm inflicted by the faeries. Faerie doctors were distinguished by Yeats from witches through the source of their respective powers and the ends to which those powers were used. Fairy doctors received their power from the faeries, either by being carried away for a time, or simply being touched by the faeries’ love so that they became “silent and strange and [took] to lonely wanderings in the ‘gentle’ places.” Yeats notes that the people so affected by the faeries’ love become either “poets...or fairy doctors.”³²⁹ People sought out the fairy doctor in Ireland, much as they did the witch doctor on the continent, for help when butter would not rise from milk or when milk failed to come from cattle and to cure the effects of the “faerie stroke” and the “faerie blast.”³³⁰ Fairy doctors resembled charmers in that they rarely, if ever, accepted payment from their “clients” In some instances fairy doctors imposed certain ascetic conditions on themselves, or else these were imposed upon them by

³²⁸ Davies, “A Comparative Perspective,” 199-202.

³²⁹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 159.

³³⁰ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 159-60.

the faeries, as demonstrated by the fairy doctor of Innis Sark who spoke only Gaelic, revered the old traditions and refused to touch certain kinds of wood.³³¹

If the faeries imposed restrictions upon the fairy doctors in exchange for their knowledge, they also seem to have influenced the doctors' personalities. While fairy doctors generally worked for the good of their communities and "clients" it seems they, like the faeries themselves, engaged in pranks and tricks that "were never more than mischievous."³³² Yeats recounts a story related to him by William Carleton that describes a fairy doctor playing a trick upon his relatives by placing a faerie into the pudding to be served at a wedding feast that evening. Once the enchanted pudding was consumed the guests at the feast began to dance with a fervor, eventually dancing their ways home, out of breath and exhausted.³³³ The fairy doctor, Harry Connolly, had a reputation of being "hand in glove with the good people," and his prank, while mischievous, was generally harmless and certainly served to enliven the wedding celebration.³³⁴

Fairy doctors, it seems, were able to counter the evil magic of witches as well as faeries. They were able to determine if the failures in dairy production or illnesses were natural maladies or the result of malefic witchcraft.³³⁵ Folk lore from Queen's County, an English and Protestant controlled region during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, describes the actions of a "fairy-woman" in thwarting the efforts of a witch in stealing milk

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Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 160-61. Yeats here relays some information recorded by Lady Wilde regarding the fairy doctor in Innis Sark, wherein Lady Wilde notes that the Protestant church would have declared the "old traditions" to be superstitions.

³³² Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 159 .

³³³ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 202-12.

³³⁴ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 212.

³³⁵ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 159.

from her neighbor's cattle. The "fairy-woman" was described as old and barefoot, with her hair falling in "elf-locks" from under her white linen skull cap.³³⁶ The fairy-woman was alternately referred to as a "witch," a "sorceress" and a "charmer"³³⁷ The fairy-woman identified the loss of milk from the cattle as caused by witchcraft by tasting the milk then was able to draw the witch to the farmer's house by having the farmer and his wife engage in a specific ritual. The horseshoe the farmer had originally placed on the outside of his house to drive away faeries also prevented the witch from approaching so the fairy-woman instructed him to remove it in order for her to complete the spell.³³⁸

This story demonstrates an amalgamation of Gaelic faerie beliefs and Protestant English witch beliefs. The presence of the horseshoe as proof against fairies and witches seems to hint at a certain demonization of faeries through association with witches, but falls short of actually accomplishing that. The fairy-woman is clearly a fairy doctor, even her appearance is suggestive of the faeries themselves. The teller of the story seems not to understand what the woman really is, thus obscuring the fairy-woman's identity through the use of the various names by which she identified. Given the details of her behavior the most accurate designation from the text would be "charmer," though fairy doctor is even more precise. Even the physical appearance of the witch integrates traditional Gaelic superstition. The tale specifically identifies the color of the witch's hair as red as she approached the house.³³⁹ MacLysaght noted that even the Gaelic aristocracy and Anglo-Irish were as "put

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Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 170-71. Yeats recounts the tale of "Bewitched Butter (Queen's County)" as originally published in *Dublin University Magazine*, 1839.

³³⁷ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 173-74.

³³⁸ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 172-75.

³³⁹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 175.

out as the humblest fisherman by meeting a red-headed woman” at the gate in the morning.³⁴⁰ While MacLysaght did not explain the underlying superstition, it is clear that there was a certain stigma attached to the appearance of an unaccompanied red-haired woman approaching one’s house.

The fact that the fairy-doctor seems to be proof against the witch as well as the faeries, combined with the absence of witch-doctors in Irish folklore, indicates that the faerie, not the witch, was perceived as the primary source of supernatural misfortune in Ireland. The single appearance of anyone resembling a witch doctor in the records of Irish witchcraft trials was the appearance of Valentine Greatrakes, aka Mr. Greatrix, in the trial of Florence Newton. Greatrakes had been a soldier in the Puritan Army in Ireland and became a county magistrate in 1659 when the army was disbanded. In 1662, Greatrakes discovered he had a “gift” when he cured a boy by “stroking,” or laying hands upon him.³⁴¹ In Newton’s trial, Greatrakes, along with two other men, applied a method similar to “pricking” to establish Newton’s identity as a witch.³⁴² Despite the occasional conflation of fairies with witchcraft in folk tales from the Protestant and English controlled counties in Ireland, faeries remained largely untainted by the demonizing influence of the Puritan and Presbyterian churches. The same cannot be said of the faeries in Scotland.

The Demonization of Scottish Gaelic Faeries and Faerie-Faith

Faerie faith in Gaelic Scotland was similar to that of Gaelic Ireland; misfortunes

³⁴⁰ MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 179.

³⁴¹ Byrne, *Witchcraft in Ireland*, 34.

³⁴² Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Deomonolgy*, 118-19; Byrne, *Witchcraft in Ireland*, 31-32.

were frequently blamed on faeries rather than witches.³⁴³ Hutton argues that witchcraft trials seemed particularly absent from the Gaelic, highland regions of Scotland, likely the result of the continued belief in faeries by the Gaelic Scots.³⁴⁴ Lizanne Henderson, however, provides evidence that there were in fact several witchcraft trials in the Gaelic regions of Scotland and that the Scottish kirk succeeded in turning instances of faeries in witchcraft “confessions” into evidence that the witch trafficked with devils and demons.³⁴⁵ In point of fact, Henderson’s analysis demonstrates that the kirk’s demonization of faeries actually served to intensify witch-hunting in Scotland.³⁴⁶

Conflation of faerie folkloric images with diabolism occurred early in the period of intense witch-hunting in Scotland. In 1597, in Aberdeen, Andrew Mann was tried for diabolical witchcraft. Mann testified that he received his power through the agency of a man named Christsonday, who took to various festivals attended by the “fairy-queen.”³⁴⁷ Mann confessed to engaging in sexual intercourse with the fairy-queen, and receiving secret knowledge and the power to heal from his association with her.³⁴⁸ Both Christsonday and the fairy-queen were transformed into manifestations of the Devil by the court and Mann was executed for witchcraft. Hutton rightly notes that this trial occurred in a “border” region between lowland and highland Scotland.³⁴⁹ This would have been an area where the

³⁴³ Julian Goodare, “Introduction,” *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, 3.

³⁴⁴ Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 31-32.

³⁴⁵ Henderson, “Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*,” 95-96 & 99-102.

³⁴⁶ Henderson, “Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*,” 102.

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Stuart Macdonald, “In Search of the Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases, 1560-1705,” *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, 35.

³⁴⁸ Macdonald, “In Search of the Devil,” 35.

³⁴⁹ Hutton, “The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 32.

Scottish, Calvinist kirk exercised more influence than it would have in the previously Roman Catholic highlands and was, therefore, successful in demonizing the elements of Mann's confession that contained images from faerie folk lore.

Much of the diabolic elements in Scottish witchcraft confessions seemed to have been informed by traditional faerie lore. The witchcraft confession in the 1675 Culross trials included descriptions of the Devil playing on pipes and dancing similar to that normally ascribed to faeries in their festivals. Similarly, testimony presented in the 1704 Torryburn witchcraft trial noted that the Devil, "durst not use a sword," which is suggestive of the belief that elves or faeries could not touch metal.³⁵⁰ J. A. MacCulloch noted that there were distinct parallels between the Scottish descriptions of the witches' sabbaths and faerie revels indicating the mingling of folkloric traditions with demonological theories as part of the judges' and kirk's efforts to find the Devil everywhere.³⁵¹

The expansion of the Scottish, Calvinist kirk sessions, presbyteries and synods stalled as they approached the highlands. However, by 1639 the synod of Argyll at Inveraray exerted religious jurisdiction all the way to the outer Hebrides Islands beyond the northern coast of Scotland. In 1649 the synod appointed several brethren to try witches in that region.³⁵² As the Calvinist Church extended its reach into the highlands, it imposed its interpretation of traditional folklore upon the Gaelic Scots. In 1677, in Inveraray, Donald

³⁵⁰ Macdonald, "In Search of the Devil," 46.

³⁵¹ Macdonald, "In Search of the Devil," 47.

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Henderson, "Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*," 104. The kirk sessions, presbyteries and synods were the various levels of the Scottish Calvinist churches institutional hierarchy beginning with kirk session that presided over a particular town or village to the synod approximating a Roman Catholic or Anglican bishopric.

McIlmichall was accused of consulting with the Devil when he confessed to seeing faeries inside of a hill. The presence of faeries was demonized by the court into “evil spirits” or demons and produced McIlmichall’s conviction and execution.³⁵³ Traditional “charming” was also demonized by the kirk session in Rothesay in 1660, when Jean Campbell admitted that she “gangs with the feyres,” indicating that she, like Irish fairy-doctors, learned her craft from the faeries.³⁵⁴ In its efforts to build a godly society in Scotland, it did not matter to the Calvinist church if the spirits with which a witch associated were faeries, the Devil or both; in all cases they were a threat to the godly society and had to be extirpated.³⁵⁵

Following the rebellion of Hugh O’Neill in Ireland, king James I and VI’s established a plantation program in Ulster in 1608. The Ulster Plantation brought numerous Scottish planters to Ireland who brought the Calvinist or Presbyterian Church with them. The Scottish church proved unable to make the same progress into the Catholic and Gaelic Irish regions as it had in Scotland. In Ireland the Scottish church was forced to compete with the already established Anglican Church of Ireland, which had decidedly “high church” underpinnings until the accession of Puritanism, *and* an entrenched, determined and sometimes militant Irish Catholic Church. The dynamics of these three competing confessional faiths added layers of nuance to the double process of confessionalisation that developed in Ireland.³⁵⁶ Gaelic and Catholic resistance to the incursion of Protestantism

³⁵³ Henderson, “Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*,” 107.

³⁵⁴ Henderson, “Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*,” 108.

³⁵⁵ Macdonald, “In Search of the Devil,” 49.

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The process of confessionalisation and, particularly, the dual confessionalisation in Ireland will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

prevented the spread of Protestant ideologies and prejudices into traditional Gaelic beliefs. In Ireland the faeries were never successfully demonized or connected to diabolical witchcraft. They remained supernatural and capricious spirits distinct from the Devil and his agents, both demons and witches. Fairy-doctors and charmers, therefore also remained relatively free of association with diabolical witchcraft, at least in those areas that remained predominantly Gaelic.

Chapter VI
Faith:
**The Impact of Confessionalisation and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Suppressing
Witch-Hunts in Ireland**

One of the primary differences between Ireland and England and Scotland was the nature of the dynamic tensions between competing confessional faiths in Ireland. The Protestant faiths were the religions of the invaders and the oppressors in the eyes of the Catholic Gaelic Irish. The Anglican Church of Ireland met with entrenched religious resistance from both the Gaelic Irish and the “Old English,” Anglo-Irish. The Anglo-Irish, descendants of the Cambro-Norman, or Anglo-Norman invaders of the twelfth century, insisted upon retaining their traditional religion *and* their loyalty to the English Crown. The Gaelic Irish resisted Anglican intrusions on both religious and ethno-cultural grounds. Anglicanism represented the heretical oppression of an invading foreign power. This conflict was further complicated in the early seventeenth century by the introduction of Scottish Presbyterian planters in Ulster. The Anglicans found themselves competing not only with an obstinate Catholic majority, but also with a rival Protestant, confessional faith. The Presbyterians’ efforts were bolstered by the Puritan movement among the Anglican Church in the mid seventeenth century, especially during the English Civil War, the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth. The Puritans and Presbyterians found common political and religious grounds upon which to struggle for political and religious reforms against the Church and Crown of England.

The competing and conflicting social, cultural and political aspects of these three faiths are best understood through the confessionalisation paradigm. Ute Lotz-Heumann

first applied the German concept of confessionalisation to Ireland in 1999.³⁵⁷ The concept of confessionalisation was originally developed in the early 1980s by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling, who built upon the work of Ernst Walter Zeeden. Zeeden, in 1958, analyzed the development of Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist churches in late sixteenth century Germany. Zeeden determined that the three faiths began establishing “confessional churches” based on the “confession of faith” by their members, what Zeedan called “confession-building.”³⁵⁸ Reinhard and Schilling, recognizing the relationship between religion, society and politics developed the paradigm of “confessionalisation” to encompass the political and social dimensions of confession-building. Confessionalisation thus incorporates confession-building into the process of early modern state formation.³⁵⁹ Lotz-Huemann, by applying this paradigm to early modern Ireland, identified a condition of “dual confessionalisation,” encompassing the competing actions and agendas of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in Ireland. Confessionalisation was not unique to Ireland, but the socio-political and religious impacts of simultaneous Protestant and Catholic confessionalisation in that country were.³⁶⁰

Crawford Gribben’s analysis of the inter-Protestant debates of faith and doctrine, however adds layers of nuance to the binary model developed by Lotz-Heumann. The concept of a Protestant confessionalisation oversimplifies the situation and obfuscates the

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Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalisation in Ireland: Periodisation and Character, 1534-1649”, in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed Alan Ford and John McCaferty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 24-53.

³⁵⁸ Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalisation in Ireland”, 27.

³⁵⁹ Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalisation in Ireland”, 28.

³⁶⁰ Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalisation in Ireland”, 53.

fact that there was considerable theological fragmentation between the various Protestant churches in Ireland. Gribben claimed that the religious culture of the Cromwellian period in Ireland, “defies” a “collective categorization.”³⁶¹ By the end of the 1650s, Protestantism in Ireland was a complex of various denominations. The Ulster Presbyterians had distanced themselves from the Scottish Presbyterians and the pejorative use of the term “Puritan” had markedly diminished as the Puritans entered the mainstream of Protestantism in Ireland.³⁶² The Quakers followed their traditional patterns of aggressive publication in Ireland, overwhelming local competing Protestant clergy by dominating the number of publications in Ireland.³⁶³

Lotz-Heumann’s conception of dual confessionalisation becomes far more complex with the fact that the competing confessionalisation occurred within the “Protestant confessionalisation.” This internal conflict weakened the Protestants’ ability to advance ideologically into Gaelic religious and ethnic culture and prevented the demonization of Irish fairies. Nevertheless, the ongoing efforts of all of the Protestant churches against the Catholic Church in Ireland created a condition of ongoing religious and political conflict that diminished the need to ascribe misfortune to the enemy within, the witch. Instead, suffering, misfortune, privation and destruction could readily be attributed to the obvious enemy, members of the opposing religious and/or ethnic culture.

The Origins of Competing Confessionalisation in Ireland

The English Reformation itself was distinct in that it was driven primarily by the

³⁶¹ Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 39.

³⁶² Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 36 & 38.

³⁶³ Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 36.

dynastic and political agendas of Henry VIII (r. 1509- 1547), rather than reactions against corruption within the Catholic Church. To be certain there were both institutional and doctrinal reform movement in England from which Henry VIII and subsequent Tudor monarchs would derive support for their policies, but the fact remains that the impetus for the English Reformation began with Henry VIII's "Great Matter." Had it ended with that, things in both England and Ireland might be very different. Beginning in 1531, with the enforcement of the Act of Praemunire against the Convocation, Henry VIII began the somewhat gradual process of separating the Church in England from the Pope in Rome.³⁶⁴ The annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon was secured by the Act in Restraint of Appeals in April 1533. Henry's economic and political agendas had been clearly demonstrated by the previous Statute of Annates, in 1532, which abolished the practice of sending the first years' salary of each new bishop to Rome. The November 1534 Act of Supremacy, which declared Henry VIII the "Supreme Head of the Church of England," was preceded by a second Statute of Annates that severed all financial ties with Rome and channeled the once papal revenue into the Royal Treasury.³⁶⁵ Overall, Henry VIII made relatively few changes within the Church itself; he abolished the reliquaries, and confiscated the monastic lands, but, despite the production of an English translation of the Bible, the

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The term "gradual" is relative. The entire process took six years to complete from 1531 attack on the Convocation to the 1536 Act Against Papal Authority. While this may seem gradual to modern historians, it was probably rather sudden to those who lived through it.

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Lacey Baldwin Smith, *This Realm of England: 1399 - 1688* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), 122. Emphasis mine.

services remained in Latin and the Eucharist remained a Sacrament of transubstantiation.³⁶⁶

Henry VIII created an institutionalized, official Protestant state religion, with the king as the “supreme head” of both the Church and the State. The State had become the Church and religion became inextricably wedded to English and Irish politics. This would ultimately have severely polarizing effects on both religion and politics in Ireland.

The chief governing officer of the English regions in Ireland was the Lord Deputy, alternately the Governor General and the Lord Lieutenant, who was appointed by, and answered exclusively to, the English Crown.³⁶⁷ By the fifteenth century competition for this position was dominated by the FitzGerald earls of Kildare and the Butler earls of Ormond.³⁶⁸ This contest was settled in 1478 when Garrett More FitzGerald, earl of Kildare was appointed as Governor General of Ireland. FitzGerald, “the great earl” had established close familial ties with both Old English and Gaelic Irish lords, particularly the O’Neills of Tyrone, in Ulster. The power and influence of the Kildare FitzGeralds was demonstrated in 1467 when the summary execution of the FitzGerald earl of Desmond and imprisonment of Kildare by Sir John Tiptoft of Worcester provoked an armed uprising of combined Old

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This was one of the major points of contention between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches. During the ceremony of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, the bread and wine were believed, according to Roman Catholic doctrine, to physically change, trans-substantiate, into the actual flesh and blood of Christ. Many of the Protestant doctrines disagreed and argued that the bread and wine were only *symbolically* transformed into the body and blood of Christ, consubstantiation. Henry VIII allowed the Church of England to retain its Roman Catholic traditions through the perpetuation of the doctrine of transubstantiation of the Eucharist.

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While the Lord Deputy was a viceregal position, the Lord Lieutenant was also a position of hereditary nobility in England and so was of higher status than the rank of Lord Deputy.

³⁶⁸ Nicholas Canny, “Early Modern Ireland, 89.

English and Gaelic Irish forces.³⁶⁹ The great earl's involvement in one of the Yorkist plots to overthrow Henry VII (r. 1485 - 1509) brought Tudor attention to Ireland and resulted in FitzGerald being replaced by an Englishman, Sir Edward Poynings. Poynings was charged with bringing the entirety of Ireland into "whole and perfect obedience."³⁷⁰ In December 1494, Poynings called a Parliament in Drogheda which brought the entire Irish government under the control of the English Crown. Under the Statute that has come to be known as "Poynings' Law" the Irish Parliament could meet only with royal permission and only after the king and council had reviewed and approved the measures to be enacted.³⁷¹ From one perspective, royal oversight prevented the Irish Parliament from enacting any statutes contrary to the will of the Crown. Viewed from another perspective, however, this statute allowed the Crown to dictate and control what measures were heard by Parliament, and allowed Henry VIII to introduce and enact specific Reformation measures in Ireland.

Poynings was ultimately unable to maintain control in Ireland and Henry VII restored Kildare to his position in 1496. The Governership of Ireland became a *de facto* hereditary title for the Kildare FitzGeralds when it passed from the great earl to his son, Garrett Oge in 1513. In 1533 Oge was called to London by Henry VIII for a second time. The first, in 1519, resulted in the temporary transfer of the Governorship to the earl of Surrey. Surrey proved unable to accomplish the task Henry VIII had set for him without enormous cost to the Crown, and Oge was restored to power. Oge, apparently was less than optimistic about

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Art Cosgrove, "The Gaelic Resurgence and the Geraldine Supremacy: c. 1400 - 1534", in *The Course of Irish History*, edited by T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishing, 2001) 131-2.

³⁷⁰ Cosgrove, "The Gaelic Resurgence", 133.

