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THE GUID NEIGHBOURS: FAIRY BELIEF IN EARLY MODERN SCOTLAND, 1500-1800

by
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates fairy belief in early modern Scotland (1500-1800), and aims to reach some conclusions as to what it meant to those who held this belief. Many people in the early modern period believed in fairies; this can be conjectured through the documentation available to us. They were a part of everyday life, as real to people as the sunrise, and as incontrovertible as the existence of God. While fairy belief was only a fragment of a much larger complex of beliefs, the implications of studying this belief tradition are potentially vast. Through the study of folk beliefs one can begin to understand the worldview of the people who lived in these centuries, and we are led one step closer to a comprehension of the past.

The sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries witnessed an unprecedented assault on fairy belief, and folk culture generally. The religious impetus, both Protestant and Catholic, to remodel the world, subjected the fairies to a process of demonization. Belief in fairies is seen against a background of suppression and the attempted extirpation of folk culture.

Through the use of a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, this thesis examines the nature of fairy belief, the major themes and motifs, the attack upon the tradition, and the attempted reinstatement of such beliefs. The stance that has been taken, for the purposes of this thesis, is that it does not matter whether or not fairies existed but that the people under study believed in their existence.

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like firstly to thank the late David Buchan, with whom I began this study. I hope that he would have been pleased with the end result. I owe much thanks and gratitude to Martin Lovelace, who agreed to take on the supervision of this thesis. He has offered me a great deal of direction and an abundance of helpful suggestions. Appreciations must also go to members of the Department of Folklore, and especially Paul Smith, for all their support and advice. Most of all I thank Ted Cowan, for instilling the inspiration to research this topic and keeping me on the right track throughout the writing of this thesis, and Padea, who hovered perpetually at my side, testing mine and her patience to the limit, and gumming up the keyboard with fur.

Introduction

Beware the Lychnobious People

> . . . who in the sixteenth century lacked familiarity with angels and demons? Who did not carry inside himself a strange, phantasmagorical universe haunted by strange species?[1]

The world is full of spirits. They populate every nook and cranny, surrounding us "as thick as atomes in the air." They are "no nonentities or phantasms, creatures, proceeding from ane affrighted apprehensione confused or crazed sense, but realities." Not all tales of "pigme's, fayries, nymphs, syrens," or "apparitions" can be true, but so many are the stories, and so universally told, that surely they "could not spring of nothing?"[2] So argued the Reverend Robert Kirk in 1691. He believed the fairies to be one of several orders of spirits inhabiting the world.

This thesis seeks to investigate fairy belief in early modern Scotland, and aims to reach some conclusions as to what it meant to those who believed in the fairies. J. R. R. Tolkien aptly suggested, "faerie cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable though not imperceptible."[3] Many of the sources for this study, such as witch trial

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[1] Lucien Febvre, The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb (1942; Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 446.

[2] Robert Kirk, The Secret Common-Wealth, 1691, ed. Stewart Sanderson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976) 62, 64.

[3] J. R. R. Tolkien, On Fairy Stories, qtd. in Jack Zipes, Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales (London: Heinemann, 1979) 129-59.

depositions and the ballads, would be considered questionable by the empirical school of historical thought. I have used these sources fully aware of the problems they pose, but I am not persuaded by the opinion that they are thus rendered unusable. On the contrary, such sources can help to fill the lamentable gaps which still exist in the history of Scotland's folk culture and folk belief.

Interest in the folklore of past generations has always been with us. Unfortunately the motives behind such interest have frequently been questionable. For instance, the antiquarian approach toward folk beliefs and traditions took a patronising view of the subject as a means of validating the beliefs of the present, lauding the rational and the learned at the expense of the 'ignorant' and the 'superstitious.' Writing in response to the reprinting of books such as G. F. Black's collection of Orkney and Shetland folklore, Jacqueline Simpson wonders if the 1990s is a "period of nostalgia for an idealized rural past, seen as a time of idyllic simplicity and closeness to nature."[4] Her theory may well be right. However, when one begins to seriously study the early modern period, those who are searching for a rural utopia will be sorely disappointed, for there is nothing particularly 'idyllic' about these years. At its best it was an age of great discovery, but at its worst, an 'age of cruelty.'

The sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries witnessed an unprecedented assault on fairy belief, and folk culture generally. The religious impetus, both Protestant and Catholic, to remodel the world, subjected the fairies to a

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[4] Jacqueline Simpson, intro., Examples of Printed Folk-Lore concerning the Orkney and Shetland Islands, collected by G. F. Black, ed. Northcote W. Thomas (1903; London: Llanerch, 1994)

process of demonization, with frightening consequences for the people who resisted these reinterpretations and steadfastly held on to their beliefs. The early modern period was a time of enormous upheaval and change. In under three hundred years Scotland, and the greater part of Europe, underwent religious reformation and counter-reformation, the horror of the witch hunts, an agrarian transformation, the beginnings of an industrial revolution, significant urbanization, and large scale migration. Belief in fairies must be seen against a background of suppression and the attempted extirpation of folk culture, on a scale so intense that it is hard to imagine how belief in these creatures was sustained, relatively unscathed, not only into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the twentieth century as well.

Though many scholars have investigated the vast spectrum of fairy lore, few have attempted to scrutinize aspects of the belief within a set time frame, in a specific geographical area. An exception to this is Barbara Rieti's Strange Terrain (1991), which examines fairy belief in twentieth century Newfoundland. Popular as well as limited academic interest is reflected in the growing number of reprints of older collections, for example, Wirt Sikes British Goblins (1880, 1991), and W. Y. Evans-Wentz The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries (1911, 1990). The New Age movement has also been displaying a keen interest in the fairies, for instance, R. J. Stewart's Robert Kirk: Walker Between Worlds (1990); John and Caitlín Matthews A Fairy Tale Reader (1993); and Janet Bord Fairies: Real Encounters with the Little People (1997). There has been recent interest in the folk belief of former ages as academia has slowly begun to open its eyes to the possibilities such studies offer.

Scholarly interest in aspects of fairy belief is still relatively sparse, though a few exceptions should be noted. Rieti's work has already been acknowledged, but other valuable modern works include a sizable number of books and articles by Katharine Briggs on British, though mainly English, fairy traditions. Others are, Patricia Lysaght's study of the Irish death messenger The Banshee (1986), the collected essays edited by Peter Narváez The Good People (1991), select articles by Alan Bruford, the research of Margaret Bennett, particularly her essay in The Good People, "Balquhidder Revisited," and Karen Louise Jolly's commendable Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context (1996).

This thesis is concerned with what Barbara Rieti called the "real *dramatis personae* of fairy narrative, the people in them."[5] I am not interested in proving the reality of fairies; such an endeavour would be fruitless not to mention irrelevant. What I can prove is that fairies were a reality to many Scots people who lived in the early modern period. Alan Dundes' definition that the 'folk' in folklore "can refer to *any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor,"[6] is suitably broad enough to be applicable to this study, the common factor being, in this case, an opinion about fairies, whether that be a strongly held conviction that they

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5 Barbara Rieti, Strange Terrain: The Fairy World in Newfoundland (St. John's: ISER, 1991) 215.

6 Alan Dundes, "What is Folklore?" The Study of Folklore ed. Alan Dundes (N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 2. Personally I prefer the definition of 'folklore' as given by Robert A. Georges and Michael Owen Jones, "The word *folklore* denotes expressive forms, processes, and behaviours (1) that we customarily learn, teach, and utilize or display during face-to-face interactions, and (2) that we judge to be traditional (a) because they are based on known precedents or models, and (b) because they serve as evidence of continuities and consistencies through time and space in human knowledge, thought, belief and feeling." Folkloristics: An Introduction (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995) 1.

exist, or rank disbelief. Having said this, my focus is directed toward the "esoteric" rather than the "exoteric" factor,[7] of the "culture *produced by* the popular classes" rather than the "culture *imposed on* the popular classes;"[8] in effect, the people who believed in fairies as opposed to the attitudes of the unbelievers. Ironically, most of the primary source material is provided by the latter group, forcing us to view the "esoteric" perspective through an "exoteric" lens.

The approach of cultural and social history, the Annales school and the concept of *mentalité* has influenced my research. Lucien Febvre's The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais (1942, 1982) attempts to get at the mental life of the age in which Rabelais lived. Febvre warns against an anachronistic attitude to the past. He cautions us that the people of the sixteenth century had a different outlook to the world around them, "their way of responding to facts was not the same as ours." Because there was "no tyrannical, absolute, compelling concept of *law* that limited the unlimited power of nature,"[9] nor did they assume the notion of "natural as opposed to supernatural;"[10] no one had "a sense of what was impossible."[11] Quintessentially, "in the whole fabric of life nature and supernature were perpetually intertwined."[12] His study of *mentalité* has provided the researcher, not so much with a methodology, but rather a 'code

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7 Wm. Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," The Study of Folklore ed. Alan Dundes (N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 43-51.

8 Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (1976; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) xv.

9 Febvre 440-41.

10 Febvre 442. What is now called an act of nature were once considered acts of god.

11 Febvre 441.

12 Febvre 443.

of conduct' for future investigation.