³⁷¹ Cosgrove, "The Gaelic Resurgence", 135.

this second royal summons and when he departed in February of 1534, he left control of the government in the hands of his son Thomas, Lord Offally. Offally determined to prove to the Crown that the FitzGerald of Kildare were necessary for the governance of Ireland, just as had been proven in 1467 and 1496. He marched into the council chamber at St. Mary's Abbey and, throwing down his sword of state, declared himself no longer the king's deputy, but rather his enemy.

By this time, in England, Henry VIII's "Reformation Parliament" had passed both the Statutes of Annates and the Act in Restraint of Appeals; and though the Act of Supremacy was still five months off, when "Silken Thomas" staged his revolt, the king's course had to have been clear.³⁷² It certainly seems to have been to Lord Offally, who attempted to garner Gaelic support for his cause by opposing the king's religious policy. The institutional Catholic churches in Ireland had largely fallen into disuse and disrepair and religious renewal and revitalization became the work of Observant Friars, who concentrated their efforts among the Gaelic Irish.³⁷³ It was these friars who sustained the Catholic faith and solidified Irish resistance to the religious reforms of Henry VIII after his marriage to Anne Boleyn and his break with Rome in 1533.³⁷⁴ Silken Thomas' manipulation of religious sentiments for his own purposes turned what was primarily a political contest of wills into an institutional attack that Henry VIII could not ignore or countenance through negotiation. Politico-religious conflict had come to Ireland.

Henry VIII's response was direct and decisive. The Silken Thomas Rebellion was

³⁷² Smith, *This Realm*, 120

³⁷³ Smith, *This Realm*, 136-7.

³⁷⁴ Cosgrove, "The Gaelic Resurgence", 137.

put down in 1534 by William Skeffington who first attacked the Kildare castle Maynooth with sustained artillery bombardment, then summarily executed Lord Offally and all of the survivors when they surrendered. Henry VIII then attempted to repeat the Church of England policies in Ireland and met with little popular resistance. In 1536, the Irish Parliament passed an Act declaring Henry VIII “the only supreme head on earth of the whole Church of Ireland.”³⁷⁵ Following the English model, Henry VIII abolished the monasteries and seized the monastic lands within Dublin and the Pale. Despite the absence of open resistance, Henry VIII was either unable or unwilling to enforce this policy in the Gaelic controlled lands and by 1539, friars in the Gaelic regions were preaching martial resistance to Henry VIII’s policies.³⁷⁶ The wealthy, Old English families demonstrated symbolic resistance to the Henrician Reform by removing their children from English universities such as Oxford and Cambridge and sending them to Catholic universities on the Continent.³⁷⁷ Henry VIII created an official, Protestant, State religion in Ireland based on the English model that existed only in the Anglicized regions. Beyond the Pale, the Gaelic Irish and Old English retained their Catholic faith and their Catholic churches.

The religious reforms carried out by Henry VIII’s heirs met with even less success in Ireland than Henry’s. In England, the Regency of Edward VI, under Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, and archbishop Thomas Cranmer, issued the first *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549, which allowed the English speaking congregation to follow the mass. The

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28 Henry VIII c5, quoted in G. A. Hayes-McCoy, “The Tudor Conquest: 1534-1603”, in *The Course of Irish History*, eds. Moody and Martin, 144.

³⁷⁶ Hayes-McCoy, “Tudor Conquest”, 144.

³⁷⁷ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland”, 99.

book failed however, because it did not definitively address the matter of the Eucharist. The traditional Catholic interpretation of the mass was that the bread and wine were *actually* transformed into the body and blood of Christ, transubstantiation, while the Protestant interpretation was that the service was commemorative only and an actual transformation did not occur, consubstantiation. At the time this issue, more than any other, formed a dividing line within the Church of England. The ambiguous language in the first prayer book was supposed to be a compromise, but that only angered the reformist minded Protestants in England. The Act of Uniformity, 14 March, 1549, which was supposed to enforce the use of the prayer book, was similarly ineffective. In Ireland in June of that same year, the *Book of Common Prayer* was also ordered into use in the Church of Ireland. The matter seemed settled in 1552 with the publication of *Second Book of Common Prayer*, which declared the mass an act of consubstantiation and removed all of the Catholic trappings from the Church. The second Act of Uniformity required religious conformity within England, and by association, Ireland. While this act went largely unenforced in either country, it did set the stage for a state instituted religion that was substantially different than the predominant faith of the majority of Ireland.

When Edward VI died on 6 July, 1553, and Catholic Mary Tudor ascended to the throne, she reversed all of the “Edwardian” reforms and many of her father’s. While Mary’s restoration of Catholicism probably met with at least tacit approval from the Irish Catholics, the English were not nearly so receptive. In January, 1554, 3000 men of Kent rose up in protest of both Mary’s husband, Philip II, the king of Spain, and the restoration of a papal mass. Mary was able to rally the London troops and put down the uprising, but religious

conflict remained in the forefront of Mary's reign. Mary, in contrast to Henry VIII, Edward VI and, later Elizabeth I, effectively "confessionalized" politics. In Mary's mind it was better to burn heretics than hang traitors and the first of her "martyrs" were in fact political victims.³⁷⁸ Thomas Cranmer, the architect of the Church of England under Edward VI, was burned as a heretic rather than a traitor to Mary's Crown.

The ascension of Elizabeth I in 1558 saw the restoration of the Church of England and in 1560, Elizabeth attempted to legislate the Protestant Church of Ireland back into effect by restoring royal supremacy over the Church and prescribing the use of the English *Second Book of Common Prayer*. The fact that Elizabeth I's Irish Parliament represented almost exclusively the Anglicized regions of Ireland resulted in association of the Protestant church with an invading, foreign, power. Added to this was the fact that priests of the Society of Jesus had come to Ireland to enforce the rulings of the Council of Trent and Catholicism became entrenched in Ireland. Gaelic Irish and Old English effectively united as Catholics and the Protestant Church of Ireland became the religion of the English colony and the "official class."³⁷⁹

In England, Elizabeth I's policies demonstrated a complete reversal of Mary's as Elizabeth I returned to a practice of politicized religion. Elizabeth handled troublesome Catholics as traitors rather than heretics of the Church of England, translating the Catholics' loyalty to the Pope as allegiance to a foreign prince. Rather than creating martyrs, Elizabeth I executed traitors to the Crown.³⁸⁰ Though her revised *Second Book of Common Prayer*

³⁷⁸ Smith, *This Realm*, 165.

³⁷⁹ Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest", 145.

³⁸⁰ Smith, *This Realm*, 172.

reintroduced ambiguous language regarding the Eucharist and became less severely Protestant, the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563, however, leaned heavily toward Calvinism.³⁸¹ Ultimately Elizabeth I's Church had room for both Catholic trappings and Protestant dogma. Archbishop Laud pursued a heavily Catholic program within the Church, though he never moved for a reunification with Rome. None of this spared Elizabeth I the scorn of the Catholic Church and in 1570 Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth I in his papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis*.³⁸²

Papal condemnation of Elizabeth I combined with her expansionist programs into Catholic Ireland would eventually lead to open religious war between the Catholic Irish and the Protestant English settlers. In 1565 Elizabeth attempted to expand English influence into Ireland through the use of regional presidencies in Munster and Connacht. In Munster, the program of presidencies under Sir Henry Sidney led to the establishment of provincial councils of the English settlers who were intensely Protestant and hostile toward the Gaelic Irish in that region. Open hostilities had been brought to an end when Elizabeth I curtailed Sidney's program, but they remained and obviously continued to simmer for several years.³⁸³

The very fact that two witches were tried in Kilkenny in 1578 may indicate that tensions were high in that region, but open hostilities between religious groups were suppressed. Studies have shown that witchcraft accusations and witch-hunts occur in areas of religious division as an alternative to open inter-religious conflict.³⁸⁴ Increased anxiety

³⁸¹ Smith, *This Realm*, 171.

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T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin, editors, *The Course of Irish History* (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publisher, 2001), 403.

³⁸³ Canny, "Early Modern Ireland", 108-9.

³⁸⁴ Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, 127.

over religious instability in an area tended to cause people to look for the enemy within. Additionally, given that most witchcraft suspects were held in prison for several months prior to actual trial, it would be reasonable to assume that the witches tried and executed in 1578 had been charged and arrested as early as 1577. Another indication that hostilities remained latent is the fact that witchcraft allegations did not occur during times of open warfare when the human agents of destruction were readily identifiable.³⁸⁵ There may actually be more social politics than religious tension behind the witchcraft trials of 1578, as will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Religious hostilities erupted into open conflict when James Fitz Maurice FitzGerald returned from exile on the Continent in 1579 to lead a rebellion against the “heretic” Queen Elizabeth. The Munster rebellion was based on religious grounds, Catholic Irish against English Protestant. To make matters worse from the English perspective, the Irish forces were bolstered by Spanish and Italian forces in 1580. Elizabeth I responded by sending an army of 8000 and crushed the rebellion in 1583. Leaders of the rebellion were executed as traitors. Catholic lands were confiscated by the Crown and the implementation of a plantation program brought 4000 English, Protestant settlers into the region.³⁸⁶

Religion played a role in the 1595 Ulster rebellion as well. For years Ulster had been a thorn in the English side. Shane O’Neill, who succeeded Conn O’Neill as the earl of Tyrone, waged a fairly continuous campaign of raids against not only his fellow Gaelic lords, but also against the Pale lands. For years Elizabeth I refrained from taking direct

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Levack, *Witch-Hunts*, 180; Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996) 308-9.

³⁸⁶ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland”, 110-11.

action against Shane O’Neill, assuming, correctly it had seemed, that the situation would rectify itself when Hugh O’Neill supplanted his uncle as the earl of Tyrone in 1585.³⁸⁷ In 1595, however, Hugh O’Neill joined his fellow lords in Ulster in open revolt against English encroachment. O’Neill knew that Ulster could not stand alone against the might of England, so he attempted to rally widespread Irish support by declaring himself the champion of the Counter Reformation in Ireland. Once again Spain sent troops to Ireland to support a “Catholic rebellion.”³⁸⁸

The revolt outlived Elizabeth I and it fell to her Calvinist heir, James I and VI, to bring O’Neill to heel. The Irish forces were defeated in 1603, when they attempted to rendezvous with the Spanish army, and O’Neill surrendered to the English army at Mellifont in the north of the Pale. The surrender may have been negotiated, but the acts of atrocity committed by the Protestant English Army in Ulster from 1600 to 1603 would not soon be forgotten. Not content with killing men, women and children in Ulster, the predominately Calvinist army also slaughtered the bishop of Derry and twenty other Catholic priests from Ulster.³⁸⁹ The Nine Years’ War may not have begun as a religious conflict, but it certainly ended as one. James I’s program of plantation in Ulster only served to exacerbate the problem in the end. The king confiscated the lands of Catholic Irish involved in the rebellion, which were then given to Protestant settlers, many of whom were Scottish

³⁸⁷ Hayes-McCoy, “Tudor Conquest”, 148 and Canny, “Early Modern Ireland”, 112.

³⁸⁸ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland”, 113.

³⁸⁹

John McGurk, “The Pacification of Ulster, 1600-3”, in *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland*, edited by David Edwards, Pdraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 122-3.

Presbyterians. Rather than successfully removing the Catholic Irish, they frequently became the tenants of the new Protestant landholders. This resulted in the region being riddled with angry and resentful Catholics, who were waiting for their opportunity to strike back.³⁹⁰

Anti-papist sentiments in England were re-enforced after November 5, 1605 when a group of Catholic dissidents attempted to destroy Parliament with four barrels of gunpowder hidden under Whitehall. Sir Thomas Percy, the earl of Northumberland's, suspected involvement in this plot only served to deepen English suspicion towards Catholics.³⁹¹ The strong anti-Catholic reaction to the Gunpowder Plot may well have had an influence on James I. In 1606, the king heard the appeal of Brian Gunter in the Court of Star Chamber. Gunter claimed his daughter, Anne had been bewitched by Elizabeth Gregory and two other women. Anne suffered from seizures and trances and allegedly identified her tormentors during her seizure. The Assize court acquitted Gregory and the other women; and Brian, probably relying on James I' reputation as a witch-hunter, appealed to the king for another hearing. Not only was James skeptical at this point, but he set one of the most skeptical men in the kingdom, Samuel Harsnett, to depose both Anne and Brian Gunter.³⁹² Anne confessed to Harsnett that her father had given her "green waters" to drink that gave

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Aidan Clarke, "The Colonization of Ulster and the Rebellion of 1641: 1603 - 60", in *The Course of Irish History*, eds. Moody and Martin, 154.

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James I, "Proclamation for the Apprehension of Thomas Percy", in *James I: The Masque of Monarchy*, edited by James Travers (Surrey, UK: The National Archives, 2003), 50-51. Percy was the head of one of England's most powerful Catholic families.

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James Travers, *James I*, 36; Brian Levack, editor, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 249. Samuel Harsnett was the chaplain to the Archbishop of York and in 1603 he published a pamphlet entitled, "A Declaration of Egregious Popish Imposture" which began with a prologue by Edward Jorden, who believed that witchcraft confessions were the result of hysteria.

her the seizures and trances she claimed were the result of being bewitched.³⁹³ While it is difficult to draw a direct causal relationship between the Gunpowder Plot and James I's skepticism in the Anne Gunter case, the inflated anti-Catholic sentiments of the country following discovery of the Plot influenced events in England and Ireland for many years afterward.

England's anti-Catholic policies continued to be a source of political, social and religious turmoil in Ireland. The Old English found themselves faced with actual disenfranchisement and potential dispossession based solely on their religion. Their past loyalties to the Crown counted for naught with the Protestant Parliament in Dublin, under the control of Viscount Wentworth, earl of Strafford, which passed further anti-Catholic laws in 1634. Wentworth arranged the confiscation of one quarter of the Catholic owned lands in Connacht and made no distinction between Irish and Old English Catholic. Admittedly, Wentworth was equally harsh with the Presbyterian settlers in Ulster. Rather than effecting an appearance of balance in Irish eyes, Wentworth's policies, instead, created enemies in both religions. Worse yet for Wentworth, in England his policies appeared papist and he was recalled to London in 1639. By 1641 the Irish Parliament had joined with the English Parliament in charging Wentworth with treason.

The English Civil War and "Dual" Confessionalisation in Ireland

Religious confessionalism and politics became even more polarized and intertwined in Ireland with the outbreak of the English Civil War. While the war in England centered around the rights of royal prerogative conflicting with Parliament's perceptions of its ancient

³⁹³ "The Deposition of Anne Gunter", in *James I*, ed. Travers, 36.

rights to influence governmental policy, in Ireland religion was the primary issue. The Catholics in Ireland quickly realized the religious impacts of the king's loss of power. If either the Parliament or its Scottish allies, both of which were "militantly and intolerantly Protestant", should gain dominance over the king the results for the Irish Catholics would be disastrous.³⁹⁴ In 1641, the Gaelic Irish Catholics rose in Ulster under Sir Phelim O'Neill and were quickly successful in taking control of Ulster. O'Neill insisted that he and his army were loyal subjects of the Crown and he even went so far as to have all of his soldiers take an oath of loyalty to Charles I. This convinced the Old English Catholics of O'Neill's sincerity and they quickly joined with the Gaelic Irish forces, demonstrating that, for the Old English, religious loyalty was more important than racial loyalty.³⁹⁵ Oliver Cromwell's fears of a Catholic Army were realized in Ireland as that was the very name the united Old English and Gaelic Irish army took for itself. The Irish forces were again bolstered by the arrival of Continental reinforcements including Archbishop Rinuccini, serving as papal nuncio.³⁹⁶

With the defeat and execution of Charles I in England, Cromwell was now free to subdue Ireland. Reports of Catholic atrocities against Protestant settlers in Ulster inflamed the anti-Catholic sentiments of the Puritan Army. Cromwell's viciousness at Drogheda and Wexford, where he captured and executed the leaders of the Catholic Army, made an indelible impression upon the Irish. By the time the war was over in Ireland, the Puritan

³⁹⁴ Clarke, "Colonization of Ulster", 159.

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Alan Ford, "Living Together, Living Apart: Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland", in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, edited by Alan Ford and John McCafferty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18.

³⁹⁶ Edwards, Lenihan and Tait, *Age of Atrocity*, 12; Clarke, "Colonization of Ulster", 161.

Army had slaughtered at least 618,000 Irish Catholics.³⁹⁷ Cromwell's real revenge took the form of land confiscations. In Ireland, Cromwell found a solution to the mounting expenses of the Civil War. Profits from land confiscated from Irish Catholics helped defray the financial costs while the land itself served as payment for many Cromwellian veterans. Those Catholics deemed "innocent" of the rebellion were relocated to Counties Clare and Connacht on the west coast.

The Confederate uprising and Cromwellian settlement had profound effects on the psychology of Irish society. As noted above, periods of open military conflict suppressed society's need for witchcraft accusations. In areas of open warfare, witchcraft accusations typically occurred on the periphery, as demonstrated in Essex in 1645-6. By this time the Civil War had become concentrated to the west of England and Matthew Hopkins was able to manipulate the latent anxiety of people to spark the largest witch-hunt in English history. In Ireland, however, there was no periphery. By relocating all of the Catholic Irish to the west coast, Cromwell effectively eliminated the periphery of the Irish wars. Additionally, by displacing all of the surviving Irish Catholics, Cromwell disrupted the process of suspicion building that frequently occurred in tight knit communities and led to witchcraft accusations.³⁹⁸

Even as early as 1651, the acts of the Irish Parliament demonstrate particular hostility toward the Catholic Irish.³⁹⁹ In July 1651, the Irish Parliament under the Commonwealth

³⁹⁷ Smith, *This Realm*, 306.

³⁹⁸ Briggs, *Witches*, 308-9.

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Robert Dunlop, ed, *Ireland Under the Commonwealth: Being a Selection of Documents Relating to the Government of Ireland From 1651 to 1659*, 2 vols (Beignisville, PA: Stork Press, 2009).

of England issued instructions to a body of Commissioners charged with the “Ordering and Settling of the affairs of Ireland” with “improv[ing] the interest of the Commonwealth of England and the dominion of Ireland for the advancement of *religion* and propagation of the gospel in that country, and for the suppression of idolatry, popery, superstition and profaneness in that land.”⁴⁰⁰ The Parliament further authorized the payment of “godly,” or Puritan, ministers from public funds and called for the full execution of laws against “Papists and Popish Recusants.”⁴⁰¹ The clear association between official political policy and Puritanical religious agendas supports Lotz-Heumann’s assertions of a Protestant confessionalisation from above during the 1650s. The Catholic Irish reaction recorded by the Irish Parliament proves that there was, indeed a counter, Catholic, confessionalisation response from “below.” On 7 October 1651, the Irish Parliament noted that the Irish “rebels,” i.e. Catholic royalists, were attempting to incite a universal uprising in Ulster by “threatening excommunication, fire and sword to all there who do not rise with them.”⁴⁰² The recorded use of the threat of excommunication, if true, certainly proves a conflation of political and religious rebellion on the part of the Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Irish Catholics against the “official” Protestant confessionalisation of the state. Eventually, “Catholic” and “Irishman” became almost synonymous while Protestants in Ireland were designated as simply “English” regardless of how long their families had been in Ireland.⁴⁰³

On the surface, from the official state documents, this appears to be a simple binary

⁴⁰⁰ Dunlop, *Ireland Under the Commonwealth*, 1; Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 27.

⁴⁰¹ Dunlop, *Ireland Under the Commonwealth*, 1-2.

⁴⁰² Dunlop, *Ireland Under the Commonwealth*, 61-2.

⁴⁰³ MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 281.

conflict. Protestant Ireland, however, lacked the religious homogeneity assumed by the “dual confessionalisation” model. While the English Parliamentary Army, Cromwell’s New Model Army, achieved what Ormond, the Catholic Confederates and the Scottish Covenanters had not, a single government rule throughout Ireland, that government lacked true religious uniformity.⁴⁰⁴ In 1654 the existing government in Ireland was replaced by the joint control of a Lord Deputy and a council. Charles Fleetwood was installed as Lord Deputy, but was recalled to London due to his links to religious radicals, which resulted in instability in the government.⁴⁰⁵ Oliver Cromwell’s son Henry was appointed to the governing council in an attempt to counter those instabilities, effectively creating a condition of competing governorship between 1655 and 1657, when Fleetwood’s commission finally expired.⁴⁰⁶ This, however, failed to produce Protestant religious stability.