There are other models that have had some influence on this thesis. Work on folk culture within Europe generally is broached by Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (1978, 1992), an interdisciplinary synthesis concerned with the code of popular culture rather than the individual messages, with an aim towards interpreting the attitudes and values of the 'ordinary people.' Keith Thomas's Religion and the Decline of Magic (1973), is an analysis of popular belief in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, but which contains some Scottish material. Another useful study is Gillian Bennett's inquiry of ghost narratives, Traditions of Belief (1987), particularly the sections which deal with the historical development of ghost beliefs. The 'experience-centred approach,' developed by David Hufford in The Terror that Comes in the Night (1989), stresses the need to be objective when conducting an investigation into supernatural belief traditions.

The greatest inspiration to my own work has been Carlo Ginzburg, author of The Night Battles (1966, 1992) and The Cheese and the Worms (1976, 1982). His most recent book Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath (1991), a provocative study of the witches' sabbath in a gallant effort to uncover the beliefs of the women and men accused of witchcraft as opposed to beliefs 'about' witches, has been exceptionally helpful. His argument for the existence of ecstatic cults in continental Europe has also embraced references to fairies within Scottish witch trials, as a uniquely Scottish manifestation of this ecstatic experience.

Since it is obviously not possible for the folklorist to converse with the

common man or woman of the early modern era, other means of communication must be employed. Basically, this leaves us with the written record, archaeological investigation, and material artifacts. Due to the nature of this thesis, only the written documentation has been consulted. Unfortunately, these records have been written almost exclusively by elite or at least literate persons which means that the "thoughts, the beliefs, and the aspirations of the peasants and artisans of the past reach us (if and when they do) almost always through distorting viewpoints and intermediaries."[13] As Ginzburg points out, on the use of witch trial evidence, "to classify beliefs or practices in folkloric culture, known via indirect, casual, often stereotyped testimonies interspersed by hiatuses and silences, is difficult."[14] The nature of the documentation available to the folklorist should not, however, deter one from studying the folklore of the past, "the fact that a source is not 'objective' . . . does not mean that it is useless."[15]

Of crucial importance to a study of fairy belief in early modern Scotland are witch trial testimonials. Walter Scott and John Dalyell used the fairy material in witch trials for anecdotal purposes. The first systematic approach was taken by J. A. MacCulloch in his article, "The Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Scotland." (1921)[16] No one else has extensively used, to my knowledge, the witch trial evidence to establish the nature of fairy belief in this period. It has remained a remarkably

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13 Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms xv.

14 Carlo Ginzburg, Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath, trans. R. Rosenthal (N.Y.: Penguin, 1991) 213.

15 Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms xvii.

16 J. A. MacCulloch, "The Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Scotland," Folk-Lore 32 (1921): 227-44.

untapped source until very recently. Aside from the fact that the Scottish witch hunt is an understudied phenomenon in its own right, the reluctance to use the depositions of those accused of witchcraft has sprung from the prevailing attitude that the confessions are no more than a consequence of torture and leading questions by the judges. The confessions are thus denied any element of spontaneity,[17] and the accused are reduced to the role of puppets.

Another problem, according to Ginzburg, is that the concentration has been to study persecution, "giving little or no attention to the attitudes and behaviour of the persecuted."[18] Ginzburg argued that although the testimonies are fragmentary and indirect, "individuals articulate in a distinct manner, each with his own accent, a core of common beliefs."[19] Accessing these beliefs through the use of documentation that has originated from, or has been filtered by, "demonologists, inquisitors and judges," a process whereby "the voices of the accused reach us strangled, altered, distorted; in many cases, they haven't reached us at all," involves looking at the trial evidence in a different way. It is the importance of "the anomalies, the cracks that occasionally (albeit very rarely) appear in the documentation, undermining its coherence"[20] that we must look for. The anomalous material in the Scottish witch trials that this thesis will investigate are the alleged encounters with the fairy folk, in many cases the sole reason

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17 Carlo Ginzburg, The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi. (1966; Baltimore: Hopkins UP, 1992) xvii.

18 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 2.

19 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 23.

20 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 10.

accusations of witchcraft were made against the victim.

A frustrating aspect of the trial records are the places where the transcriber abruptly ends, presumably at the behest of the judges who were, in the main, only interested in recording certain evidence. This is very noticeable in Isobel Gowdie's trial (1662) where so often the copyist stops writing down the details, which she was so amply providing, about the fairies.

The bias shown, even by relatively recent scholarship, toward the evidence presented in the witch trials is also problematic. Commenting on the case of Bessie Dunlop, Robert Chambers said "the modern student of insanity can have no difficulty with this case: it is simply one of hallucination, the consequence of diseased conditions."[21] The confession of Isobel Gowdie is frequently dismissed as the product of insanity. Walter Scott commented, "it only remains to suppose that this wretched creature [Isobel] was under the dominion of some peculiar species of lunacy."[22] J. A. MacCulloch accused Isobel of "delusions and erotic ravings."[23] Even Katharine Briggs' response to this case was highly prejudicial: "these strange, mad outpourings at least throw some light on the fairy beliefs held by the peasantry of Scotland in the seventeenth century."[24]

The use of the ballad as a historical source has, like witch trial evidence, been devalued and ignored. Contrary to Gordon Gerould's view

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21 Robert Chambers, Domestic Annals of Scotland: From the Reformation to the Revolution, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1874) vol. 1. 110.

22 Sir Walter Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft (1830; London: Routledge, 1884) 235.

23 MacCulloch 238.

24 Katharine Briggs, The Vanishing People: A Study of Traditional Fairy Belief (London: Batsford, 1978) 25.

that the ballads "present no coherent record of either historical event or of popular belief and custom at any one particular period,"[25] I would claim that the ballads are a valuable source, and that they provide an articulation of folk beliefs in the early modern period. When we study the ballads we are studying not only the 'poetry of the folk'[26] but stylistic representations of belief as well. Though fairies do not feature prominently in the classical ballads (only 11 of the 305 Child ballads contain fairy material), I would argue what presence they do have is worthy of investigation. Of the Child corpus I have identified the following which mention the fairies: 'The Elfin Knight' (2), 'Lady Isobel and the Elf-Knight' (4), 'King Orfeo' (19), 'Allison Gross' (35), 'Thomas Rymer' (37), 'The Wee Wee Man' (38), 'Tam Lin' (39), 'The Queen of Elfan's Nourice' (40), 'Hind Etin' (41), 'Young Beichan' (53) and 'Sir Cawline' (61).

Perhaps unexpectedly, Francis J. Child was sceptical toward the historical value of the ballads he collected. His introduction to 'The Battle of Harlaw' (163) stated, "A ballad taken down some four hundred years after the event will be apt to retain very little of sober history." David Buchan was to refute this claim, and the general attitude that ballads cannot be taken seriously as history, in his article, "History and Harlaw."[27] He found that 'Harlaw' was "historical in a rather extraordinary way." It reflected, he said, the kind of "historical truth" that rarely finds its way into the documents, "the ways in which the folk imagination reacted to, moulded, and used for its

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[25] Gordon Hall Gerould, The Ballad of Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932) 161.

[26] The English and Scottish Popular Ballads ed. Francis J. Child. Eds. and intro. by Helen Child Sargent and George Lyman Kittredge (London: Harrap, n.d.) xii.

[27] David Buchan, "History and Harlaw," Ballad Studies ed. E. B. Lyle (London: Brewer, 1976) 29-40.

own emotional purposes, the raw material of historical event." The ballads, I suggest, are a heavily figurative and motifemic expression of the fairy beliefs of the folk. In the words of Buchan,

> ballads can contain factual truths not found in the often scanty records, and can contain certain emotional truths, the attitudes and reactions of the ballad-singing folk to the world around them.[28]

Throughout the researching and writing of this thesis I have consciously tried to avoid making personal judgments on the material I have found. It is neither the folklorist's nor the historian's place to put such confines on the beliefs of persons past or present. I have come at these beliefs, to the best of my ability, from what David Hufford has defined as the 'experience-centred' approach to supernatural folklore. I have also taken a conceptual attitude toward the study of history, as opposed to an empirical approach. I am interested in reconstructing the fairy belief of early modern Scotland, using as wide a range of sources as possible, in order to view 'the whole picture.'

The thesis is both synchronic and diachronic in scope. Divided into five chapters, the first chapter "The Nature of Fairy Belief in Early Modern Scotland" provides a general overview of the word 'fairy,' including its possible etymological derivation, the variety of names and euphemisms given to fairies, and when the term first occurs in Scottish sources. Opinions as to what fairies were thought to be and theories about where they originated from is introduced. The perception every generation had that fairy belief has

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[28] Buchan, "History and Harlaw" 39.

always been in decline, and the various explanations given for the waning of such belief, are also investigated.

The emphasis of chapter two, "The Secret Commonwealth: Themes and Motifs," is on the journey to Fairyland, what it involved and how it was undertaken. The notion that there were specific places connected with fairies--a supernatural landscape coinciding with the natural landscape--is discussed. Also detailed are descriptions of what Elfland was thought to be like, what the fairies looked like, the sorts of activities they were involved in, and the social and political structure of fairy society. The associations between fairies and the dead, which began in chapter one, is here continued. The 'inversion' principle of the fairies, the ways in which they are a mirror image of the human world, comes forth fairly strongly in this chapter.