The problems of denominational division among the Protestant population of Ireland began within the Parliamentary Army. Lay preachers, radical prophets, Anglicans, Presbyterians and state funded clergy ministered to the soldiers side by side and often in competition with each other. Sectarianism developed out of the resultant competing religious preference. Protestant ministers realized that the failure of their religious experiment was “ultimately internal.”⁴⁰⁷ The enemies of the Reformation in Ireland proved to be those who were supposed to be its primary agents, the New Model Army. Efforts to address the religious needs of the army siphoned resources away from the effort to convert

⁴⁰⁴ Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 26.

⁴⁰⁵ Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 27-8.

⁴⁰⁶ Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 28.

⁴⁰⁷ Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 29.

the Irish natives.⁴⁰⁸

The depletion of resources toward the penetration into Gaelic Catholicism and the conversion of Irish Catholics was further exacerbated by the influx of religious radicals from England, who seemed particularly drawn to Ireland by the end of 1650. Protestant confessionalisation in Ireland was divided between four main groups: Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians and Quakers, in addition to other smaller groups.⁴⁰⁹ The Baptists increased most rapidly in number and political influence, enjoying the support of most of the soldiers. While the Baptists exercised influence over the Fleetwood administration, that influence quickly waned under Henry Cromwell, who instead sought allies among the Old Protestants, Ulster Presbyterians and former Anglicans in Cork. The Old Protestants were more Puritanical in outlook while the Ulster Presbyterians drew influence from Scottish Covenanters.⁴¹⁰ Quakers were perceived as a threat by all the various Protestant sects in Ireland.⁴¹¹ The Parliamentary Commission, in 1655, ordered that all Quakers be arrested. In January 1656, the Dublin Quakers were expelled to Chester and the Waterford Quakers were expelled to Bristol.⁴¹² These efforts proved insufficient to curtail the very public presence of Quakers, who proved far more adept at using public print to reach the populace of Ireland. The Protestant ecclesiastical world in Ireland was characterized by debates between sectarian theologians regarding baptism, conversion, church government and miracles. Ultimately, “the invasion and its aftermath would be

⁴⁰⁸ Gribben, *God's Irishmen*, 30-1.

⁴⁰⁹ Gribben, *God's Irishmen*, 44.

⁴¹⁰ Gribben, *God's Irishmen*, 44-6.

⁴¹¹ Maclysaght *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*, 296.

⁴¹² Gribben, *God's Irishmen*, 46-7.

underpinned – then undermined – by an unstable religious dynamic,” the competing forces of internally opposing Protestant denominations.⁴¹³ Internal debates within the Protestant confessionalisation weakened Protestant efforts toward the entrenched and resistant Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, preventing Protestant ideology from redefining Gaelic folk beliefs in demonic context and perpetuating an environment of open interreligious conflict. Additionally, internal sectarian debates provided for readily identifiable “internal” enemies as members of competing denominations rather than subversive, diabolical witches. Even when a witch was accused under the Commonwealth, the trial ended in the acquittal of the accused witch, who was perceived as less of a threat than the Quakers and Ranters.⁴¹⁴

Confessionalisation, Religious Subversion and Witchcraft beyond Ireland

The presence of a strong counter confessional faith, or subversive elements within the dominant confessional faith, tended to focus religious efforts away from witch-hunting and toward the eradication and control of those other threats to the faith. The early-modern Crowns of Castile and Aragon were the home of one of the most intensive agencies of confessionalisation in European history, the Spanish Inquisition. Both Henry Kamen and William Monter have demonstrated the interrelation between the Holy Office and the “united” Crowns of Castile and Aragon.⁴¹⁵ The Crowns and the Inquisition became

⁴¹³ Gribben, *God's Irishmen*, 53.

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Gribben, *God's Irishmen*, 47. Gribben cites John D. Seymore, *The Puritans in Ireland, 1647-1661* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 140, as the source of this information. Seymour found record of only one witchcraft trial under the Commonwealth which ended in the acquittal of the accused witch. Gribben provides no other details of the trial.

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Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*. Despite the marriage between Fernando, the king of the Crown of Aragon, and Isabel, the Queen of Castile, “Spain” was not truly unified into a single state until the eighteenth century.

mutually reinforcing institutions, with each one using the other to expand and validate its power, position and influence. In 1483, Fernando and Isabel extended the Castilian Inquisition into the Crown of Aragon, supplanting the pre-existing Aragonese Inquisition, and named Tomás de Torquemada as Inquisitor General of Aragon as well as Castile.⁴¹⁶ Actual unification of the Castilian and Aragonese Holy Offices did not occur until 1518.

The pattern of Inquisitorial activity in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon demonstrates how the prosecution of counter confessional religious groups diverted ecclesiastic attention and effort away from witchcraft prosecutions. Until approximately 1530, the Castilian branch of the Inquisition remained the more active of the two. With the dwindling of Judaizing conversos in Castile, however, activity and attention shifted to the “Aragonese Secretariat.”⁴¹⁷ While witchcraft prosecutions occurred within the Crown of Aragon as early as 1498, Inquisitorial attention toward diabolical witches did not intensify until 1525. The period of Inquisitorial witchcraft prosecutions fell between the period of Morisco prosecutions and the rise of Erasmianism.⁴¹⁸

Witchcraft prosecutions, between 1550 and 1600, seemed to fade into the background in the Aragonese Secretariat when Inquisitorial attention was focused on

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Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 4. Prior to this point, the Crown of Aragon, consisting of the confederation of Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia, had the oldest Inquisition in Europe.

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Conversos were the descendent of Jews who had been forced to convert to Christianity in 1390 and 1492. The term “Aragonese Secretariat” is used by Monter to describe the particular activities of the Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, Navarre and the Basque lands, and the Levant.

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Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 259-60. Moriscos is the term applied to Muslims that were forced to “convert” to Christianity or face expulsion from the Iberian peninsula.

Morisco rebellions in the Crown of Aragon.⁴¹⁹ Earlier, in 1525, Charles V ordered the conversion of all Muslims in Valencia to Christianity, bringing the Crown of Aragon into religious continuity with Castile and ending tolerance for Islam in Spain.⁴²⁰ Charles V admitted that these conversions were not “wholly voluntary” and implemented a program of evangelization among the new “converts in an effort to instruct them in their new faith.”⁴²¹ Nevertheless, the coercive nature of their conversions provoked the Valencian Moriscos into open rebellion against the policies of the government in Castile. resulted in the Moriscos in Valencia rising against the policies of the Castilian government in 1525. The second Alpujarra Revolt in 1568 convinced the Holy Office of the urgency in repressing Morisco heresies, the recusant practice of Islamic rituals and traditions. The Moriscos of Valencia rebelled again in 1609 when they were being expelled from the Crown of Aragon. The expulsion of the Moriscos, and the attendant uprising, coincided with the eruption of a witch-hunt in Logroño, in Navarre.

The height of Inquisitorial prosecutions against Morisco heresies was between the years of 1570 and 1609, when Morisco prosecutions dominated Inquisitorial case loads in both the Valencian and Aragonese tribunals.⁴²² In Valencia, after 1568, the majority of Moriscos prosecuted by the Holy Office were from religiously mixed, Morisco and Catholic,

⁴¹⁹ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 267.

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Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 216-17. *Mudéjares* was the Spanish word for a Muslim openly practicing Islam. The term *Morisco*, like *converso*, was used to designate former *Múdejares* and their descendants, who had “converted” to Christianity. Realistically, these “conversions” were superficial as Moriscos continued to practice their original Islamic religious traditions.

⁴²¹ Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 217.

⁴²² Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 190.

communities.⁴²³ In this case, despite the absence of open inter-religious conflict, Spanish Catholics had the means through which to alleviate the tensions of “co-existing” with a counter confessional faith, the Inquisition. There were, in fact, two major counter confessional threats to Roman Catholicism in the Crown of Aragon, the recusant Moriscos and immigrant French Protestants.⁴²⁴

French Protestants provided a far more threatening “enemy within” than witches did in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon. The domestic staff brought into Castile by Philip II’s “French-born Queen” were frequently the targets of accusations of Lutheranism. The discovery of Protestant sects in Valladolid and Seville in 1558 provoked Philip II’s determination to uproot and extirpate Protestantism in Spain. “Protestant-hunts” were also carried out in the Aragonese Secretariat, which amounted to little more than hunting down French immigrants.⁴²⁵ During the 1560s, the tribunals in Navarre, Saragossa and Barcelona executed 43 “Lutherans,” 40 of whom had been born in France. Despite the previous discovery of covert Spanish Protestant cells in the Crown of Castile, none were ever discovered in the Crown of Aragon. From the 1570s to the 1580s, the Inquisition in northern Spain, essentially the Aragonese Secretariat, engaged in a “Huguenot-hunt.”⁴²⁶ Prosecution of Huguenot “heretics” by the Holy Office continued far longer than the prosecutions of witches in the Aragonese Secretariat, into the 1690s.

Despite the fact that Charles Henry Lea noted that Spain was particularly subjected

⁴²³ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 193,

⁴²⁴ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 201.

⁴²⁵ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 233-4.

⁴²⁶ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 240.

to the “insanity” of witch-hunts between 1400 and 1700, Inquisitorial involvement in witchcraft prosecutions was relatively limited. Indeed, as Lea noted, it was the policies of the Inquisition that brought the witch-hunts to an end in the Crowns of Aragon and Castile.⁴²⁷ The Holy Office seems to have officially endorsed the position expressed in Regino’s “Canon Episcopi” in their 1494 *Repertorium Inquisitorium* which noted that witches’ beliefs were merely illusions manufactured by the Devil. Nevertheless, the Holy Office instructed that witches should be tried by the Inquisition since their erroneous beliefs constituted heresy.⁴²⁸ The majority of witchcraft trials originated in the northern regions along the border with France. The Saragossa and Navarrese tribunals were the most active in prosecuting and executing accused and confessing witches during the early sixteenth century.⁴²⁹ The Inquisition, however, demonstrated significant leniency toward confessing witches, particularly through the issuance of Edicts of Grace, which allowed any heretic to confess, express sincere penitence and avoid, in the case of witches in 1521, execution. In fact, the only witches executed within the jurisdiction of the Saragossa tribunal in 1524 were tried in the secular courts and were executed before the Inquisition could intervene in the proceedings.⁴³⁰ In 1526, the Suprema reversed its position that the witches’ attendance of the Sabbaths was imaginary, primarily in order to retain jurisdiction over the crime by

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Charles Henry Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in Spain*, vol. IV (New York, 1908): 206, quoted in Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 255.

⁴²⁸ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 257.

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Saragossa is in the Kingdom of Aragon and was the principle tribunal in that kingdom within the Crown of Aragon, which also included Valencia, Catalonia and Navarre. The Navarrese tribunal included the cities of Longroño, Pamplona and Bilbao. Aragon, Navarre and Catalonia all bordered France along the Pyrenees and were the only tribunals within the Aragonese Secretariat to execute witches.

⁴³⁰ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 258-9.

asserting the reality of the witch's apostasy. The Inquisition continued to treat even witches who refused to confess with more leniency than those accused of other heresies. While Monter argues that this indicates an Inquisitorial position that questions the heretical nature of witchcraft, it seems more likely that witchcraft was less important and less of a threat than other heresies such as converso and Morisco recusants.⁴³¹ During the 1540 *auto de fe* in Pamplona, nineteen witches were penanced while a Judaizer was executed.⁴³²

Statistically, the years from 1550 to 1600 were the apogee of Aragonese domination of Inquisitorial activity. As noted above, this coincided with increased attention and concern with Morisco heresies, not witchcraft prosecutions. Despite the fact that the Aragonese Secretariat was far more active in witchcraft prosecutions than the Castilian Inquisition, one witch was presented at the autos de fe in Saragossa during this period, in 1581. The thirty year old woman was flogged and banished, not executed. The Navarrese tribunal was by far the most active in prosecuting witches, but even here, witches were treated with far more leniency than Morisco and Huguenot heretics. Thirty-seven witches were absolved in 1576, while the three that were convicted were flogged and banished.

One of the largest and most notorious of the Aragonese witch-hunts occurred in 1609 in the Basque Lands in the village of Zugurramurdi, near the border with Pays de Labourd, the site of a large scale French witch-hunt. This witch-hunt was, in part, fueled by the Inquisitors' acquisition of copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and enabled by the Suprema's preoccupation with the expulsion of the Moriscos from the Crown of Aragon.⁴³³ The

⁴³¹ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 262-3.

⁴³² Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 264.

⁴³³ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 270-72.

Suprema finally acted following the auto de fe in 1610, in which 13 witches were condemned to death, by sending Father Alonso Salazar y Frías to issue an Edict of Grace in 1611. Father Salazar y Frías's report to the Suprema provoked decisive action to curtail the efforts of the Inquisitors in Navarre and prevented further participation in witch-panics by the Holy Office in 1614.

Following 1614, the Holy Office did not take part in another witch-hunt in either the Aragonese Secretariat or the Crown of Castile. By 1630, Inquisitorial energy had decidedly shifted away from Aragon back to Castile with the immigration of Portugese conversos, whose arrival signaled a renewed heretical threat to the Church in Castile.⁴³⁴ Initially, concern over the heretical acts of the Moriscos who had been previously relocated to the Crown of Aragon drew Inquisitorial attention when converso Judaizing dwindled in Castile, facilitating the rise of witch-hunting in the Aragonese Secretariat. With the expulsion of the Moriscos from the Crown of Aragon and the arrival of a renewed heretical threat in Castile, Inquisitorial efforts shifted away from Aragon thoroughly preventing any Inquisitorial witch-hunting from recurring. What is clear is that Morisco and converso heresies, the perceived presence of competing confessional faiths, were far more threatening to the Holy Office's confessionalising agenda than the possibility of diabolical witchcraft.

The Restoration in Ireland and a Witch in Youghal

The Restoration of Charles II to the throne of England brought further changes to Ireland and ultimately resulted in an increase in anxiety amongst the Puritan settlers. Charles II endeavored to rectify some of the injustice the Irish Catholics experienced at the

⁴³⁴ Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, 54.

hands of Cromwell and he promised to return their lands to them. At the same time, Charles II also promised not to dispossess the settlers of their lands.⁴³⁵ Ultimately, the Act of Settlement was Charles II's attempt at a compromise between these two, conflicting promises. The Irish Catholics would have some of their land restored, though not necessarily the land that was taken from them and certainly not all of it. The Protestant Cromwellian settlers were required to surrender one third of their estates to accommodate the Act. This of course created resentment among the Cromwellian settlers. Add to this the Puritan anxiety over a restored monarch and the potential or actual return of a socially unacceptable group and the conditions favorable to witchcraft accusations grew; Florence Newton was denounced as a witch in Youghal.

From the Protestant torture and execution of Dermot O'Hurley, the Catholic archbishop of Cashel, to the scorched earth policies of the English in the early seventeenth century, from the Catholic atrocities against the Protestant settlers in Ulster in 1641 to Cromwell's brutal victories at Drogheda and Wexford, religious conflict was open, bloody and violent.⁴³⁶ The "enemy" was clearly defined as a member of the opposite religion. The nature of the Protestant revolution in England inextricably tied religion to politics in Ireland which resulted in every major conflict becoming a religious war between the Protestant state and the Catholic resistance. The open and active nature of these conflicts, combined with the repeated smaller raids of the Gaelic lords struggling to maintain independence, resulted

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J. G. Simms, "The Restoration and the Jacobite War", in *The Course of Irish History*, eds. Moody and Martin, 165.

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Richard Stanihurst, *Brevis praemunitio pro futura concertione cum Jacobo Usserio*, quoted in Ford and McCafferty, eds, *Origins*, 1.

in an environment antithetical to witchcraft accusations. Ironically, it was only when a modicum of stability developed coupled with increased anxiety that a witch actually appeared in Ireland.

Part III

Irish Witchcraft Trials in Historical Context

The combined influences of enduring artifacts of Gaelic culture and the dynamics of competing confessional faiths and confessionalisation in Ireland suppressed the tendency toward witchcraft accusations that existed in Scotland and England during the same time period. Understanding some of the mechanisms that prevented witchcraft accusations and trials, however, does not suffice to explain why those trials that are recorded occurred. To understand why these people were accused and tried as witches requires that we place them within the historical context in which they occurred. By examining the events and conditions that surrounded the specific trials, we can more clearly understand the social and political function of a witch in early modern Ireland.

This section will examine the historical context surrounding three particular witchcraft trials in Ireland: the 1578 trial and execution of “two witches;” the 1605 “trial” of Reverend John Aston, a minister in Mellifont; and the trial of Florence Newton in Youghal in 1661. While there is precious little real information regarding the 1578 trial, careful analysis of social, political and military conditions and events during the Lord Deputyship of Sir Henry Sidney provides sufficient context to interpret the underlying significance and function of the trial and execution of women for the unnatural crime of witchcraft. Additionally, there is only a little more information regarding the trial of Reverend Aston, which was cut prematurely short when the accused was suddenly sent to England to be examined by the King himself, James I. Close examination of both the Nine Years War that preceded and influenced the nature of the charges brought against Aston, as well as of the credulity or skepticism of James I, cast an entirely different light upon the proceedings and their unusual conclusion.

By far the best documented witchcraft trial in early modern Ireland, the trial of Florence Newton, is still more than it appears. The social, political and demographic history of Youghal was significant in the development of witchcraft accusations in County Cork following the restoration of Charles II to the throne of England, Scotland and Ireland. The sudden accession of a monarch with known and public Catholic sympathies placed the Protestant, minority, ruling elite of Youghal in a potentially precarious position. As will be demonstrated, the trial of Florence Newton was an assertion of values and control by the governing English Protestants faced with a far larger Catholic Irish majority, and an effort to prevent that majority from perceiving itself empowered by the restoration of the Stuart monarchs and rising up against Protestant governmental control.

The witch, in Ireland, served a very particular function. She was the embodiment of subversive, unacceptable behavior. Prosecution of such an outsider served to ratify and reinforce social, political and moral control by the invading English Protestants. Faced with a resistant Catholic majority composed of Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Irish who were frequently unified *across* ethnic boundaries and along religious boundaries, the ruling elites needed to make an example of someone who served as a demonstration of what would not be tolerated. Anything that threatened their hegemony had to be suppressed or extirpated. In 1578 and 1661, the witches publically tried and, probably in Newton's case, executed seem to have provided just such examples and reinforced the dominant social order.

Chapter VII
Tudor Conquest and Kilkenny Witches:
The Social Role of the Witch under Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney.

In the mid sixteenth century, the process of confessionalisation in Ireland was closer to the binary model proposed by Lots-Heumann. With the accession of Elizabeth I to the throne of England, the Anglican Church was re-established as the official church of the English state.⁴³⁷ Elizabeth's confessionalising policy in England was to identify and execute outspoken and troublesome Catholics as "traitors" loyal to a foreign prince, the Pope in Rome. This policy was an inversion of that of Mary Tudor, who executed traitorous Protestants as heretics. While Elizabeth's policies in England met with widespread approval and acceptance, such was not the case in Ireland.⁴³⁸

Elizabeth was determined to bring Ireland into religious conformity with England. In 1560, at Elizabeth's instructions, Lord Fitzwalter, earl of Sussex and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, called an Irish parliament and passed the Acts of 1560, which imposed Protestantism upon the Anglo-Irish within the Pale and required the use of the Second Book of Common Prayer. The Acts of 1560 produced only resentment and dissent among the Anglo-Irish who steadfastly refused to abandon their religious faith and allegiance to the Pope. The remaining two thirds of the population of Ireland, those living outside of the English Pale were not subject to the Acts of 1560. However, if the Acts were successfully enforced upon the Anglo-Irish, relations between the Catholic Gaelic- and Anglo-Irish

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Previously, Mary Tudor had re-established the Roman Catholic Church in England following the death of her father, Henry VIII and her younger brother Edward VII. When Mary, died, Elizabeth I took the throne and re-established her father's Church of England.