The thematic focus is continued in chapter three, "Enchantments of the Fairies: Themes and Motifs," and deals exclusively with how humans were believed to become 'enchanted' by the fairies, what one could do to avoid enchantment, and the magical and counter-magical methods employed to 'disenchant' a fairy-led person or animal. The close relationships that many people claimed to share with the fairies have sometimes shown that there were benefits that could be gained through such a correspondence. Fairies have been credited with bestowing certain gifts or knowledge upon humans, such as the ability to heal, the power of second sight, or remarkable musical talent. Nevertheless, it is also seen how these 'gifts' were rarely given without some penalty, ranging from loss of personal property, such as a cow, to complete paralysis of parts of one's body.

Chapter four "The Assault on Fairy Belief," seeks to establish the attack on fairy belief within a larger context of the suppression of folk culture in general. The process of demonizing the fairies and a redefinition of the supernatural is set against the background of the Reformation and the Scottish witch hunts. The part played by King James VI, including a discussion of his tract Daemonologie (1597), is investigated. The correlation between fairies and witches is also evinced.

The fifth and final chapter, "The Reinstatement of Fairy Belief: Robert Kirk and The Secret Common-Wealth (1691)," looks at the life and work of the man responsible for providing one of the best sources of fairy belief in seventeenth century Scotland, the Rev. Robert Kirk. He will be seen as working, not in isolation, but as part of a larger movement against 'atheism' and 'Sadducism.' The connection between fairies and second sight, with emphasis on Kirk's ideas, are surveyed. The chapter concludes with a summation of the main concepts of The Secret Common-Wealth.

Researching this for thesis has been, to use a cliché, like working on a giant jigsaw puzzle. Unfortunately many of the pieces are lost and irretrievable. Nevertheless, the pieces that remain are enough to build a reasonably vivid picture of what fairy belief once was and meant to the early modern person. In assembling this material, I have not worked toward some deconstructionist end, as my metaphor of the jigsaw puzzle might have inadvertently suggested, but rather have tried to synthesize the individual components, to reconstruct the whole essence of fairy belief as a distinct phenomenon. Like Carlo Ginzburg, who led us in pursuit of the witches'

sabbat with these evocative words, "the attempt to attain knowledge of the past is also a journey into the world of the dead,"[29] it is my intention to lead the reader down a similar path. In the ballad of 'Thomas Rymer' Thomas is fortunate in having the assistance of the Fairy Queen to show him the road. For us, however, we must find another way to Elfland.

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[29] Ginzburg, Ecstasies 24.

Chapter One

The Nature of Fairy Belief in Early Modern Scotland

> Diamond . . . had not been out so late before in all his life, and things looked so strange about him!--just as if he had got into Fairyland, of which he knew quite as much as anybody; for his mother had no money to buy books to set him wrong on the subject.[30]

Anyone who believes that things in the past were rosier and somehow better than they are today should pause for a moment and try to imagine the grind of daily life and the perilous existence of an ordinary Scottish person during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That individual occupied a world of devastating plague, famine and recurring epidemics interrupted by occasional strife, uprisings and outright civil war. Normality consisted of long hard days tilling the soil, running a household, or battling the sea. There were public punishments and humiliations for petty crimes; judicial torture and executions provided the populace at large with regular, if apotropaic, entertainment. Throughout lowland Scotland the Kirk ruled, providing not only spiritual nurture but also poor relief, education and above all, discipline. The harshness of life was no joke to the ordinary person in this period.

William Bascom stated that one of the functions of folklore was to maintain the stability of culture, noting

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[30] George MacDonald, At the Back of the North Wind 1870 (Ware: Wordsworth, 1994) 25.

> the basic paradox of folklore, that while it plays a vital role in transmitting and maintaining the institutions of a culture and in forcing the individual to conform to them, at the same time it provides socially approved outlets for the repressions which these same institutions impose upon him.[31]

Lauri Honko remarked that people who have had a supernatural experience do not always make the interpretation themselves, "the social group that surrounds him [or her] may also participate in the interpretation."[32] Furthermore, while some people may be prone to supernatural experiences, others are better able to explain a given experience. Ultimately, "the group controls the experiences of its members."[33] So it was with fairy belief but 'the group' itself was subject to the historical forces being exerted upon it--and thus, in turn, the beliefs themselves were influenced by remote forces originating far from the community.

The country as a whole was undergoing tremendous social and political upheaval throughout this period.[34] In 1560 the Protestant Reformation had come to Scotland, bringing with it over a century of religious conflict. In 1567 a monarch, Mary Queen of Scots (1542-87), was forced to abdicate and, in 1587, was executed. 1590-7 heralded the horrific and bloody beginnings of full scale national witch hunts, with other hunts peaking in the 1630s and '40s and the 1660s. In 1603 the Union of the Crowns

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31 William R. Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," The Study of Folklore ed. Alan Dundes (N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 298.