⁴³⁸ Mike Cronin, *A History of Ireland* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 49-50.

beyond the Pale and the Protestantized Anglo-Irish within the Pale would become further strained. Indeed, enforcement of the Acts *within* the Pale would produce resentment toward the English throne by otherwise loyal subjects. Elizabeth's religious policies were complicated by the fact that priests of the Society of Jesus had come to Ireland to enforce the rulings of the Council of Trent. The Jesuits became a driving and enduring force behind the Counter-Reformation in Ireland and Catholicism became entrenched. Gaelic Irish and Old English effectively united as Catholics and the Protestant Church of Ireland was identified as the religion of the English colony and the "official class."⁴³⁹

Matters in Ireland became more complicated in 1565, under Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney who attempted to divest the Gaelic chieftains of their traditional power and position through the establishment of "presidencies" in Ireland. Sidney's land policy was a fundamental transformation of the traditional land holding and power structures in Ireland. Sidney's policy required that tenants pay their rents in cash, rather than through service as was traditional. In this way, Sidney brought the Irish land system in line with the English land system and provided for an alternate form of funding for the army in Ireland. The system of "presidencies" resulted in the creation of provincial councils composed exclusively of Protestant English settlers and adventurers who were intensely hostile toward the Catholic Gaelic Irish. The presidents of these provincial councils had sole authority to raise money in the provinces for the maintenance of soldiers and to recover lands identified as belonging to the Crown.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest", 145.

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Nicholas Canny, "Early Modern Ireland, c. 1500-1700," in R. F. Foster, ed. *The Oxford History of Ireland* (Oxford: University Press, 1989), 108-9.

Sidney expanded the territory under English control by dispossessing any Gaelic lords engaged in military hostilities against the Crown of their lands. These lands were then parceled into smaller units, some of which were given to the relatives of the “rebellious” lords, while the majority were given to Protestant English adventurers and settlers engaged in private colonization efforts. The English adventurers arrived in Ireland with private armies, and their intrusion into both Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lands provoked a series of insurrections that allowed Sidney to confiscate more lands.⁴⁴¹ Sidney’s land policy put him at odds with the Butler lords of Ormond when an English adventurer, Peter Carew, claimed lands as the result of military hostilities by Gerald FitzGerald of Munster. Some of the lands claimed by Carew were actually under the control of the Butlers of Ormond. Carew prevailed in court and acquired some of Ormond’s lands.⁴⁴² Not only did Ormond lose land to an English adventurer, but the Butlers and other Anglo-Irish lords resisted Sidney’s policy because they recognized its potential to destabilize relations between the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Irish, thus destabilizing the fragile conditions in Ireland.

In 1570, Gerald FitzGerald’s successor, James FitzMaurice FitzGerald responded to Sidney’s policies with open rebellion. While FitzMaurice was “vehemently anti-Protestant” his rebellion was primarily political when it began. FitzGerald had been imprisoned for his actions against Carew and FitzMaurice’s rebellion was ostensibly a reaction to his predecessor’s imprisonment. When the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth as a heretic and absolved her subjects from obeying her commands, FitzMaurice responded by adding a religious element to his rebellion to garner additional Irish support. FitzMaurice was unable

⁴⁴¹ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland,” 108.

⁴⁴² Cronin, *A History of Ireland*, 53.

to obtain support from King Philip II of Castile and was defeated in 1572. Nevertheless, Elizabeth recognized that Sidney and the English adventurers were intentionally provoking the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lords into open military conflict for the purpose of seizing more and more land in Ireland and ordered Sidney to desist in his programs. Elizabeth's decision was also partially informed by her relationship with Sir Thomas Butler, the tenth earl of Ormond. Ormond was related to the Desmond Geraldines of Munster and in 1573 Desmond FitzGerald was released by Elizabeth due, in no small part, to the persuasion of Ormond. FitzMaurice, who had invoked religion into his rebellion was not pardoned by Elizabeth and remained in exile until the second Desmond Rebellion of 1579.

Sidney perceived Ormond as his nemesis in Ireland and principal rival for the favors of Elizabeth in the form of political advancement. Sidney repeatedly petitioned to be named Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, a position which included hereditary title in either England or Ireland and, therefore, nobility. Sidney's campaign against Ormond, both in Ireland and in his memoirs, was part of a larger concern among the English that Ormond's success in Munster could lead to his appointment to the viceroyalty of Ireland, making Butler the first Irish born Lord Deputy since Silken Thomas's rebellion in 1534.⁴⁴³ Time and again, Sidney notes Ormond's subversive efforts to both undermine his policies and support rebellious Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lords. Sidney, in fact, blames Ormond for the first Desmond Rebellion, not FitzGerald or FitzMaurice, and for prolonging the 1565-1567 war against Shane O'Neill in Ulster. Ormond complained to Elizabeth of the activities of the earl of Desmond, which forced Sidney to divert his attention away from Ulster and toward

⁴⁴³ Brady, *A Viceroy's Vindication?*, 24 & 28.

Munster.⁴⁴⁴

Sidney's response to the internal controversies and strife was to establish "president and council" in Thomond as he previously had in Munster.⁴⁴⁵ Thomond is on the coast west of Munster, in what would become County Clare and bordered both the Desmond and Ormond "Supremacies."⁴⁴⁶ Sidney appointed Sir Edward Fitton, already president in Connacht, to the presidency in Thomond. Ormond complained repeatedly to Elizabeth of injustice from both Sidney and the commissioners in Munster, which provoked angry letters from Elizabeth to Sidney.⁴⁴⁷

When Fitzmaurice rebelled in Munster in 1568, Ormond was in London. Fitzmaurice was joined by Sir Edmund Butler, Ormond's seneschal who proceeded to wage war against the Englishmen in Queen's County. While Sidney was marching his army through hostile territory in Ireland, attempting to suppress the rebellions, Ormond returned from London with letters from Elizabeth urging Sidney to show mercy to the rebelling lords Butler and Fitzmaurice.⁴⁴⁸ The earl of Thomond joined the rebellion at this point, declaring his allegiance to Fitzmaurice and complaining of "hard dealings" of Fitton. Sidney sent Ormond to parley with Thomond in an attempt to avoid further military conflict. Thomond insisted upon his ancestral rights, refused to live under a president or suffer any laws to be enforced

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Sir Henry Sidney, "Memoir" 1582, PRO State Papers, Domestic, sp 12, vol. 159, in Brady, ed., *A Viceroy's Vindication?*, 49. Subsequent citations will reference Sidney, "Memoir" and the page in Brady's edited publication of Sidney's book, which otherwise lacks a specific title.

⁴⁴⁵ Sidney, "Memoir," 52.

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A "Supremacy" refers to the region under hereditary control of an Anglo-Irish Lord. Essentially a feudal holding.

⁴⁴⁷ Sidney, "Memoir," 52-3.

⁴⁴⁸ Sidney, "Memoir," 71.

in his own country by anyone other than himself. Thomond also insisted that he had only acted as Ormond had counselled, which Ormond denied.⁴⁴⁹ It seems clear, though, that Sidney gave credence to Thomond's accusation. Even after the rebellions were suppressed, Sidney referred to Ormond as, "the...poison of all Munster."⁴⁵⁰

Elizabeth recalled Sidney from his post in 1571 and he was replaced by Sir William Fitzwilliam as Lord Deputy. Suppression of the first Desmond Rebellion required the dispatching of Sir John Perrott with guns and cannon. His smaller but better equipped force brought an end to the rebellion in Munster. Sidney was reinstated as Lord Deputy in 1575. As the decade progressed, however, Elizabeth found occasion to intervene in Sidney's government. The Queen did not approve of the Lord Deputy's campaign of private colonization in Ireland. Whether through the influence of Ormond or not, Elizabeth decided that Sidney's policies were directly responsible for the provocation of the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lords into rebellion. Elizabeth ordered the end of Sidney's colonization programs in Ireland and he was again recalled in 1578 amid mounting internal tensions between the Catholic Gaelic and Anglo-Irish and the "intensely Protestant" new English settlers.⁴⁵¹

It was during this period of increasing tensions that Fitton and Sir William Drury wrote Sidney about the trial and execution of two witches in Kilkenny. Kilkenny not only bordered Munster on the east, it was also part of the Ormond Supremacy. Fitton and Drury were strong supporters of Sidney and could be described as Sidney's men. Sidney had appointed Fitton to two simultaneous presidencies, one of which, the presidency of

⁴⁴⁹ Sidney, "Memoir," 73-4.

⁴⁵⁰ Sidney, "Memoir," 84.

⁴⁵¹ Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 110.

Thomond, had been re-assigned to Perrott following his victory over Fitzmaurice in 1573. Drury arrived in Ireland as the president of Munster in 1576 and in 1578 was appointed Lord Justice to the Irish Council and succeeded Sidney as Lord Deputy when Sidney was recalled in 1578.

Information regarding the nature of the charges against the two women for witchcraft is completely absent. Records are silent regarding the specific accusations of *maleficia* that brought the women into the custody of the officials in Kilkenny. The records are equally silent regarding the women's ages, backgrounds, nationalities and even their names. Inferences can be made by applying the general pattern of witchcraft suspects and the patterns of accusations in Ireland to these nameless women. They were probably older and poor, likely subsisting through begging and charity; they were certainly marginalized, probably living on the edge of their village. Given the conditions in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the women were probably either Gaelic or Anglo-Irish and nominally Catholic, though a tendency toward folkloric, traditional practices is also likely. All of the accusations of witchcraft in early modern Ireland were made by Protestant "victims," so it is reasonable to believe that a similar pattern existed in this case as well.⁴⁵²

Returning to Hutton's observations of the social significance of witchcraft trials, as described in Chapter II above, the trial and execution of two women who represented one of the ethnic groups that challenged the authority of the English government in Ireland and who engaged in behavior deemed socially unacceptable by the Protestant English would

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Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 4. Seymour notes that "Witchcraft seems to have been confined to the Protestant party..."

have served to reinforce the rules of the new regime.⁴⁵³ The accusations of the women may have been part of the process of adjustment to the new regime in Ireland as described by Mary Douglas.⁴⁵⁴ By executing members of the subversive and rebellious groups, Fitton and Drury demonstrated the consequences of resistance to the social, political and religious change the Elizabethan government in Ireland represented and required. This lesson may have been particularly pointed by having been demonstrated within the jurisdiction of Sidney's most troublesome rival, Ormond. Additionally, the accusations brought against the women may very well have been a function of the people's adjustment to those changes.

⁴⁵³ Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt", 23.

⁴⁵⁴ Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunts," 24.

Chapter VII
The Witch that Wasn't:
Reverend John Aston, King James I and the Rebellion of Hugh O'Niell.

The witchcraft trial of Reverend John Aston of Mellifont, must be understood within the complex matrix of conditions and events within which it occurred. The very nature of the accusations themselves provide indications of the underlying motives behind Aston's mysterious and sudden removal from Ireland to the court of James I, mid-trial. Aston was charged with conjuring demons for the purpose of locating a silver cup, stolen from his church in Mellifont, for discovering the location and plans of "the most wicked traitor, Hugh [O'Neill], Earl of Tyrone," and for locating other treasures.⁴⁵⁵ It may seem ironic that the Crown would prosecute a minister for using magic to determine the location of a rebelling Irish lord as well as uncover that rebel's plots against King and Crown. This irony becomes doubly suspicious because this charge is sandwiched between two other acts that were specifically enumerated in James's 1604 statute.⁴⁵⁶ Further, the Enrollment of Pleas states that Aston was removed from imprisonment in Dublin Castle, "by warrant of the lord King was sent to England, therefore further proceedings shall cease."⁴⁵⁷ It would seem, then, that

⁴⁵⁵ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 78.

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James Travers, *James I: The Masque of Monarchy*, 30-1. Page 31 contains a photograph of the original statute, while page 30 provides a translation into plain type. The statute specifically reads: "to tell or declare in what place an treasure of gold or silver should or might be found or had in the earth or other secret places." Compared with the specific charges against Aston, "...that he might find out and obtain divers treasures of gold and silver concealed in the earth at Mellifont." The charges read like "boilerplate" charges, and may well be, but the nearly identical language between the charges and the statute should not be dismissed as simple formality of charges.

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Enrolment of Pleas, 6 James I, memb. 2 (Queen's Bench), in Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 79.

the Crown in fact did not prosecute Aston for discovering the whereabouts and intentions of Hugh O'Neill during the Ulster Rebellion of 1595 -1603.

Seymour points to James I's reputation as a "witch-hunter" to infer the fate of Aston upon his arrival in London. The reality of James I's increasing skepticism after he ascended to the throne of England does not support his, historically accepted, reputation as a "witch-hunter" as presented by Seymour. James's reputation was the product of his involvement in the witchcraft trials in North Berwick in 1590 and again in 1597 as well as the publication of his treatise on the reality of witchcraft, *Daemonologie*. In both of these trials, James became involved after his throne, his bride and his person were allegedly threatened by the witches. More than a zealous witch-hunter, James seems more "paranoid" by the possibility of treason and regicide than simply diabolical witchcraft. Indeed, in 1605, the year before Aston was sent to England, James demonstrated considerable skepticism regarding the accusations of witchcraft leveled by Brian Gunter. A 1606 hearing in the King's Court of Star Chamber produced a confession from Brian's daughter, Anne, that Gunter's accusations were false and that her symptoms of bewitchment had been manufactured through the consumption of "green waters" given to her by her father.⁴⁵⁸ By the time Aston was sent to England from Ireland, James I was more skeptic than witch-hunter and had surrounded himself with other skeptics such as Harsnett.

Hugh O'Neill, Ascension and Rebellion

The ascendancy of Hugh O'Neill as the earl of Tyrone was supposed to solve

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Attorney General v Gunter, 1606, in Travers, *James I*, 36-7. Page 37 contains a photograph of the record of Anne's testimony in the Court of Star Chamber, while page 36 contains the plain type translation of both the page pictured and the page normally precedes it. The pages pictured is a record of Anne's testimony to Reverend Samuel Harsnett.

Elizabeth's problems in Ulster. Hugh's predecessors, Shane O'Neill and Turlough Luineach, had proved troublesome to both Elizabeth and the various Lords Deputy. When the earl of Tyrone, Conn O'Neill died in 1559, his second son Shane insisted that, according to the system of Gaelic lordships, Conn had ruled only so long as he was alive and, thus, left no estate to be passed on to his eldest son. The system of primogeniture was an English system, which Shane argued did not apply to a Gaelic earldom. In 1562, Shane pressed his claim in London before Elizabeth, having arrived at Crown expense at the head of a company of gallowglasses.⁴⁵⁹ Elizabeth sent Shane back to Ireland "with honour" and Shane commenced behaving like a king in Ulster, "yok[ing] and spoil[ing] at pleasure" the Scots in Antrim such that in 1567, they rose up against him and placed his head on a spike over the gates of Dublin.⁴⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Elizabeth's endorsement and toleration of Shane O'Neill's rule represented a reversal, however temporary, of the anglicisation project in Ulster.

Hugh O'Neill was installed by the Irish parliament under Sidney as the baron of Dungannon, which had previously been part of Shane's lands, in 1569. Hugh had been educated in England and Elizabeth anticipated that his accession would restore English control over Ulster. In 1595, Hugh O'Neill succeeded Turlough Luineach as the earl of Tyrone. While Hugh O'Neill sat in the House of Lords in the Irish parliament, he also asserted his claims to control over the greater part of Ulster as a Gaelic king. Hugh O'Neill

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G. A. Hayes-McCoy, "The Tudor Conquest, 1534 - 1603," in F. X. Martin and T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin, *The Course of Irish History* (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart, 2001), 145. Gallowglasses were Scots-Irish mercenaries of notorious ferocity traditionally clad in saffron dyed shirts carrying halberd, large axe-like weapons into battle.

⁴⁶⁰ Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest," 145.

had been quietly supporting the neighboring Gaelic lords in asserting their sovereignty in Ulster since 1593. In 1595, when he learned that the English intended to send a large force into Ulster to suppress the rebellion of Hugh Macguire, Hugh O'Neill engaged his own army of fifteen thousand in support of Macguire. Hugh O'Neill had been gradually building his private Irish army since 1569, and he had been training it in the use of "modern" weapons. He had also established close connections with Scotland and Spain. Initially perceived as an ally of England, these activities had been overlooked by the Crown.⁴⁶¹

Hugh O'Neill's initial successes in Ulster drove the English settlers back into the Pale around Dublin. O'Neill realized there could be no separate solution for Ulster, however and attempted to involve the entirety of Ireland in his rebellion, as well as courting Philip II for military support. Hugh O'Neill demanded the restoration of all lands to their rightful owners and the freedom for the Irish to openly practice Catholicism. In the summer of 1598, following a massive Irish victory in Ulster, the majority of Gaelic and Catholic Ireland rose up in support of the Ulster rebellion. The Irish in Connacht, Leinster, Munster and the Pale simultaneously rebelled against English rule.⁴⁶² Hugh O'Neill had successfully united Ireland for the purpose of rejecting English rule, the defense of Catholicism and the restoration of Gaelic traditions.⁴⁶³

The arrival of a Spanish army in support of O'Neill at Kinsale confirmed the worst of the English fears. Hugh O'Neill, once believed to be a loyal English subject and the solution to England's troubles in Ulster, was providing an invasion point for England's

⁴⁶¹ Cronin, *History of Ireland*, 57-8.

⁴⁶² Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest," 149; Cronin, *History of Ireland*, 59.

⁴⁶³ Cronin, *History of Ireland*, 60.

political and ecclesiastical enemies. The new Lord Deputy, Lord Mountjoy, engaged in a campaign of atrocities against O'Neill, rapidly establishing new and heavily occupied garrisons in southern Ireland before moving north into Ulster, where Mountjoy employed a "scorched earth" policy burning crops and houses. When O'Neill and his Irish allies attempted to rendezvous with the Spanish forces at Kinsale in 1603, the English took advantage of the Irish unfamiliarity with waging an offensive war to crush O'Neill's forces while the Spanish remained in Kinsale.⁴⁶⁴ Hugh O'Neill surrendered to the English on 30 March 1603 at Mellifont.⁴⁶⁵ Elizabeth did not survive to see the end of the Nine Years War, but her heir, the "notorious witch-hunter" James I, accepted a negotiated settlement with O'Neill and O'Donnell, who remained the earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell in Ulster, respectively.⁴⁶⁶

Among the Irish, Hugh O'Neill had been extremely popular. He had embodied the assertion of Gaelic tradition and Catholicism. O'Neill's religious position would also have endeared him with the Anglo-Irish, who were being systematically disenfranchised because of their refusal to conform to the official Anglican religion. His sudden departure from Ireland with O'Donnell in 1607, "the flight of the earls," left many Gaelic Irish shocked and dismayed; and left Ulster effectively leaderless in the face of an aggressive plantation program by the English and James I.

⁴⁶⁴ Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest," 151.

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Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest," 151. Mellifont was also the location of Aston's church and the region in which the reverend was accused of practicing diabolical witchcraft.

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Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest," 151 and Aidan Clarke, "The Colonization of Ulster and the Rebellion of 1641, 1603 -1660," in Moody and Martin, *Course of Irish History*, 152.

James I and VI, Witch-Hunts and Treason

James's reputation as a witch-hunter developed during the early years of his monarchy in Scotland with his direct involvement in the witchcraft trials of the 1590s and his publication of *Daemonologie*. *Daemonologie* not only confirmed the reality of witchcraft, but also included recommendations for prosecutions, including the use of "Swimming" to discover a witch. Probably written in response to Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witches*, which is specifically mentioned by James in the text, *Daemonologie* is also a political treatise in defense of the Divine Right monarchy. *Daemonologie* had little impact on English witchcraft beliefs, though it did increase English awareness of the diabolical aspect of the crime. As King of England, James added the crime of trafficking with demons to the definition of witchcraft in his 1604 statute. By this time, however, James was already beginning to shed his reputation as a zealot witch-hunter.⁴⁶⁷

James's belief in the divine right of kings and his intense fear of rebellion informed his involvement in the Scottish witch-hunts of the late sixteenth century. Those same beliefs and fears would be redirected in 1605 toward the belief in a Catholic conspiracy following the attempted coup of Guy Fawkes. James did not begin the North Berwick witch-hunt and only became involved when the use of judicial torture of Gellis Duncan produced the names of two noblewomen as accomplices. James had suspected that Euphame MacCalzean and Barbara Napier had attempted to kill first his bride, Anne of Denmark, then himself in 1589.⁴⁶⁸ This suspicion was based on the fact that authorities in Denmark

⁴⁶⁷ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 34.

⁴⁶⁸ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 35.

executed six witches in May 1590 for raising the storm that initially prevented Anne from traveling from Denmark to Scotland to marry James. In autumn 1590, Agnes Sampson, who was also named by Duncan as a witch, confessed to raising a storm to prevent “the queen[]” from arriving in Scotland.⁴⁶⁹

Sampson’s confession captured the attention of King James, who already had reason to fear for the safety of his life and throne. In 1582, James had been captured during a series of minor rebellions, but managed to escape. In 1589, just a few months before his departure to Norway and Denmark to marry and return with Anne, the thoroughly Calvinist James faced the rebellion of the Catholic lords in northern Scotland and a border uprising led by the earl of Bothwell, James’s cousin Francis Stewart. Bothwell was declared a traitor, but his sentence was suspended and he was made regent while James was in Denmark. Bothwell had connections to MacCalzean and Napier and was implicated in a diabolical plot to kill James through the testimony of Richie Graham and Sampson. Sampson testified that Bothwell would pay the witches in gold and silver for their attempts on Anne and James’s lives. Graham claimed that Bothwell came to him about using magic to return to the King’s favor following his 1589 rebellion. According to Graham, Bothwell specifically mentioned Sampson as a witch capable of destroying James.⁴⁷⁰ Perhaps even more damning was the testimony that, when Sampson presented the Devil with a wax carving during a witches’ Sabbath, the Devil himself identified the carving as representing James and named Bothwell

⁴⁶⁹ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 36.

⁴⁷⁰ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 40.

as the author of this diabolical conspiracy against the King.⁴⁷¹

The implication of Bothwell as the orchestrator of the North Berwick witches tied the crime of witchcraft to the crime of treason for James. James announced that Bothwell had conspired with the “enemies of God,” and employed witchcraft for the purposes of overthrowing the king and the “true religion,” Calvinism.⁴⁷² James incorporated the political and demonological theories of Jean Bodin with the traditional beliefs about political sorcery in Scotland to produce witchcraft as a crime of treason against both God and the king. James used the convergence of these two crimes to raise witchcraft in Scotland to the level of a *crimen exceptum*, allowing for exceptions to the normal rules of evidence and the use of judicial torture to elicit confessions.⁴⁷³ James’s intervention into the 1597 witch-hunt followed a similar pattern, with the king only becoming involved after the accused confessed to plotting his murder via diabolical witchcraft.

Daemonologie was the product of James’s experiences with the North Berwick witches and the diabolical treason of Bothwell. Divided into three books and consisting of a dialogue between Philomathes and Epistemon, *Daemonologie* is both an expression of James’s witchcraft beliefs and his perception of the king as “pastoral” instructor and judge.⁴⁷⁴ James attempts to differentiate between “magic” of learned men, particularly the

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Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 41. Normand and Roberts use the memoirs of Sir James Melville, who, with King James, attended the testimonies of both Graham and Sampson. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 37.

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Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 40. The term “enemies of God” was originally coined by John Knox, James’s foster father and religious mentor.

⁴⁷³ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 41.

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Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 332; Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 42.

art of divination, and “witchcraft” as practiced by poor, ignorant women.⁴⁷⁵ While both are ultimately powered by the Devil, witches and the Devil represent disorder and the inversion of godly society, mimicking and mocking the natural order of things with the king as the divinely ordained “epitome of order and control.”⁴⁷⁶ The “magician” is characterized by a patronage type of political relationship with the nobility or king, thereby demonstrating the impact of Bothwell’s treason upon James’s ideology. *Daemonologie* addressed not only the reality of witchcraft, but also the state’s power and authority in discovering and prosecuting the crime itself. In this way, *Daemonologie* was almost as much a political treatise in defense of the divine right monarch as it was a demonological tract on diabolical *maleficia*.⁴⁷⁷

James’s particular concern with witchcraft was clearly its potential for treason and undermining the godly society and the proper socio-political order. Shortly after he became king of England, the group from which James most feared treason were the Catholics. James’s response to Hugh O’Neill’s rebellion in Ireland was the implementation of a massive plantation campaign which brought Scot Presbyterians into the previously Catholic controlled region. Guy Fawkes’s ill fated “Gun Powder Plot” was quickly associated with Catholic revolutionary sentiments in England. By 1605, the treasonous witch was not nearly as dangerous to James as the treasonous Catholic.

Reverend John Aston: Witch?

Not one of the charges listed against Reverend Aston included treasonous behavior

⁴⁷⁵ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 43.

⁴⁷⁶ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 340.

⁴⁷⁷ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 4.

on his part. Aston was accused of using divination to discern the whereabouts and intentions of a rebelling Catholic, Gaelic lord, but was himself seemingly innocent of any treasonous activity. Certainly, James noted divination as one of the powers of the educated “magician;” however the magician, under James’s expectations, was involved in a patron-client relationship with either the nobility or the monarchy. Was Aston then the client of some powerful English patron? Was it James I who had the most to gain from knowing the movements and schemes of his opponent in Ireland, who was Aston’s patron? Whomever his patron may or may not have been, none of the charges against Aston were perceived by James as inherently dangerous to the crown. Even the charges of using diabolical magic to locate missing or stolen treasure were essentially misdemeanor charges under James’s 1604 statute.⁴⁷⁸ Indeed, by 1605, James was demonstrating considerably more skepticism than credulity.

All of this information raises the question of why Aston was charged with witchcraft in the first place and why he was ordered moved to England with no trial disposition noted in any historical record. The Irish hate an “informer.”⁴⁷⁹ If the diabolical and magical aspects of Aston’s knowledge of Hugh O’Neill’s movements are discounted, then Aston may be understood to be a spy for the English Crown. It is a striking coincidence that Aston’s parish is in the very town where O’Neill surrendered to Lord Mountjoy, Mellifont. What

⁴⁷⁸ Travers, *The Masque of Monarchy*, 30-1.

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Ken Bruen, *The Guards* (New York: St. Martin’s Minotaur, 2001), 5. While Bruen’s book is a modern fiction, he is not the first to express such sentiments, “You can get away with most anything except ‘telling.’” By applying Braudel’s concept of the *longue duree*, the continuity of underlying structures, the Irish stigma against informants and spies can be seen as the modern expression of an older, enduring sentiment; witness Michael Collins’s assassination of a group of known British Intelligence agents, spies, in 1920. It seems reasonable then that similar sentiments prevailed in the seventeenth century.

better way to remove one's agent from a country hostile to informants than to implicate that informant in the practice of diabolical witchcraft and rely upon the king's reputation as a zealot to facilitate the belief in the worst possible outcome of the trial. The fact that there are no surviving records of Aston's trial in England further demonstrate the elements of subterfuge in Aston's deportation to England. Even Brian and Anne Gunther's testimony in the King's Court of Star chamber was recorded and preserved. Aston, on the other hand seems to have simply disappeared; and that may have been James's plan from the very beginning.

Chapter IX
Florence Newton:
Witchcraft and the Assertion of Protestant Hegemony in Youghal

On 24 March 1661, Florence Newton was committed to the Gaol of Cork on the charges of witchcraft. By the time Newton was brought to trial in the Cork Assizes on 11 September 1661, she was charged with bewitching and tormenting Mary Longdon and bewitching David Jones, who died as a result of Newton's witchcraft.⁴⁸⁰ O'Flanagan described Newton as "an aged crone" and "a miserable old creature," which is the only descriptive or biographical information presented about Newton.⁴⁸¹ The first victim, Mary Longdon, was a maid in the house of John Pyne, the bailiff in Youghal. Longdon quarreled with Newton on Christmas day, 1660, when Newton asked Longdon to give her a piece of beef from Pyne's larder. Longdon refused and Newton said, "thou had'st as good have given it me" then walked away grumbling. About a week later, Longdon encountered Newton, who "violently kissed" Longdon on the forehead, pleaded for reconciliation and assured Longdon that she harbored no ill will toward her.⁴⁸² A few nights later, Longdon saw an apparition of Newton and a short, well-dressed man at the side of her bed. The man offered Longdon, "all things after her own heart." Longdon refused and asserted her faith in God. Within the month, Longdon began to suffer, "fits and trances" accompanied by the vomiting up of pins,

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Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 105-31; O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 51-63. These are two of the more complete accounts of Newton's trial, both of which were based Joseph Glanvil, *Sadducismus Triumphatus, or, a full and plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1712).

⁴⁸¹ O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 51.

⁴⁸² O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 52; Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 107-8.

needles, wool, straw and horse shoe nails. Longdon was also pelted with small stones that vanished before falling to the floor. Longdon reported seeing Newton during her “fits.”

When Longdon concluded her testimony during the trial, Newton was seen peering at her between the heads of others in the court room. Newton then cast her manacled hands toward Longdon and said, “Now she is down.”⁴⁸³ Longdon immediately fell into a seizure, screaming and biting her own arms. She was carried from the courtroom by several people, who reported that Longdon began vomiting pins, straw and wool. Newton was seen pinching her own arms during Longdon’s seizure in the courtroom.

Pyne, Longdon’s employer, corroborated Longdon’s testimony “to near the minutest particular.”⁴⁸⁴ He reported having seen one of the stones that struck Longdon before it vanished. Pyne also corroborated the nature of the material vomited by Longdon during her seizures as well as her transportation from her bed to other areas in the house. O’Flanagan remarks on the almost conspiratorial similarities between Longdon and Pyne’s testimonies, but dismisses the idea of an outright conspiracy against Newton.⁴⁸⁵

When Newton was examined she denied bewitching Longdon, but confessed to “overlooking” her when she kissed her. Newton admitted to imagining mischief befalling Longdon when she kissed and, later, equated this with “overlooking.” Newton expressed remorse for having “wronged” Longdon by overlooking her. Newton suggested that two other women, Goody Halfpenny and Goody Dod, would be able to remove the misfortune befalling Longdon, or, that these two women might be responsible for Longdon’s condition.

⁴⁸³ O’Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 55; Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 112.

⁴⁸⁴ O’Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 57.

⁴⁸⁵ O’Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 57.

When Longdon exonerated Dod and Halfpenny, blame fell squarely back upon Newton, who continued to insist on the difference between overlooking and bewitching.

While Newton was confined to the County Cork gaol, two remarkable events occurred. One evening, all of the guards heard the prison door shaking. Newton asked the apparition what it was doing in the gaol. When pressed about the matter, Newton initially denied speaking to anyone, but later she confessed to having spoken with “a spirit, and her familair, in the shape of a greyhound.”⁴⁸⁶ In April 1661, while still confined to the gaol, Newton kissed David Jones’s hand through the bars of the prison door. After suffering two weeks of “great pain” in his arm, Jones died. As he lay dying, Jones accused Newton of bewitching, and, thus, murdering, him. The actual outcome of Newton’s trial is not recorded, but, given Jones’s deathbed accusation, it seems likely that she was found guilty and executed for practicing diabolical witchcraft.

While the “trial” of Reverend Aston is questionable in its authenticity as a witchcraft trial, the trial of Florence Newton in 1661, in County Cork, is not. Newton’s trial was a legitimate witchcraft trial in that the victim and witnesses truly believed that “gammar” Newton had bewitched Mary Longdon. The actual prosecution of the trial, however, returns to the underlying societal forces described by Hutton and Douglas. Here, again, Newton the witch served a very specific socio-political function. Understanding that function requires an understanding of the contemporary history of the town of Youghal.

The History of Youghal

Youghal is located on the southwest coast of Ireland near the border between

⁴⁸⁶ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 118; O’Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 58.

Counties Cork and Waterford, on the Cork side, within Munster Province. In the sixteenth century this would have placed Youghal within the Desmond Supremacy. The Ormond Supremacy lay along the entire northern border of the Desmond Supremacy. The Fitzgerald earls of Desmond had a long standing rivalry with the Butler earls of Ormond, dating back well into the fifteenth century when the Fitzgerald earls consolidated their control over the government and Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland. Fitzgerald dominance endured until the Silken Thomas Rebellion in 1534. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, however, Thomas Butler, the earl of Ormond, had secured royal favor, even above the return Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney.

Youghal, itself was a prominent medieval seaport following the Norman invasion of 1169. Until 1420, Youghal was actually under the control and jurisdiction of the Butler lords of Ormond, at which time it reverted to the control and governance of the Desmond earls.⁴⁸⁷ Under the Normans in the twelfth century, Youghal flourished as a port town, providing the market and service center for the colonized hinterland, occasionally rivaling Waterford and Cork in the rapidity of its growth. The “progressive decay of law and order” in sixteenth century Munster resulted in Youghal being sacked by the sixteenth earl of Desmond, during the 1579 Desmond Rebellion. The defeat of Desmond resulted in the confiscation of his lands and the establishment of the Munster Plantation, providing for a Protestant Ascendancy in Youghal. Sidney himself notes that between his second and third terms as Lord Deputy, Youghal was, in fact, sacked twice.⁴⁸⁸ This history of political

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A. R. Orne, “Youghal, County Cork - Growth, Decay, Resurgence,” *Irish Geography; bulletin of the Geographical Society of Ireland* 5 (1966), 125 & 128.

⁴⁸⁸ Sidney, “Memoirs,” 84.

instability left the Protestant planters insecure in their control over the town, which was surrounded by a Catholic Irish majority of both Gaelic and Anglo-Irish.⁴⁸⁹

The outbreak of the English Civil War in 1641 provoked the creation of the Irish Catholic Army in support of Charles I and the Royalists. Irish Catholic victories in 1643 spelled the temporary death of Protestant Cork and the citizens of Youghal vacillated between Royalist and Parliamentary loyalties. However, in 1649, warned of the imminent approach of Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan Army, the citizenry made an “expedient embrace of Parliament” and the town was spared the devastation Cromwell visited on Drogheda. For the next three hundred years, Youghal supported a garrison of English soldiers. Additionally, demobilized Cromwellian soldiers settled in the area.

When the Commonwealth effectively ended in 1659, the population in Youghal and the surrounding region was still predominantly Irish and Roman Catholic, including Anglo-Irish Catholics. Fully 58 per cent of the population of the town and hinterland of Youghal were Catholic Irish. Throughout Munster Province, there were ten Catholic Irish for every one English Protestant settler.⁴⁹⁰ With the restoration of King Charles II to the throne of England in 1660, the minority Protestant Ascendancy in Youghal suddenly found their positions threatened by a potentially empowered Catholic majority. Charles II was a known Catholic sympathizer and while Laudian Anglicanism no longer thrived in England, the

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A. R. Orne, “Youghal,” 134. Orne points out that in 1642, Richard Boyle, the first Earl of Cork, noted that the Irish Catholics outnumbered the English Protestants by a ratio of 3:1, despite his efforts to import Protestant English settlers.

⁴⁹⁰ Orne, “Youghal,” 134.

Restoration marked the ideological death of Militant Puritanism in England and Ireland.⁴⁹¹

While Charles II was sympathetic to the plight of the Irish Catholics and royalists who had supported his father during the Civil War, he had been recalled by the Commonwealth Army, which insisted that Cromwell's land settlement be maintained. Charles II had made conflicting promises to both sides, which were intended to be resolved by the Act of Settlement, passed by an all-Protestant Parliament. Innocents and specifically named royalists were to have their lands restored to them, while the Cromwellian settlers were to be compensated with other lands of equal value.⁴⁹² The reality of Ireland's limited land mass made the implementation of this act problematic if not impossible and required the passage of a second act for the purpose of clarification. The second act required that the Cromwellian settlers surrender one third of their lands so that approximately 500 Catholic "innocents" could recover at least a portion of their lands. The implementation of this act produced resentment among the Cromwellian settlers over the loss of a portion of their estates and among the Catholic Anglo-Irish over the slow rate and limited restoration of their property. Ultimately they recovered only about one third of their previous land holdings and viewed the act as a breach of faith. The Gaelic Irish were largely denied even the limited success of the Anglo-Irish "Innocents."⁴⁹³

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Lacey Baldwin Smith, *This Realm of England, 1399 - 1688* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 322 & 327. Archbishop Laud, under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, was an advocate of the High Church, in other words a church that was very close to the Roman Catholic concepts of rituals, ceremonies and trappings.

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J. G. Simms, "The Restoration and the Jacobite War, 1660-91," in Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, 165. The term "Innocents" was strictly defined within the language of the Act itself.

⁴⁹³ Simms, "Restoration," 165.

Newton's Trial in Historical and Cultural Context

It was within this environment of repressed hostilities and resentment that Mary Longdon accused Florence Newton of witchcraft. On the surface, this case appears to be an archetypal witchcraft case. The accused was an elderly women, as further demonstrated by her nickname "gammar" meaning grandmother and indicating a certain level of communal familiarity with Newton, who was clearly poor and marginalized. The encounter between Longdon and Newton that provided the foundation of Longdon's accusations occurred on Christmas Day, when Newton begged Longdon for a piece of salt beef from her master's larder. Newton was obviously poor enough to have to beg for meat on Christmas day. Additionally, Briggs points out that the accuser was typically of slightly higher socio-economic status than the accused.⁴⁹⁴ Longdon was employed as a serving maid in the house of Youghal's baillif, which provided a steady income and probably room and board, in contrast to Newton's destitution.

Additionally, Longdon's refusal of charity at her master's expense produced a quarrel between Longdon and Newton which resulted in Newton cursing Longdon, "Thou hadst as good have given it me," and walking away.⁴⁹⁵ Subsequent to the quarrel was an unsettling, for Longdon, encounter with Newton, wherein Newton kissed Longdon on the forehead, apparently with some force. Newton's behavior on this occasion seemed to have been an attempt to reconcile with Longdon. The forcefulness of Newton's kiss may be questionable as Longdon claims only to have been "violently kissed" but provides no supporting

⁴⁹⁴ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 304

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O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 52; Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft*, 108 is a slightly different version of Newton's statement.

description or corroborative testimony.⁴⁹⁶ Such “violence” may be entirely subjective and potentially exaggerated. Shortly after this exchange, however, Longdon suffered a nightmare featuring Newton and a short well dressed man who offered her everything she could ever want in exchange for her swearing loyalty to him. Longdon refused and asserted her faith in God. Longdon’s nighttime encounter introduced elements of the diabolical pact into the trial record. The short, well dressed man is obviously either an agent of the Devil, or the Devil himself with whom Newton has, by implication, made a pact. The “man” offers a similar pact to Longdon, who refused. This refusal produced the malefic “punishment” of bewitchment by Newton. A few days later she began to experience her symptoms of bewitchment. The pattern of quarrel, misfortune and accusation is also fairly typical of most witchcraft trials, and hunts, outside of Ireland.⁴⁹⁷

Taken as a whole, this trial seems to contain all of Levack’s preconditions and most of the enabling conditions identified by Briggs.⁴⁹⁸ Youghal was definitely subject to the increasing tensions between competing religious groups lacking the release of open inter-religious conflict or warfare. Both the Irish Catholics and English Protestants feared the power of the other group and both felt betrayed by the newly restored monarchy. Neither

⁴⁹⁶ O’Flanahan, *Munster Circuit*, 52.

⁴⁹⁷ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 75.

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Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 175-88; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 289-310. Levack identifies the existence of a law specifically enabling the legal prosecution of witchcraft as a crime and the belief in the reality of witchcraft by the ruling elite. In 1586, the English witchcraft statute was applied to Ireland and in 1604, James I updated and expanded upon the Elizabethan law for both England and Ireland. Given the testimony of Youghal’s bailiff, John Pyne it seems clear that the ruling elite in Youghal did, in fact believe in the reality and danger of malefic witchcraft. This section will focus on the social, cultural, religious and political dynamics in Ireland that were the product of “dual confessionalisation.”

group was willing to act openly against the other in the climate of state endorsed toleration. Deprived of the release of open conflict these tensions frequently produced accusations of witchcraft against social deviants, frequently in an effort to locate the hidden enemy within.⁴⁹⁹ Add to this the political and religious anxiety experienced by the Protestant Ascendancy upon the restoration of a monarch sympathetic to the Irish Catholics and the end of militant Puritanism. Both of these conditions contributed to the development of the “crisis mentality” identified by Levack as a necessary precondition for a witch-hunt.⁵⁰⁰

Charles II’s Acts of Settlement created a condition of, at least perceived, economic instability in Ireland through the reassignment of landed property to Irish Catholics at the expense of the Cromwellian settlers. Whether due to simmering hostilities between religious groups, or simply a product of the economic conditions in Restoration Ireland, Longdon’s refusal of aid to Newton indicates the break down of “traditional, informal methods of relief.”⁵⁰¹ Personal, internal conflict over the refusal of traditional charity produced feelings of guilt within the person who refused to *give* aid. This internal emotional tension was frequently alleviated by projecting that guilt upon the beggar, which occasionally took the form of an accusation of witchcraft. If the beggar was, in fact a witch, then the “victim” who refused assistance, had been under no moral obligation to provide that aid in the first place..⁵⁰² This may very well have been the case for Longdon. Guilt over refusing to give aid to Newton might have been somewhat alleviated by Newton’s behavior on Christmas

⁴⁹⁹ Levack, *Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 179-80.

⁵⁰⁰ Levack, *Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 178.

⁵⁰¹ Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 295.