32 Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," Journal of the Folklore Institute 1 (1964) 18.

33 Honko 18.

34 For what follows there are several specialist studies but see, in general, T. C. Smout, A History of the Scottish People: 1560-1830 (London: Collins, 1969) passim.

removed the Scottish monarchical seat of power from Edinburgh to London, making James VI of Scotland James I of England. The National Covenant was formed in 1638, spurring the Covenanting wars that culminated with the Battle of Dunbar in 1650. In 1707 Scotland entered into an Act of Union with England. The Jacobite uprisings, that began in 1689 and continued in 1715-6,1719, 1745, came to a catastrophic end at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. The eighteenth century also brought with it an agricultural revolution and the beginnings of industrialization. Both events contributed to the significant rise in urbanization and large scale migration. The latter half of the eighteenth century saw impressive developments in the science and culture of the nation, subsumed in the designation 'The Scottish Enlightenment,' an era that produced the philosopher David Hume (1711-76), the economist Adam Smith (1723-90), engineers like James Watt (1736-1819), poets such as Robert Burns (1759-96), and an impressive collection of artists and architects like David Allan (1744-96) or Robert Adam (1728-92). This is by no means a conclusive catalogue of the events that transformed early modern Scotland but this modest list is offered in the hope of illuminating the complexity of the times and providing some sort of context for the period covered by this thesis.

So where do the fairies fit into all of this? Many people in the early modern period believed in fairies; this can be conjectured through the documentation available to us. They were a part of everyday life, as real to people as the sunrise, and as incontrovertible as the existence of God. While fairy belief was only a fragment of a much larger complex of beliefs, the

implications of studying this belief tradition are potentially vast. Through the study of folk beliefs one can begin to understand the worldview of the people who lived in these centuries, and we are led one step closer to a comprehension of the past.

David Hufford said that supernatural belief is "the least studied of all topics" in the folklore discipline.[35] He attributes this to an academic bias against supernatural beliefs on ideological grounds: namely, that such beliefs "arise from and are supported by various kinds of obvious error."[36] Hufford has called this approach a "tradition of disbelief" and points out that a great deal of scholarly work has begun from this perspective. He proposes a somewhat different starting point, the adoption of an attitude in which both belief and disbelief are suspended and an external point of view taken.[37] This is not to say that reflexivity should be ignored. Hufford thinks that folk belief scholarship has already been "unreflexive in the extreme," and scholarly reflexivity is a requirement for objectivity.[38] Hufford has termed his approach "experience-centred"[39] and focuses not on whether a belief is true or untrue, but on the reasons beliefs are held to be credible. It should be possible, as Gillian Bennett has said, to believe one's informants without believing their explanations.[40] When dealing with the beliefs of people in the past there is

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35 David J. Hufford, "The Supernatural and the Sociology of Knowledge: Explaining Academic Belief," New York Folklore 9.1-2 (1983): 21.

36 David J. Hufford, "Traditions of Disbelief," New York Folklore 8.3-4 (1982): 47.

37 David J. Hufford, "Rational Scepticism and the Possibility of Unbiased Folk Belief Scholarship," Talking Folklore 9 (1990): 19.

38 Hufford, "Rational Scepticism and the Possibility of Unbiased Folk Belief Scholarship" 23.

39 See David J. Hufford, The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1989).

40 Gillian Bennett, Traditions of Belief: Women, Folklore and the Supernatural Today (London: Penguin, 1987) 16.

the additional problem of trying to understand the world in which they lived, a world quite different from our own, and consequently a quite different belief system. As J. D. Y. Peel has argued, the study of "alien belief-systems" requires a "temporary suspension of the cognitive assumptions of our own society."[41] The role of the folklorist with regard to folk belief scholarship has been, and will doubtlessly continue to be, a hotly debated issue. The stance that has been taken, for the purposes of this thesis, is that it does not matter whether or not fairies existed but that the people under study believed that they existed. This folklorist is interested, as Donald Ward said, in the "reality of the supranormal experience and not in the reality of paranormal phenomena."[42]

The fairies of Scottish folk tradition bear little or no resemblance to the vast majority of modern day images of fairies. Rather, the images that have been carried through to the twentieth century find their source in the butterfly winged, diaphanously clad, frolicking nymphs of artists and writers such as Shakespeare, Blake and Fuseli.[43] The romantic Cottingley Fairies,[44] the materialistic Tooth Fairy,[45] and Walt Disney's mischievous Tinkerbell are

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41 J. D. Y. Peel, "Understanding Alien Belief-Systems," British Journal of Sociology 20.1 (1969): 82.