⁵⁰² Levack, *Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe*, 115.

Day. However, Newton's later attempt to make amends and reconcile with Longdon may have produced more intense feelings of guilt that manifested and were projected first in Longdon's nightmare and later in her symptoms of bewitchment.

The records of Newton's trial include almost no information about Newton herself, her religious or ethnic background. As will be demonstrated below, however, some of Newton's statements seem to indicate that she was, if not of Gaelic descent, then certainly from a Gaelicized Anglo-Irish family. The significance of Newton's use of the term "overlooked" has either been ignored or misinterpreted in the records as a reference to the "evil eye," rather than as a reference to Newton's belief in fairies.⁵⁰³ If the societal conditions described above produced sufficient crisis mentalities in Longdon, Pyne and the local elites to accuse and try Newton for the crime of witchcraft, an additional political motive for the trial may exist. Faced with the possible return to pre-Cromwellian religious conditions and a Catholic counter-ascendancy in Ireland, the Protestant elite may very well have seized the opportunity presented by the indictment of Newton as a marginalized, socially deviant member of the competing religious and ethnic groups as an opportunity to reinforce the current socio-political hierarchy. As with the 1577 witchcraft trials in Kilkenny, Newton may represent the assertion of a particular social order, though this trial served to legitimize the power of the existing Protestant Ascendancy rather than a new order.⁵⁰⁴ Similar to the purposes of the witch-hunts in "revolutionary Scotland," the trial of

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O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 58. In footnote 2, O'Flanagan equates overlooking with the evil eye via reference to an Italian folkloric belief. O'Flanagan comes closer to the truth when he associates the evil eye with a "fairy stroke" while this is not quite correct a connection between overlooking and the fairies does exist, as has been demonstrated in Chapter 5 of this work.

⁵⁰⁴ Hutton, "The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt," 23-4.

Newton by a Protestant government seems to be the result of the political-religious, or confessionalizational, changes produced by the restoration and the Protestant Ascendancy's attempt to prevent the subversion of the existing social order by Irish Catholic revolutionaries.⁵⁰⁵ By using Newton, as representative of Irish Catholics, as an example of socially and morally unacceptable behavior the governing elite reinforced not only its own position, but also reinforced standards of behavior within Youghal and County Cork.

The idea of Newton as representative of the Gaelic and/or Anglo-Irish population is supported by particular excerpts from the trial records. When Newton was asked on 24 March if she had bewitched Longdon, Newton replied that, "she had not bewitched her, but overlooked her and that there was a great difference betwixt *bewitching* and *overlooking*."⁵⁰⁶ Newton became distraught by the idea that she had wronged Longdon by thinking "mischief" about her when she kissed her. Later, Newton, "confessed that she had overlooked [Longdon] when she kissed her."⁵⁰⁷ Further, while confined to the prison, Newton conferred with an invisible visitor whose presence shook the prison house doors. Newton initially denied talking to anyone, but the following morning confessed that the visitor had been "a spirits, and her familiar, in the shape of a greyhound."⁵⁰⁸ As the folklore and fairy tales collected and edited by Yeats demonstrate, there are direct connections between fairies, in Ireland, and *overlooking* and greyhound shaped spirits.

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Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 58. Levack points to the efforts of "radical Protestants" to force moral reform. Given the fact that Youghal sustained only a single trial, perhaps the goal in Ireland was more modest and simply the assertion of the status quo and the prevention of political, religious and moral shifts following the Restoration.

⁵⁰⁶ O'Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 58.

⁵⁰⁷ O'Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 60.

⁵⁰⁸ O'Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 59.

As described above in Chapter 5, should a person “over look” a child with envy, then the fairies, “have it in their power.”⁵⁰⁹ Yeats implies that this means that the fairies will be able to steal the child and replace him or her with a changeling. As the case of Bridget Cleary and the tale of Jamie Freel demonstrate, this folkloric belief was not confined to the theft of just children. Fairies were, obviously, also able to steal away full grown adults from their homes. Child stealing may be the most evil act that the fairies visit upon humanity, but folklore abounds with lesser mischief on the part of the fairies toward people, often at the instigation of other people. Fairy doctors have been held responsible for both the removal of faerie mischief and the instigation of it, as in the tale of “The Pudding Bewitched,” wherein Harry Connolly, a “fairy-man” places a faerie inside of the pudding intended for a country wedding feast. By the end of the story, the “enchanted” pudding sets everyone at the feast dancing until they were all exhausted.

Newton confessed to overlooking Longdon when she kissed Longdon on her forehead. Newton admitted that she had been thinking about “mischief” falling upon Longdon “at that time she kissed her.”⁵¹⁰ When the authorities urged Newton to undo her “bewitchment” of Longdon, Newton claimed “It must be another that must help her, and not they that did the harm.”⁵¹¹ Newton then named two other women in town who “could do these things as well as she...”⁵¹² This seems a conflation of faerie folklore, the belief in fairy doctors and witchcraft lore on the part of Newton. Given Newton’s repeated use of the

⁵⁰⁹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 53.

⁵¹⁰ O’Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 57-8.

⁵¹¹ O’Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 58.

⁵¹² O’Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 58.

expression, “overlooked” and her insistence that this was different from “bewtiching,” her admission of wishing, specifically, “mischief” upon Longdon when she kissed her and overlooked her, “they that did the harm” may well be a reference to the fairies. Newton’s initial identification of “Goody Halfpenny and Goody Dod” in Youghal as women who could “do these things as well as she,” may have been an expression of her belief that these women were fairy doctors and capable of ending the fairies’ mischief toward Longdon.⁵¹³ Newton’s hasty attempt to blame Halfpenny or Dod for causing Longdon’s ills may be an attempt to shift the blame, or it may be an expression of the belief that her overlooking Longdon when she kissed her exposed the maid to the attention of the fairies and allowed Halfpenny or Dod to set the fairies against Longdon. Interpretation of these statements by a Protestant, non-Gaelic judiciary would have tended toward the diabolic, fairies having been integrated into Christian ideology as demons in Scotland and England by the end of the sixteenth century. Newton’s examiners would have understood her statements in terms of the witchcraft beliefs of England and Scotland, not in terms of Gaelic Irish faerie faith.

Similarly, Newton’s admission that she had been visited by a spirit, or familiar, “in the shape of a greyhound,” also touches Irish faerie tales.⁵¹⁴ The texts are ambiguous as to whether it was Newton who used the term “familiar” or if she simply identified the creature as a spirit and the term “familiar” was added by Glanvil in an attempt to impose meaning upon Newton’s statement.⁵¹⁵ Yeats recorded the folkloric account of “The Fairy

⁵¹³ O’Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 58.

⁵¹⁴ O’Flanagan, *Munster Circuit*, 58.

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Nearly all of the extant accounts of Newton’s trial are drawn from a single source, Joseph Glanvil, *Sudduciasmus Triumphatics, or, a full and plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions*, including O’Flanagan’s account in *The Munster Circuit*, and Seymour’s account in *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*.

Greyhound,” wherein a poor man digging for buried gold encounters a spirit in the shape of a “comely-looking greyhound.”⁵¹⁶ Yeats recounting of this folk tale identifies the greyhound as the Devil, but also directly associates the greyhound with the “good people” or fairies.⁵¹⁷ The association of the greyhound with the Devil may have been the result of Protestant, English beliefs upon Gaelic faerie faith. The greyhound appeared while Paddy M’Derrmid was digging for gold in the middle of a faerie rath. The greyhound opened the ground in the middle of the rath revealing a staircase leading to a beautiful mansion, where M’Dermid was quickly set upon by angry fairies who drugged, disfigured and transported him away. The unrecorded moral of this tale seems to be a warning against disturbing a faerie fort. Nevertheless, the association of the greyhound as spokesman for the fairies is clear. Whether Newton actually saw a spirit in the likeness of a greyhound or not is irrelevant. Her claims to have been visited by, and to have conversed with, a greyhound shaped spirit seem to be further evidence of remnants of Gaelic faerie faith.

Absent any real records about Newton, it is difficult to make concrete assertions regarding her ethnicity and religion. Given her age, obvious marginalization and poverty, as well as her references to Gaelic faerie folklore, it is reasonable to assume that Newton was both Irish and, nominally, Catholic. Her prosecution for witchcraft by the governing elite would have served to reinforce the existing social structure in Youghal and County Cork in the face of political and religious uncertainty following the Restoration and the Acts of Settlement. The trial of Florence Newton, social outcast and representative of subversive

Glanvil claimed to have received information on the trial from Valentine Greatrakes, who was present and had obtained Sir William Aston’s, the Judge, notes.

⁵¹⁶ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 325-27.

⁵¹⁷ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, 327.

behaviors and beliefs, seems to have been one attempt by the Protestant elites to assert and maintain their hegemony over the Irish Catholic majority in the region.

Conclusion

The witch, when she appeared and was prosecuted in Ireland, served a very specific social purpose. Seymour noted that it was only in Protestant English controlled regions that witchcraft accusations and trials actually occurred.⁵¹⁸ Thus, prosecution of the witch served to legitimize and reinforce the authority of the Protestant, English government in Ireland – what would come to be known as the Protestant Ascendancy. While the idea that such witchcraft accusations and trials were expressions of the social “health” of the new order, as described by Douglas; the trials in Ireland do seem to represent something other than social “sickness.”⁵¹⁹ The 1577 trials in Kilkenny viewed as an aspect of the conflict between Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney and his rival for Elizabeth I’s attention and favour, Thomas Butler, could certainly be described as the “midwi[fe] of social change.”⁵²⁰ The trial of Florence Newton in 1661 was certainly part of the governing elite’s attempt to “support social virtues and discourage the expression of animosity” by the Catholic Irish following the Restoration of Charles II to the throne of England.⁵²¹ In both of these cases, it was essentially individuals who were being accused and tried, despite the fact that two witches were executed in 1577. Hutton has found that in such instances, the individuals being tried were outcasts who deviated from acceptable social norms, the prosecution whereof- served to reinforce those norms and discourage social or cultural radicalism.⁵²² Given the persistent

⁵¹⁸ Seymour, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, 4.

⁵¹⁹ Hutton, “Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 23.

⁵²⁰ Hutton, “Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 23.

⁵²¹ Hutton, “Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 23.

⁵²² Hutton, “Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 23.

endurance of Gaelic culture and Catholicism in Ireland the possibility of cultural and religious “radicalism” was a very real and frightening possibility for the Protestant, minority, governing elite in Youghal.

It is almost ironic that both of these trials occurred during periods of relative religious tolerance on the part of the English government. Elizabeth proved to be far more tolerant of Irish recusancy than she was of English Catholic recusants, despite the parliamentary legislation requiring the implementation of the Second Book of Common prayer. Even the Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney, in his memoir, seems to manifest a more tolerant attitude toward Irish Catholics, reserving his judgement for a case by case application.⁵²³ It was during those periods *between* open, military conflict between the two ethno-religious groups in Ireland that the invading group reinforced its position and values through individual witchcraft trials. In both instances, tensions between the groups were elevated due to the efforts to peaceably coexist. In each case, the accused was certainly a member of the “subversive” ethno-religious element. The two Kilkenny witches were probably subjects of Ormond, and thus represented Gaelicized, Anglo-Irish traditions, and perhaps even Ormond himself by proxy. So too, with Newton, who seems to have far closer affiliation with Gaelic Ireland than with the Protestant New English settlers.

It is just those periods of open ethno-religious, or confessionalisational, conflict that provide an understanding of some of the reasons for the suppression of witchcraft accusations in Ireland and helps to place Ireland within a global context. The cultural, political, religious wars and conflicts that persisted in Ireland were the product of the

⁵²³ Brady, *A Viceroy's Vindication?*, 17-8.

process of dual confessionalisation in Ireland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As demonstrated above, the application of a binary model is an oversimplification, but serves to illustrate the conflict inherent in the dynamic of a state endorsed Protestant confessionalisation competing with an indigenous, popular Catholic confessionalisation in support of traditional Gaelic and Anglo-Irish power and privilege. The endurance and resilience of Gaelic culture facilitated the process of dual confessionalisation, as well as worked to suppress witchcraft accusations outside of the territory directly controlled by the English Crown.

Not only did the persistence of Gaelic Irish culture and Irish Catholicism provide the foundation for Irish Catholic confessionalisation, but also preserved the Gaelic cultural artifacts of the seer-poet and faerie faith. These two cultural artifacts informed Gaelic Irish witchcraft belief while the culture itself prevented the Protestant confessionalisation from achieving any ideological penetration into Gaelic and Anglo-Irish Catholic culture. The witch was never as frightening a figure for the Gael as it was for the rest of Early Modern Europe. Irish folklore presents her as little more than a nuisance, easily overcome by the Catholic priest or traveling fairy woman. The evils with which she was associated in Scotland, England and the Continent remained the jurisdiction of the fairies in Gaelic Ireland. The Gael and Gaelicised Anglo-Irish took precautions to ward away fairies who would prevent butter from churning if not properly appeased. Even more horrific, fairies in Ireland were credited with stealing children, and occasionally adults, and leaving an ancient faerie or piece of enchanted wood in the stolen child's place. The faerie typically withered and perished, as did the enchanted piece of wood, so that the child appeared to die. The Irish

witch was no cannibalistic baby-killer, she did not need to be; unexpected infant deaths were readily explained as a faerie changeling. Entrenched Gaelic culture and Catholicism prevented the spread of Protestant beliefs and ideologies, which, in turn prevented the Protestant faiths in Ireland from demonizing the fairies as the Calvinist church had done in Scotland. Faeries remained capricious, if malicious, spirits rather than being transformed into demons.

Additionally, the office of the Poet, or *fili* in Gaelic culture seems to have had a similar impact on witchcraft fears as the shaman has had on Siberian culture. The *filid* were believed to have the power to magically “rhyme someone to death.” While this belief is most likely tied to the concept of honor in Gaelic society, where the loss of honor was tantamount to social death, there does seem to be a literal belief in the Poet’s ability to actually injure and kill someone through satire.⁵²⁴ Early Irish, or Brehon, law tracts specifically regulate this ability and proscribe who may or may not use satire to injure another, especially in the case of women satirists. Brehon law established very specific social sanctions against women who illegally used satire, including sanctions against those who harbored such women. With such laws in place, how frightening to Gaelic culture was the witch?

The Poet as both foil to sorcery and prophet seems to replicate the role of the shaman within Celtic culture. The Poet’s association with fairies as the possible source of his music and talent is similar to the shaman’s relationship with guardian spirits. Both the shaman and

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Fred Norris Robinson, “Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature,” in *Studies in the History of Religions*, ed. D. G. Lyon (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912) , 95.

the Celtic Poet describe experiences of transmigration of the soul, utter prophecies in poetic verse and seem to communicate with spirits who speak through them. Early Irish literature demonstrates a distinct connection between the *filid* and the *druid*, indicating that the two may have been one and the same office at an earlier period in Celtic/Gaelic societal development. With the Christianization of Ireland, the *druid* either disappeared or was assimilated into the Irish Catholic clergy, leaving just the Poet as the keeper of history and lore, and prophet. The Gaelic/Celtic Poet may be the vestigial remainder of the Gaelic shaman. The social position of the *fili* and the shaman were undeniably similar, though certainly not identical. That similarity, however seems enough to have imparted a similarity in the absence of witchcraft accusations. Hutton noted that Siberia sustained *no* witchcraft trials or hunts, just as there are no recorded trials or hunts in Gaelic Ireland.⁵²⁵ The Siberian witch, like the Irish witch, appeared in creation myths where she was easily defeated by the heroes. The Siberian “witch,” then, like the Irish witch, was not a figure of fear or dread.

The military, ethnic and religious violence associated with the dual confessionalisation process in early modern Ireland also contributed to the suppression of witchcraft accusations. Levack and Briggs point out periods of open conflict, with a clearly identifiable enemy, undermined the social need to identify the enemy within and denounce witches.⁵²⁶ The conditions of competing confessionalisations in Ireland directed focus at the opposing religious group, almost exclusively so. The influence of this dynamic on witch-hunts was demonstrated in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in the seventeenth century. The Spanish Inquisition presents a dramatic example of the confessionalisation process in early

⁵²⁵ Hutton, “Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt,” 27.

⁵²⁶ Levack, *Witch-Hunts in Early Modern Europe*, 180; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 309

modern Europe. While the Iberian peninsula had a reputation for witch-hunting, those were primarily conducted by the secular authorities. The Holy Office in Spain assumed exclusive responsibility for expunging heretical religious groups from the Crowns of Castile and Aragon, thereby affording the secular authorities the opportunity to focus on other, socio-politically subversive elements, such as witches. The Inquisition did engage in witch-hunting, but its attention was quickly captivated by the counter confessional threat of first the conversos and later the moriscos. The Holy Office turned to witch-hunting in Aragon following the suppression of the converso threat in Castile. Once the Morisco population became a counter confessionalisation threat, the threat of witchcraft seemed to have diminished. In Ireland, the dual confessionalisation process involved a much wider societal demographic than the Inquisition had in the seventeenth century.

In Ireland, there was no Inquisition and no separation of secular and religious concerns. The conflation of religion with ethnicity in Ireland ultimately led to the words English and Protestant becoming synonymous, as well as the words, Irish and Catholic. For the Gaelic Irish Catholics, Protestantism was the religious faith of the invading oppressor, while Irish Catholicism was the religion of the dangerous, barbaric native. The Anglo Irish, or Old English, were initially caught in the middle as they tried to balance their adherence to Catholicism with assertions of loyalty to the English crown. Ultimately, social divisions fell along religious rather than ethnic lines as the Catholic Anglo-Irish were systematically disenfranchised.⁵²⁷ These ideological conditions were a product of the process of dual confessionalisation in Ireland, their existence meant that even “secular” authorities had to

⁵²⁷ Canny, “Early Modern Ireland,” 99.

confront the threats of the competing ethno-religious group.

Placed within the context of the Restoration and the Scottish witch-panics of 1661-2, the trail of Florence Newton demonstrates the impact of the English system of justice on the suppression of witch-hunts in Ireland. The 1661-2 witch-panic, the largest witch-hunt in Scottish history, occurred only after the traditional Scottish judicial system was restored following the Restoration of Charles II. Prior to this, during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, the English system of assize courts, essentially local representatives of the central English court system, had been imposed upon the Scottish judicial system. The traditional Scottish judicial system was composed of both a local, peripheral court system and a central court system. When the circuit court system broke down, local lairds were able to establish their own courts through a petition to the privy council for a commission of justiciary.⁵²⁸ With the restoration of the Scottish Parliament and Privy Council in 1660, the traditional judicial machinery resumed operation.

Despite the central judiciary's efforts to maintain control over the 1661-2 witch-panic through the use of Justice Deputes in Mid-Lothian, the discovery of the "Devil's mark" produced confessions, sometimes forced, of the diabolical pact and named others as witches. These confessions provoked petitions for "standing commissions," which would have authorized local courts indefinitely.⁵²⁹ The threat of widespread diabolic witchcraft prompted the issuance of commissions of justiciary and the central court system lost exclusive control over the hunts. Scottish witchcraft beliefs required only proof of the diabolical pact for condemnation of a witch. Being named by another witch as having

⁵²⁸ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 19.

⁵²⁹ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 86-8.

attended a sabbath was considered sufficient evidence to bring the accused to trial. As confessing witches implicated others in 1661 and 1662, an increasing number of local lairds petitioned the privy council for, and were granted, commissions of justiciary and the hunts spiraled out of control until the justiciary court judges realized that a number of the women being tried were, in fact, innocent of the charges.⁵³⁰ The resulting judicial skepticism eventually brought the hunts to an end.

In contrast, the state judicial system operating in Ireland in 1661 was the extension of the English assize system. The assizes were circuit courts staffed by trained judges supplied by England. As such, the assizes were effectively representations of the central judiciary on the local level. In the case of Florence Newton, the presiding judge was the Crown appointed Sir William Aston, not the local lord or magistrate. Thus the central courts of England were involved in witchcraft trials at the very outset. Statistical evidence demonstrates that the central or state courts tended to exercise restraint upon the development of a witch-hunt and issued significantly less severe judgements.⁵³¹

The English and Irish definition of the crime of witchcraft was also different than the Scottish legal definition. Mere identification by the confessing witch was not sufficient to produce indictment of additional suspects. The English understanding of the crime of witchcraft was less diabolical in nature than the Scottish understanding of the crime. In Scotland, witchcraft was defined as a religious crime, which overemphasized the importance of the diabolic pact and attendance at the sabbath relative to English model.⁵³² This

⁵³⁰ Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 94-5, 97.