42 Donald Ward, "The Little Man Who Wasn't There: Encounters With the Supranormal," Fabula 18.3-4 (1977): 216.

43 E. C. Mason, The Mind of Henry Fuseli points out the fairies of Blake and Fuseli were inventions of their own sexual fantasy and have a "peculiar way of employing, and charging with supernatural intensity, nude figures with wide-flung arms and remarkably long legs in fantastic straddling and crouching attitudes, in abandoned embraces, or swaying, hovering, soaring, flying at every possible angle. . . ." qtd. in John Adlard, The Sports of Cruelty (London: Woolf, 1972) 90.

44 For an excellent appraisal on this topic see Paul Smith, "The Cottingley Fairies: The End of a Legend," The Good People, ed. Peter Narváez (New York: Garland, 1991) 371-405.

45 See Tad Tuleja, "The Tooth Fairy: Perspectives on Money and Magic," and Rosemary Wells, "The Making of an Icon: The Tooth Fairy in North American Folklore and Popular Culture," The Good People.

the pervasive iconographic forms in the popular culture of today. However, though the literary, fine art and mass media creations were indubitably inspired by folk tradition, they are by no means representative of their unrenowned folk roots.

If it were possible to ask an ordinary person from sixteenth or seventeenth century Scotland what they thought of these creations of artistry, s/he would probably have said that there was nothing very merry, or coy, or playfully mischievous about the fairy folk in their experience. The fairies were dangerous, capable of terrible harm to people and their property, and every precaution had to be taken to keep them at bay, or at least, placated. Though it was possible for them to do good their proclivity to cruelty and general malevolence meant that it was best that they were avoided at all costs. It is these fairies, the fairies of folk tradition, that this thesis will attempt to investigate. Descriptions such as Thomas Keightley's northern "light-hearted, night-tripping elves,"[46] can no longer be said to reflect the fairy traditions that once impacted upon the Scottish mind. This chapter will explore the nature of fairy belief in early modern Scotland taking into account the suggestions and hypotheses of other scholars in the field.

The primary sources consulted mainly consist of transcripts of witch trials, ballads,[47] extracts from presbytery records, literature of the period, traveller's memoirs, and the accounts of antiquarians. An extensive range of secondary source material, including tale type and motif indices [see Table

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46 Thomas Keightley, The Fairy Mythology, 1828 (London: Wildwood, 1981) 13. Keightley is one of the first scholars to undertake a comparative study of fairy traditions.

47 My pattern of approach towards supernatural elements in ballads owes acknowledgement to Lowry Charles Wimberly's Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1928).

1],[48] has also been employed. Drawing upon the forementioned sources, the areas to be discussed in chapter one will include a listing of the various names and euphemisms ascribed to the fairies, a brief introduction to the etymology of the word *fairy*, ideas as to what fairies are and where they came from, and an inquiry into the notion of vanishing fairies (the perception in each generation that fairies were more prevalent in the former generation). In the course of this chapter, and throughout the thesis, certain correlations and distinctions will begin to emerge, such as the connections between fairies and witches and the dead, as well as with such phenomena as prophecy and second sight; the perception that Scottish fairies are particularly malevolent; the extent to which fairy belief differed within Gaelic and non-Gaelic speaking regions; and, the distinctions and differences between folk and educated belief in fairies.

What's in a Name?

Throughout Scotland fairies have been known by several different names and euphemisms. Names include "elves," "the hill folk," "fane,"[49] the

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48 Reidar Th. Christiansen, The Migratory Legends Folklore Fellows Communications 175 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakademia, 1958) cited hereafter ML with type number; Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature, 6 vols. (Indiana: Indiana UP, 1955-8) cited hereafter Motif with type number; Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, The Types of the Folktale (Helsinki: N.p., 1961) cited hereafter AT with type number; Alan J. Bruford, "Trolls, Hillfolk, Finns, and Picts," The Good People 116-41, cited hereafter Bruford index with type number.

49 Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary says this is an Ayrshire name for fairy. The Scottish National Dictionary, cited hereafter SND, traces the coinage of this word to poet J. Train, Poet. Reveries (1806), possibly influenced by English 'fay'. Briggs, A Dictionary of Fairies (London: Penguin, 1977) says "in default of further evidence, the name should possibly be listed as literary."