⁵³¹ Levack, *Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 102.

⁵³² Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 11.

difference clearly carried over to Ireland where the focus of the Newton trial was primarily the malefic magic she was accused of working against Longdon. The court's response when Newton implicated two other women was to bring them before the victim as a kind of test to establish their use of *maleficia* against Longdon. This contrasts sharply with the concurrent chain of events in Scotland where implication produced additional interrogations, arrests and trials.

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, the trial of Florence Newton served a particular purpose, one that was satisfied by a single witch. The ambiguity of Newton's implications of Halfpenny and Dod aside, however, the nature of the English judicial system prevented those implications from producing further trials. The presence of the Sir William Domville, the Attorney-General for Ireland, as prosecutor in a court presided over by one of the Justices of Court of King's Bench in Ireland, Sir William Aston, places this trial squarely within the central English Court system.⁵³³ As such the judicial skepticism typical of state central courts, particularly the English central courts, further prevented the single trial from escalating into a larger witch-hunt despite Newton's implication of other potential witches and the diabolical elements presented in Longdon's testimony.⁵³⁴

In the end, the Irish had no need for witches. Due to the mechanics of dual confessionalisation, the enemy was always clearly identified as a member of the opposing

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O'Flanagan, *The Munster Circuit*, 51-2. The Court of King's Bench was one of the four central courts of the English government and the court in charge of hearing criminal cases. The others were the Court of Exchequer, the Court of Common Pleas (civil court) and the Chancery.

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Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 82-3. Levack notes that the imposition of the English judicial model by Cromwell in Scotland had a definite impact upon the prosecution of witchcraft suspects. The English prohibition on judicial torture combined with the judicial skepticism in confessions of the English Judges produced a decline in witchcraft trials between 1653 and 1657.

ethno-religious group. The atrocities each side perpetuated against the other during the English Civil war reinforced the concept that the opposing ethno-religious group was the enemy, and served to entrench confessional conflict between the groups. This would have undermined and suppressed the need to identify the enemy within, except during periods of increasing tension due to the cessation of open hostilities between the two groups. By the seventeenth century Popish plots had become the predominant concern for the crown following the 1605 Gunpowder Treason of Guy Fawkes. James I became far more concerned with the possibility of a Popish based assassination plot than he had been over the threat of diabolical witchcraft.

The Irish had no need for witches. They had an alternate explanation for unexpected misfortune, fairies. Nearly all of the misfortunes and evil blamed on witches in England, Scotland and the Continent were attributed to fairies in Ireland. Fairies prevented butter from churning and stole children leaving a decrepit faerie changeling in his or her place. When the changeling withered and died, the Gaels blamed the fairies rather than beginning the search for the diabolical witch. The Irish had no need of witches. Witches were not the frightening figures in Ireland that they were in Scotland. Irish folklore paints the picture of the witch as a nuisance, easily dealt with by a Catholic Priest or a traveling fairy woman. The Catholic rebel or Protestant oppressor was a far more immediate and real threat.

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Brady, Ciaran, Editor. *A Viceroy's Vindication? Sir Henry Sidney's Memoirs of Service in Ireland, 1556-78*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2002.

The publication of Sir Henry Sidney's memoirs regarding his three tours as Lord Deputy in Ireland. This is primarily Sidney's apologia for his actions in Ireland, but serves to demonstrate some of the political dynamics involved in the various rebellions during his governance. Placed in historical context, these serve to illuminate some of the underlying causes behind the poorly documented 1578 witchcraft trial.

Davidson, L. S. and J. O. Ward, editors. *The Sorcery Trial of Alice Kyteler: A Contemporary Account(1324) with Related Documents in English Translation, with Introduction and Notes*. Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1993.

A translation from the original Latin of bishop Richard Ledrede's fourteenth century prosecution of Dame Alice Kyteler for witchcraft. The charges against Kyteler seem to anticipate the "cumulative definition" of witchcraft that would emerge on the Continent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but which never quite took hold in either England or Scotland. Dame Kyteler's status as a wealthy woman departed from the norm of later, continental accusations and, combined with the fact that the accusations originated with Kyteler's step-children from her various marriages, indicates that this was prosecution more closely typified later "political" witchcraft accusations and prosecutions. The Kyteler trial is one of the few Irish witchcraft prosecutions for which any official documentation and detail exist.

Dunlop, Robert, Editor. *Ireland Under the Commonwealth: Being a Selection of Documents Relating to the Governance of Ireland From 1651-1659*. 2 volumes: Breiginsville, PA: Storck Press, 2009.

A collection of the acts of the Irish Parliament from 1651 to 1659, preserved in two volumes. According to Gribben, the originals of these documents were destroyed in the Four Courts fire in 1970 in Dublin and are now only available via Dunlop's collection.

Gillespie, Raymond, Editor. *Scholar Bishop: The Recollections and Diary of Narcissus Marsh, 1638-1696*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2003.

The diary and correspondence of Narcissus Marsh, begun on the eve of his appointment to the archbishopric of Cashel. Marsh's recollections were never intended for

public review and thus they provide insight into the priorities of an Anglican Priest in seventeenth-century Ireland. Of particular interest is Marsh's seemingly prophetic dream wherein he was approached by a figure that would otherwise have met the description of the Devil, being clad entirely in black. Marsh makes no note of this seeming correlation, nor is he at all disturbed by the image.

Kinsella, Thomas, translator. *The Tain: From the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

A modern translation of the Táin Bó Cuailnge or the Cattle Raid of Cooley, which comprises the Ulster cycle of Irish mythology, specifically the tales of Cu Chulainn. The presence of witchcraft and magic in this cycle is significant in the manner in which it is portrayed as a socially acceptable activity. Macha's curse on the men of Ulster is presented as just retribution for her suffering and death and the prophetess consulted by Queen Medb demonstrates the actual significance and perceived power of the Poet in Irish society; as noted by Kelly in his examination of Early Irish laws. The importance of this cycle of myths to Irish culture cannot be understated, the image of Cu Chulainn continued to influence Gaelic identities and values well into the twentieth century. The monument to the martyrs of the 1916 Easter Rebellion is a statue of Cu Chulainn bound to the rock to face his enemies even in death.

Kors, Alan Charles and Edward Peters, Editors. *Witchcraft in Europe 400 - 1700: A Documentary History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Primarily a collection of translated documents that chart the progression of witchcraft beliefs in Europe, stretching as far back as Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* and including both credulous and skeptical tracts. Kors and Peters's introduction provides a beneficial supplement to Levack, Briggs, Larner and Bartsow's larger scale analyses. Through the analysis of the documents included in this collection in comparison with the various tracts by James VI and Reginald Scot, one can see the influence of and resistance to Continental concepts in England and Scotland, whose ideologies must have diffused to Ireland via the various settlement and plantation programs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger. *The Malleus Maleficarum*. Translated by Mantague Summers. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007.

Kramer's treatise on the power and prosecution of witches. Kramer asserts that belief in the reality of witchcraft is fundamental to Christian faith. Kramer also describes the various harm caused by witches, the methods by which they acquire their power and the proper methods of punishment. Kramer deviates from accepted Church doctrine by equivocating on the reality of witches' flight to the sabbath.

Levack, Brian P., Editor. *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

A collection of translated and published documents relating to the development of witchcraft beliefs and definitions in early modern Europe. Some of the documents collected by Levack overlap with the Kors and Peters collection, while others were not included in the Kors and Peters collection. Levack has organized these documents thematically rather than strictly chronologically and has included tracts from Salem that were excluded from the strictly European Kors and Peters collection.

Normand, Lawrence and Gareth Roberts, Editors. *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches*. Exeter, UK: Exeter University Press, 2000.

This volume includes James VI's *Demonologie* and copies of other primary source documents from the North Berwick witchcraft trials of 1590-1. Normand and Lawrence provide an introduction to set the trials and James's treatise on the reality of witchcraft in historical context.

Scot, Reginald. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. New York: Dover Publications, 1972.

Scot's skeptical and satirical work on the un-provability of witchcraft. While Scot does not actually assert that witchcraft is not real, he attacks the methods of proof applied by Kramer. Scot also satirized the stereotype of the witch, but his satire provides evidence of accepted witchcraft beliefs.

Travers, James. *James I: The Masque of Monarchy*. Surrey, England: The National Archives, 2003.

This is a collection of copies of primary source documents preserved in the National Archives in England. This collection includes photocopies of James I's witchcraft law and the testimony of Anne Gunter made during her examination in the Court of Star Chamber and recorded by Samuel Harsnett. The copies include translations and biographical and historical information on the life and reign of James I.

Secondary Sources

Articles

Boettcher, Susan A. "Confessionalisation: Reformation Religion, Absolutism, and Modernity." *History Compass* 2 (2004), 1-10.

Boettcher provides an analysis of the Confessionalization paradigm developed by

Schilling and Reinhard in their analysis of post-Reformation Germany. The article charts the development of the paradigm as a reassessment of the role of religious conflict, and the use of institutional religion by the central government in state building efforts and modernity. Boettcher notes the ideological conflict of ‘top down’ versus ‘bottom up’ confessionalization, which is of particular interest to Ute Lotz-Heumann in her examination of the dual confessionalization of Ireland, in the development of the paradigm.

Kivelson, Valerie A. ‘Male witches and Gendered Categories in Seventeenth Century Russia.’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, No. 3 (July, 2003), 606-631.

Kivelson presents a detailed summary of both witchcraft prosecutions and accusation patterns, and the concepts of gender and types of division inherent in the Muscovite, command structure, society. Kivelson argues that the fact that more men were accused of witchcraft in seventeenth century Russia had less to do with gender than the particular anxieties in Muscovy during the first century of Romanov rule. Of particular interest is Kivelson’s analysis of the impact of the Russian Orthodox Church on societal concepts of gender and sexuality and the underlying social concerns that resulted in a pattern of witchcraft accusations that deviated from the Western European pattern. Additionally, the Russian concept of witchcraft diverged from the German/European pattern in that the diabolic pact was notoriously absent, which is similar to the English model, though the Devil was more prominent in English witchcraft trials than in Russian trials. Kivelson argues that particular incidents have to be examined to truly understand the motives for the accusations, rather than assuming that the accusations and prosecutions were substitute prosecutions for the persecution of a particular class, profession or gender.

Kramer, William. “English Reformation and Irish Witches: The Effects of Confessionalisation in Suppressing Witchcraft Accusations in Early Modern Ireland.” *The Forum: Journal of History* 1 (Spring 2009), 18-32.

A surface examination of the religious nature of political and military events in Early-Modern Ireland as demonstrating Lotz-Heumann’s dual confessionalisation in Ireland paradigm and the resultant suppression of witchcraft accusations. Kramer’s analysis is primarily a state-school analysis that attempts to examine the impact of politico-religious events on societal conditions. Kramer balances his analysis of suppressive conditions with an examination of the causative conditions of the 1661 witchcraft trial of Florence Newton.

Lapoint, Elwyn C. ‘Irish Immunity to Witch-Hunting, 1534 -1711.’ *Éire-Ireland; A Journal of Irish Studies* 27, No. 2 (1992), 76-92.

Dr. Lapoint argues that the absence of witchcraft accusations in early modern Ireland demonstrated a form of passive resistance by the oppressed Irish Catholic population. Lapoint notes the Gaelic distrust of the English judicial system as the system of the

oppressor. He also, correctly, notes that most of the documented accusations and trials occurred in Protestant controlled regions of Ireland. Lapoint's analysis has merit, but he fails to explain the causal factors of those trials that did take place, thereby failing to account for the exceptions to his model. As a social analysis of an oppressed segment of early modern Irish society, Lapoint's analysis is useful in understanding the dynamics of the conflicting confessionalization that occurred in Ireland.

McGrath, Thomas. "Fairy Faith and Changelings: The Burning of Bridget Cleary in 1895." *Studies* 71 (Summer, 1982), 178-184.

McGrath provides an analysis of the murder of Bridget Cleary by her husband, Michael, in Clonmel, Ireland in 1895. Michael had become convinced that his wife had been replaced by a faerie changeling and in his efforts to drive out the faerie and procure the restoration of his "real" wife, Michael placed Bridget onto the fire in their fireplace, a traditional folkloric method of revealing the changeling's nature. McGrath includes additional evidence of the persistence of faerie faith in Ireland as well as a description of the activities of the fairy doctor who advised Michael Cleary.

Orne, A. R. 'Youghal, County Cork - Growth, Decay and Resurgence,' *Irish Geoggraphy* V (1964-68) 121-49.

While this is an older article, the historical background of the city of Youghal provides insight into the social and political dynamics that formed the back drop of the trial of Florence Newton in 1661. Of particular interest is the fact that, though the town was governed by a Puritan Protestant Ascendancy, the region was predominantly Catholic Irish in demographics. The social dynamics presented indicate that the witchcraft trial may have been part of a wider effort to reassert socially acceptable behavior following the restoration of a king with Catholic sympathies.

Robinson-Hammerstein, Helga. 'The Confessionalisation of Ireland? Assessment of a Paradigm.' *Irish Historical Studies* 32, No. 128 (2001), 567-578.

Robinson-Hammerstein provides a very comprehensive review of Ute Lotz-Heumann's book, *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung in Irland: Konflikt und Koexistenz in 16. und in der ersten Hälfte 17. der Jarhundertz*, which applies Schilling and Reinhard's paradigm to Ireland, and is currently available only in German. The article presents Lotz-Heumann's analysis of the conditions and events in Irish history in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Lotz-Heumann examines the various rebellions of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century as examples of both state and popular confessionalisation which prevented either Catholicism or Protestantism from achieving dominance in Ireland. The inter-religious tensions presented by Lotz-Heumann, particularly the impact of an "underground" Catholic church as a form of resistance to the state imposed Church of Ireland indicate that confessional conflict predominated in early modern Ireland. These

conditions have been shown by Robin Briggs and Brian Levack to have an inhibiting effect on the process of witchcraft accusations.

Monographs

Balzer, Marjorie Mandelstam. ed. *Shamanic Worlds: Rituals and Lore of Siberia and Central Asia*. London: North Castle Books, 1997.

A collection of essays written by various Siberian Ethnographers. The authors presented in this collection are all ethnically Siberian, therefore they provide an indigenous perspective upon the practices and rituals of Siberian shamanism. The articles on Shamanic verse, ritual and folklore were particularly helpful in analyzing the Siberian shaman relative to the Gaelic/Celtic Poet.

Barnard, Toby. *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641-1770*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004.

This is a collection of essays addressing the development of the Protestant Ascendancy in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland. Barnard presents evidence that the Ascendancy was not simply an elite or gentry condition, but also included various societal levels, particularly in towns and cities. Barnard presents a more complex analysis of the social dynamics and mentalities of Protestant groups in Ireland and their impact on Irish society. He demonstrates that by the early eighteenth century the urban Protestant Ascendancy demonstrated a fairly high level, if ultimately unsuccessful, of civic activism.

Barstow, Anne Llewellyn. *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*. San Francisco: Pandora, 1995.

Barstow's analysis of the witch-hunts in early modern Europe is heavily gender biased. Her thesis ultimately rests on the concept that witch-hunting was an expression of violent misogyny and, therefore, women-hunting. Nevertheless, Barstow does present valuable information regarding the underlying conditions that facilitated witch-hunts, which concurs with much of Levack's analysis.

Bloomfield, Morton W. and Charles W. Dunn. *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989.

Bloomfield and Dunn provide an analysis of the position and function of the Poet in various early societies, including Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Scandinavian countries. Bloomfield and Dunn provide a somewhat superficial analysis of each society, however,

given the fact that they cover such a vast spectrum of eras and societies this can, perhaps, be forgiven. Their analysis of the Poet in early Irish society demonstrates definite links between the Poet and the druid within Gaelic culture. Their conclusions regarding the decline of the Poet's influence in Gaelic Irish society following the Christianization of Ireland seems somewhat contrary to the information presented by Fergus Kelly in his analysis of Early Irish law.

Boyer, Paul and Stephen Nissenbaum. *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Boyer and Nissenbaum's social history of Salem and the 1692 witch-hunts provide insight into the social dynamics that underlay a broader range of witch-hunts in Europe. The efforts to resist socio-economic change by the villagers that resulted in the witch-hunts adds layers to the work of Briggs and Levack in understanding the greater significance of witchcraft accusations and prosecutions.

Briggs, Robin. *Witches & Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*. New York: Penguin Books, 1996.

Briggs analyzes the social and cultural underpinnings of witchcraft accusations, trials and hunts. Briggs acknowledges the importance of the state and laws in both facilitating and suppressing hunts, but he focuses on the popular mechanisms by which those hunts began. Briggs rightly concludes that witch-hunts began with local accusations and so his analysis seeks causative answers within European societies at large. Of particular interest is the impact of social and societal upheaval on the tendency for accusations and witch-hunts.

Byrne, Patrick, F. *Witchcraft in Ireland*. Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1967.

A brief summary of four of the five recorded witchcraft trials in early modern Ireland, including the 1711 Island Magee trial. Byrne also includes two witchcraft related events in the nineteenth century, including the 1894 murder of Bridget Cleary by her husband and father-in-law who suspected her of being a faerie changeling. Seymour appears to be Byrne's principle source of information as his book seems to be a summary of some of the cases presented in *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*, below.

Caball, Mark. *Poets and Politics: Reaction and Continuity in Irish Poetry, 1558-1625*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998.

Caball's analysis of the Irish Poet is primarily political in this book. He does not discuss the cultural or religious origins of the Poet, focusing instead on the Poet's role in fomenting and supporting resistance to English Protestant incursions and "oppression" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Caball's study, does demonstrate the continuing social importance of the Poet in Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Irish society.

Canny, Nicholas. "Religion, Politics and the Irish Rising of 1641." in *Religion and Rebellion: Papers Read Before the 22nd Irish Conference of Historians Held at University College Dublin, 18 - 22 May 1995*. edited by Judith Devlin and Ronan Fanning, 40 - 70. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1997.

Canny focuses primarily on the risings in Leinster in his analysis of the 1641-2 rebellion in Ireland. Canny finds, contrary to previous historiography, that the uprisings in Leinster were extensions of the "disturbances" in Ulster and that the people in Leinster were aware of the Ulster rebellions almost immediately. Canny also demonstrates that uprisings were popular, peasant uprisings and were primarily religiously motivated. Canny uses contemporaneous records and depositions to demonstrate both the sectarian nature of the "disturbances" and prevailing ideologies of both the Protestant and Catholic Irish. The role of the clergy in provoking and directing the rebellions, and the specifically religious nature of the uprisings is important to the overall thesis presented in this paper.

Corish, Patrick. *The Irish Catholic Experience: A Historical Survey*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986.

This is a broad survey of the interactions between Irish Catholics and the English government in Ireland. Of particular interest for this project was Corish's research into the relations between the Gaelic Irish and the Anglo-Norman settlers following the 1169 invasion. As cited by Lapoint, Corish notes that the Gaelic Irish were denied access to the English judicial system. My interpretation of this condition, unlike Lapoint's is that it facilitated the perpetuation of the Brehon system and the cultural values and ideologies expressed by that system in the Gaelic regions and enabled the Gaelicization of the Anglo-Norman settlers; actually impeding the Anglicisation of the "wild Irish."

Croft, Pauline. *King James*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.

A general biography of the reign of King James VI and I in both Scotland and England. While this source is informative, Croft provides limited treatment on James's reputation and activity in either Scottish or English witch-hunts. James skepticism and the events surrounding the trial of Brian and Anne Gunter received only limited summaries. The information Croft presents does coincide with Levack's analysis below.

Davies, Norman. *Europe, A History*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1998.

This is a general survey of the history of Europe. Davies provides valuable information and detail required to accurately set the witch-hunts and the development of witchcraft beliefs in historical context.

Edwards, David, Padraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait, Editors. *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007.

An edited collection of essays documenting and analyzing the exceptional violence in early modern Ireland between the Gaelic Irish and the New English settlers from the sixteenth through the seventeenth centuries. While the focus of these essays is primarily political and social, the impact of religious conflict cannot be ignored or separated from the wider socio-political background. What these essays do demonstrate is that the pattern of change and development in early modern Ireland was characterized by wide spread violence and destruction. These essays help develop the historical background of early modern Ireland against which witchcraft became far less of a concern than in other areas of the British Isles and Continental Europe.

Fitzpatrick, Brendan. *Seventeenth Century Ireland: The War of Religions*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1989.

Fitzpatrick presents a state history of the politico-religious conflicts in seventeenth-century Ireland. Fitzpatrick's argument reduces religion to a political tool exploited primarily by the Protestant government in Ireland and England. He notes that the Protestant agenda in Ireland was never truly one of conversion, but rather one of coerced conformity by the Old English Catholics. He rightly identifies the fact that Irish society was divided into three groups: the Gaelic Irish, the Old English and the Protestant, New English. Fitzpatrick also finds that the Old English and the Gaelic Irish were not religiously united at the beginning of the seventeenth-century. His interpretation of the Old English efforts to both assert their loyalty to the Crown and maintain their previous position adds depth and detail to the struggle between the Old English Catholics and the Protestant Ascendancy. In view of Canny's assertions, however, Fitzpatrick clearly under emphasizes the importance of religious beliefs and conflict.

Ford, Alan and John McCafferty, Editors. *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

A compendium of individual essays examining the origins and development of religious sectarianism in early modern Ireland. Of particular interest is Ute Lotz-Heumann's article on "confessionalization" in Ireland. Lotz-Heumann analyzed the development of dual confessionalization in Ireland in an attempt to periodize the early modern era; however her analysis has broader application in understanding the politico-religious conflicts that divided Ireland and informed various rebellions in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The process of "dual confessionalization" described by Lots-Heumann resulted in conditions of open religious conflict which was inextricably related to political power, influence and identity in Ireland.

Ford, Patrick K., Translator and Editor. *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Ford's translation of the Mabinogi cycle of Welsh myths includes a translation of the two Taliesin tales, one of which is an epic poem attributed to Taliesin himself. The stories of Taliesin include elements of reincarnation and transmigration of the soul. Ford noted that these stories, therefore contain shamanic elements that link the Celtic Poet to the Siberian shaman. Ford also demonstrates the connection between the Welsh, Celtic Poet and the Gaelic Irish Poet, indicating via an analysis of the poetry of Amorgin the two share similar, if not identical, concepts of transmigration, reincarnation and prophecy; thus linking the Gaelic Poet with the Siberian shaman as well.

----- *The Poetry of Llywarch Hen*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Ford's earlier translation of the poetry of Llywarch Hen. It was within this work that Ford first noted the connection between the Celtic Poet and the Siberian shaman. As with the previously cited work, Ford notes the presence of transmigration of the soul in both Celtic poetry and shamanic verse, a connection that is reinforced by the application of Mongush Kenin-Lopsan's analysis of shamanic ritual verses in *Shamanic Worlds*, above.

Foster, R. F., Editor. *The Oxford History of Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

An edited collection of historical essays similar to the Martin and Moody collection below. Foster's collection includes an expansive essay by Nicholas Canny who presents a social, cultural, religious and political synthesis in his analysis of "Early Modern Ireland, c. 1500 - 1700." Rather than a simple state school history of the English and Cromwellian invasions into Ireland, Canny attempts to demonstrate the broad implications of the major political and religious events and conditions of the early modern period. This essay also successfully demonstrates that Ireland was not isolated from either England or Continental Europe.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Foucault's classic analysis of the concept of power as a relationship between two groups wherein power is exercised by one against or over the other. Foucault notes that the subject group is also able to exercise a certain amount of power against the dominant group. In particular, Foucault notes that power is related to "body of knowledge" in a mutually reinforcing and interdependent relationship. When the body of knowledge loses validity or acceptance power based on that knowledge can no longer be exercised. This is particularly true in the case of witch-hunts wherein the "knowledge" of witchcraft gave way to skepticism which undermined the ability to prosecute or convict accused witches.

Goodare, Juilan, Editor. *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.

A collection of essays regarding the witch-hunts in Scotland by various historians. This collection includes articles by Ronald Hutton, Stuart Macdonald, Joyce Miller and Brian Levack. Hutton's essay indicated some correlation between the Siberian shaman and the Gaelic Poet in their impact on their respective cultures. Hutton also addressed the Irish belief in fairies, while Macdonld demonstrated that many of the demonic elements in Scottish confessions, were actually derived from Gaelic Scottish faerie lore.

Goodare, Juilan, Lauren Martin and Joyce Miller, eds. *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

An edited collection of essays focusing primarily on witchcraft beliefs in early modern Scotland. This collection includes an article by Lizanne Henderson, who refutes Hutton's observations regarding the function of faerie belief among the Gaelic highlanders. Also of particular interest was the article by Joyce Miller regarding the appearance of the Devil in Scottish witchcraft confessions, including the frequency with which he appears in black or as a female. This information was useful in building the concept of the Devil as central to the development of witchcraft theory.

Gregory, Lady. *Irish Myths and Legends*. Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1998.

A collection of Irish legends and myths including the Finn MacCumhal cycle. These legend provide a folkloric and cultural background for the belief in magic, witchcraft and the supernatural that informed the belief system of early modern Gaelic Irish, and probably influence the Gaelicized Old English as well.

Gribben, Crawford. *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Gribben presents an analysis of the internal theological division and debates that occurred among the Protestants during the 1650s. Rather than forming a unified, anti-Catholic front in the decade following the Cromwellian invasion and resettlement of Ireland, the various Protestant sects were actually deeply divided on several theological issues such as conversion, baptism and the role of women in the church. Much of this division actually resulted in internal searches for the agents of the Anti-Christ which may help explain the 1661 trial of Florence Newton. The Restoration, as Levack demonstrated with Scotland, only increased tensions within Protestant communities and contributed to a large-scale hunt in Scotland. Given Gribben's analysis of the internal division and tensions within the Irish Protestant communities a similar dynamic seems likely.

Hutton, Ronald. *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*. London: Hambledon and London, 2001.

Hutton examines the Western perception of the shaman, the development of the concept of shamanism and the reality of Siberian shamans. The concept of “shamanism” is a western intellectual construct driven by the effort to find cultural parallels between ethnic groups in the western hemisphere and Siberian society. Hutton notes that part of the difficulty facing both the historian and the anthropologist is the ongoing debate over whether the shaman is a religious or spiritualist office within Siberian culture and societies.

Kelly, Fergus. *A Guide to Early Irish Law*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988.

A summary of early Irish, Brehon, laws that were developed in the seventh and eighth centuries but persisted through the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The cultural norms that resulted in the laws continued to inform Gaelic Irish behavior and values into the twentieth century. Of particular interest were the laws relating to Poets, who were ascribed with certain magic powers, including the power to cause death through satiric verse. The association of magic and maleficium with the Poet class, the only lay class to receive the level of privileges reserved for clergy and lords, provides insight into the Gaelic concept of magic and witchcraft. Kelly’s sources include various secular, ecclesiastical, and canonical law texts as well as “wisdom texts” which provide moral and cultural guidelines of behavior frequently related to the law texts.

Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3rd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Kuhn presents the history of scientific progression as the result of a series of revolutions and paradigm shifts rather than the accumulation of knowledge. According to Kuhn, existing paradigms were challenged by anomalies that could not be resolved by “normal” theories and practices contained within those paradigms. These anomalies thus resulted in crises that forced the development of new paradigms, which both altered, and expressed the alteration, of scientists’ understanding and perception of the world. If one reads “knowledge” in the place of “science,” Kuhn’s model has particular relevance to the progression of witchcraft beliefs. Commonly accepted as the “cumulative definition of witchcraft” there is some indication that official definitions of witches and witchcraft may have undergone similar crises and paradigm shifts. Indeed, Kuhn notes the existence of a philosophical crisis that may be indicative of an impending paradigm shift in the field of philosophy.

Larner, Christina. *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

This is a posthumously published collection of essays edited by Alan Macfarlane. Some of these essays overlap with the information and arguments in *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland*. Larner presents a social history of witchcraft and witch-hunting and argues that more can be learned about the social context of witchcraft by reinserting the crime of witchcraft back into the criminal justice system of early modern Europe. Larner argues that prior analysis of witchcraft as a *crimen exceptum* has misunderstood the significance of that term as applied to witchcraft and obfuscated the social significance of the “crime.” She also demonstrates that while witchcraft as a crime may have been sex related, it was not sex specific and did not equal woman hunting, as argued by Barstow (above).

Levack, Brian P. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2006.

A detailed and concise analysis of the witch-hunts in early modern Europe. Dr. Levack describes the religious, judicial and social conditions necessary for a witch-hunt to begin and the actions and policies of the local and state elites that facilitated and drove those hunts to extremes. Levack also identified the conditions that suppressed witchcraft accusations, including active warfare and open inter-religious conflict. By applying Levack’s model to Ireland we can both understand the causal factors that suppressed witchcraft accusations, which factors necessary to establish and maintain large scale hunts were missing from Ireland, essentially presenting Ireland as a negative example that tends to prove Levack’s thesis.

----- *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: law Politics and Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Levack presents a detailed, comparative analysis of the religious, political and judicial aspects of the larger witch-hunts in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scotland. Levack compares the Scottish process and system to the neighboring English process and system and notes both similarities and differences, particularly in the areas of judicial procedure and legal definition. He also details the influence of James I and VI on both Scottish and English witchcraft accusations and trials, including the changes James made to the working definition of witchcraft in Scotland via the prosecutions of the 1590s and his treatise, *Daemonologie*. Levack also describes the similarities in procedure that resulted from, first, the religious alliance of the Covenanters and Puritan during the 1640s; and, second, the impact of the Protectorate upon Scotland following the deposition and execution of Charles I. This work provides a comparative foundation for examining the conditions in Tudor/Stuart and Cromwellian Ireland relative to England and Scotland.

Lotz-Heumann, Ute. "Confessionalisation in Ireland: Periodisation and Character, 1534-1964." In *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, edited by Alan Ford and John McCafferty, 24-53. Cambridge: University Press, 2005.

Lotz-Heumann's article provides an abbreviated version of her application of the Confessionalisation paradigm to Ireland, which she explored in greater detail in her monograph, *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung in Irland: Konflikt und Koexistenz im 16. und in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000. Lotz-Heumann applies the concept of Confessionalisation as developed by Reinhard and Schilling to the development of competing confessional faiths, Protestantism and Catholicism, in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland. Lotz-Heumann periodizes the development of this dynamic through various stages culminating in a condition of "dual confessionalisation" in the 1640s. Lotz-Heumann's model provides insight into the continuous tensions between Gaelic Catholic Irish and the Protestant New English settlers. While her model is useful, it somewhat oversimplifies the actual conditions into a strict binary system, ignoring the sectarian fragmentation among the various Protestant vying for power and control in seventeenth century Ireland.

MacLysaght, Edward. *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1979.

A social history of Ireland in the seventeenth century. MacLysaght divides Irish society into its three major ethnic and religious components of the Protestant Ascendancy, the Old English and the Gaelic, or Wild, Irish. MacLysaght attempts to examine most of the facets of everyday life and provided some surprising and useful insights, particularly the persistence of faerie faith in both the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish in the seventeenth century. MacLysaght also notes that the Brehon law system of the Gaelic Irish did not perish until the beginning of the century, indicating that it continued to inform the Gaelic belief system up to that point, and perhaps beyond.

Melammed, Renée Levine. *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto Jewish Women of Castile*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

An examination of the *conversos* in Early Modern Spain following both the 1391 and 1492 forced conversions of Spanish Jews. Melammed argues that the conversos remained practicing "crypto-jews" who presented themselves as Christians. Melammed's study focuses on conversas, converso women, who preserved their Jewish traditions and faith in the home and were ultimately denounced as judaizing heretics. Like Perry, Melammed notes the critical role women played in perpetuation their traditional faith in a country wherein witch-hunts were markedly less severe than the rest of Continental Europe and the "subversive" actions of non-Christian religious groups dominated heresy investigations and trials.

Monter, William. *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Monter presents an analysis of the Inquisition in the “Aragonese Secretariat” consisting of the Crown of Aragon, Navarre, the Basque Lands and the Levantine States. These were the “fringe” areas of early modern Spain, which could be considered a peripheral area itself. The largest and most intense witch-hunt occurred in the Basque Lands and was prosecuted by inquisitors of the Holy Office, which maintained primary jurisdiction over heresies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Monter demonstrates that witchcraft prosecutions actually made up a small portion of the heresy trials conducted by the Inquisition in the Aragonese Secretariat. The Holy Office’s primary focus following the decline of “judaizing” conversos was Protestant heretics who were typically French immigrants into Catalonia before the Morisco expulsion from Granada increased the Muslim population in Aragon. Here Monter provides an analysis of a region wherein the primary threat to the dominant religion was not the apostasy of witchcraft, but the enduring tension and conflict between various religions within the region itself. This has definite comparative applications to the conditions in Ireland and about the same time as demonstrated by O’Dowd’s analysis of the gendered colonial discourse in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Moody, T. W. and F. X. Martin, editors. *The Course of Irish History*. Fourth Edition. Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2000.

A collection of essays analyzing various periods in Irish history. Of particular use to this study were the essays by Art Cosgrove, G. A Hayes-McCoy, Aidan Clarke and J. G. Simms. Together these analyses span the period from 1400 - 1691 and demonstrate the social, political and religious tensions within Ireland and the development of those tensions with the imposition of the Church of Ireland, the excommunication of Elizabeth I, the overthrow of Charles I and the Cromwellian invasion. The historians collected provide the historical context for the absence of witchcraft accusations and relationship between religion and rebellion during the Tudor-Stuart and Commonwealth eras.

O’Dowd, Mary. *A History of Women in Ireland, 1500-1800*. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2005.

O’Dowd presents a broad analysis of the role of women in Early Modern Ireland. She notes that in the case of Ireland, Women’s History has preceded Social History, whereas the opposite is the typical pattern of the historiography of other countries. O’Dowd’s survey is thus impaired by a lack of primary documents beyond the wealthy stratus of society. She does note that Irish society was horizonatally stratified into three primary groups: Gaelic Irish, Old English and Protestant English. O’Dowd’s presentation of women as primarily responsible for the perpetuation of Irish Catholicism and Presbyterianism through domestic

efforts is markedly similar to the efforts of both Muslim and Jewish women in Imperial Spain as demonstrated by Mary Elizabeth Perry and Renée Levine Melammed. O'Dowd also notes that the colonial conditions in Ireland were unique and resulted in a gendered discourse that demonized Gaelic women and idealized Protestant English women. The dynamics were, therefore very similar to those in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon wherein the Spanish Catholic Church had to contend with crypto-Jews and Muslims more so than witches.

O'Flanagan, J. R. *The Munster Circuit; Tales, Trials and Traditions*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1880.

A collection of the various trials and hearings of the Munster Assize from the reign of Elizabeth I to the late nineteenth century. Over that entire time period the Newton trial was the only recorded witchcraft trial in the entire County of Munster. O'Flanagan's principle source for this trial, like Seymour, is Joseph Glanvill's *Sadducimus Triumphatis*, which was produced from the trial note of the presiding judge, William Aston. O'Flanagan presents additional details regarding the trial and proceedings that Seymour lacks, and the nature of this work places the trial in legal historical context beyond that of Seymour's book. Interestingly, the entry immediately preceding the Newton trial enumerates a series of "obsolete", moral offenses into which the Munster grand jury was ordered to inquire following the Restoration, which speaks to the moral climate of post-Restoration Ireland.

Olsen, Roger E. and Adam C. English. *Pocket History of Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2005.

Olsen's brief synopsis of the development of Christian theology from the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church, through the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation served, much as Davies' historical survey, to place the development of witchcraft belief and the process of confessionalisation into historical context.

Perry, Mary Elizabeth. *The Handless Maiden: Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

A subaltern study of the Moriscos in Early Modern Spain following their expulsion from Granada and prior to their general expulsion from the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in 1614. Perry demonstrated that Moriscos, Muslim women, maintained the Islamic faith through the use of "everyday rituals" in the domestic environment of the home through the observance of Holy Days, dietary restrictions through meal preparation and the instruction of children. Given O'Dowd's presentation of the role Irish Catholic women played in maintaining Roman Catholicism in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century a certain parallel becomes apparent; especially considering that Spain also experienced fewer witchcraft prosecutions than other regions and was particularly plagued by the existence of internal "subversive" religions.

Reid, Anna. *The Shaman's Coat: A Native History of Siberia*. New York: Walker & Co., 2002.

Reid provides examples and analyses of the shaman within various Siberian cultural groups. Her research was conducted primarily via interviews with modern, post-Soviet era shamans. The fact that many of them are practicing as “healers” should serve to settle the debate noted by Hutton in favor of the shaman as a spiritualist rather than a religious figure. Reid’s interview with a Buryat shaman also provides strong evidence of the continuity between the Siberian shaman and the Celtic druid, and therefore the Gaelic/Celtic Poet.

Robbinson, Fred Norris. “Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature.” In *Studies in the History of Religions: Presented to Crawford Howell Toy by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends*, edited by David Gordon Lyon and George Foot Moore. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912.

Robbinson’s analysis of the reputed magical power of the Gaelic Poet is one of the most complete, even considering the age of this essay. Robbinson provides both English and Irish literary evidence of the belief in the Poet’s ability to injure or kill someone through the use of satirical verse. Robbinson points out the correlation between satirical, Poetic verse and magical incantations, or spells. His study provides further evidence of the Poet as a legally sanctioned and culturally accepted practitioner of harmful magic in Gaelic society.

Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Scott’s analysis of forms of popular, non-organized resistance based on two years of personal research in a Malayan village. Scott notes that organized and violent rebellions by peasants are actually few and far between. Instead, peasants resist oppression by the dominant through passive resistance such as “foot dragging,” evasion and false compliance. This is particularly significant for Ireland given the information presented by O’Dowd regarding women’s role in maintaining Catholicism in the home while allowing men to feign conformity to the Protestant Church in early modern Ireland.

Seymour, St. John D. *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology*. Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., Ltd., 1913.

A collection of documented witchcraft trials and demonological tales that are marginally related to witchcraft and are extraneous to this study. Seymour begins this book with his own analysis of the causes for the scarcity of witchcraft accusations and trials in Ireland, some of which (such as the absence of a print industry preventing the dissemination of literature to drive hunts) remain valid, while others such as the geographical isolation of Ireland have been successfully refuted by historical study. His account of the Florence

Newton trial is based entirely on Joseph Glanvill's, as are most other accounts of this trial as Glanvill provided the only original documentation of that trial.

Sharpe, James. *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Deception, Witchcraft, Murder and the King of England*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

A focused account of the accusations of witchcraft leveled by Brian Gunter at three women with whom he quarreled. Sharpe's book presents the social underpinnings of local witchcraft accusations and successfully demonstrates the skeptical trend in England in the early seventeenth century. The inquest into Brian and Anne Gunter by James I also demonstrates that the king was not the fanatical witch-hunter of prior portrayals. The symptomology demonstrated by Anne would be repeated in both Scotland and Ireland, and was particularly similar to those claimed by Mary Longdon in Youghal, 1661.

Smith, Lacey Baldwin. *This Realm of England: 1399 - 1688*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001.

A general survey of English history from Richard II through the Glorious Revolution of William and Mary. Of particular interest is the information regarding Tudor and Stuart relations with Ireland and the efforts toward consolidation by Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and James I. Smith presents an informative overview of the Civil Wars and the impact of the Cromwellian invasion into Ireland, including some startling statistics regarding the casualties inflicted on the Irish by Cromwell's Puritan Army. Smith's survey provides a firm foundation for further analysis into the dynamics of political and religious struggles in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland.

Worobec, Christine D. *Possessed: Women Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003.

Worobec's social history of witchcraft in early modern Russia provides useful insights into the gendering of the crime of witchcraft. Worobec notes that there was feminization of witchcraft in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, even those women accused, or suspected, of witchcraft had some masculine feature(s). Typical depictions of witches with tails or broomsticks provided distinct phallic symbols, thereby masculinizing even female witches.

Yeats, William Butler, Editor. *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1973.

Two of Yeats's collections of fairy folk lore from Ireland. This omnibus includes both *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* and *Irish Fairy Tales*. Particularly interesting is the appendix at the end of the second work, wherein Yeats attempts to "scientifically" categorize the Irish fairies. The works presented here were personally

collected by Yeats and compiled into the two books for publication. The folk lore included here demonstrates the belief system of the Irish peasantry and is probably reflective of the beliefs of the Gaelic Irish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

-----*Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*. New York: The Modern Library, 2003.

This is a reprinting of Yeats's *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* as included in the compendium above. The information included in the two books differs only in that the above work includes a second previously published work that was not included in this one. I have used the version of *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* here in reviewing the Irish faerie faith regarding fairy-doctors, banshees, witches, changelings and "the trooping fairies," strictly for ease of use.