Forfarshire "klippe,"[50] the Gaelic "*sìth*," and "*sluagh*," and, in Orkney and Shetland, the "peerie or peedie folk," "ferries," "the hogboy or hogboon,"[51] "the huldre-folk,"[52] "hillyans," "the grey folk," and "trolls, trows or trowies."[53] Euphemisms include "the good neighbours," "the good people," "the honest folk," "the fair folk," "the gentry," "the little people," "the forgetful people," "the still people," "the seelie and unseelie court," "the Dame of the Fine Green Kirtle,"[54] and "the people of peace." A name sometimes used to specifically denote the queen of fairies is "NicNiven or Neven." Robert Kirk used a variety of names in The Secret Common-Wealth; "subterranean people," "invisible people," and "lychnobious people."[55] He also distinguished between lowland names "elves, fauns, and fairies," and Gaelic names "*hubhsisgedh, caiben, lusbartan & siotbsudh.*"[56] The usage of personal names for individual fairy folk is unusual but not unheard of. Self-confessed witch, Isobel Gowdie, supplied several names during her trial in 1662. The nasty fairy of Scottish folktale, Whoopity Stoorie, whose name must be guessed to break the spell, is but one example from the genre. And an old lady from Quarff, Shetland was reported this century as having known

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50 Eve Blantyre Simpson, Folklore in Lowland Scotland (1908; Wakefield: EP, 1976) 93.

51 This is the equivalent of Old Norse *haug-búi* or *haug-búinn*, meaning mound-dweller.

52 Meaning "hidden people." On huldre-folk and trows see Alan Bruford, "Trolls, Hillfolk, Finns, and Picts," The Good People 116-41.

53 Giants and trows of the Northern Isles were introduced by Viking settlers in the 8th and 9th c. Trows have had an important influence upon Orkney and Shetland customs and traditions. Words 'troll' or 'trow' appear in place names and local words, e.g. Trowie Glen, Hoy. See Ernest W. Marwick, The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland (London: Batsford, 1975) 30-3.

54 Name of fairy woman (who is usually friendly) in many highland folktales.

55 'Lychnobious' or 'those living by lamplight.' Kirk's glossary states, "he that instead of day, useth the night, and liveth as it were by candle night." 102, 117.

56 Kirk 49. Regrettably, Stewart Sanderson says the only identifiable Gaelic word is *lusbartan* due to poor quality of the script. Gaelic *luspardan* 'a dwarf, pigmy, sprite.'

some trows by name, such as "Sara Neven" and "Robbie a da Rees."[57]

In spite of having an unfavourable reputation, or probably because of this reputation, fairies have frequently been given amiable and agreeable names. Such salutary name calling was thought to please the fairies, thus reducing one's risk of inducing fairy wrath.[58] Kirk said that "*sluagh-maith*," or good people, was a name often used by highlanders "it would seem, to prevent the dint of their ill attempts."[59] It was a rule best obeyed *ad infinitum* "as they are supposed to be invisibly present, they are at all time to be spoken of with respect."[60] A rhyme recorded by Robert Chambers in the nineteenth century informs us of the fairies' point of view on this sticky issue of naming:

> Gin ye ca' me imp or elf,
> I rede ye look weel to yourself;
> Gin ye ca' me fairy,
> I'll work ye muckle tarrie [trouble];
> Gin guid neibour ye ca' me,
> Then guid neibour I will be;
> But gin ye ca' me seelie wicht,
> I'll be your freend baith day and nicht.[61]

The etymology of the word fairy is about as vague and amorphous as the creatures which it signifies, though there has been no lack of theories about its derivative source. Many have favoured etymologies derived from words that denoted female supernatural beings, such as the Arabic *Peri*, or the

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57 E. S. Reid Tait, ed., Shetland Folk Book 9 vols. (Lerwick: Shetland Times, 1947-95). Vol. 2 (1951) 24-5.

58 Motif C46; C433.

59 Kirk 49.

60 Patrick Graham, Sketches Descriptive of Picturesque Scenery on the Southern Confines of Perthshire (1806).

61 Robert Chambers, Popular Rhymes of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1870) 324.

Latin *nympha*. Others sought out derivatives from words with supernatural associations, such as the Old English *fagan*, or the Latin *fatua*.[62] The most popular idea has been that after the Celts were defeated by the Romans the Latin *fata*, meaning "fate," came to be associated with Celtic female deities. As the Latin language was subsumed by Old French the /t/ was omitted, producing *fae*.[63] Unfortunately, there exists no written evidence for such a change. Noel Williams, who has conducted a thorough study of the word and all its mystical connotations and denotations, points out that the main problem with this etymology is its reliance upon the "vague processes of 'identification' and 'misunderstanding.'"[64] The majority of Old French *fee* and Middle English *fay* citations rarely indicate a female enchanter, but rather denote a "quality of phenomena or events which may or may not be associated with creatures."[65] Williams feels that while *fay* was occasionally used to mean "enchantress" this was not the central meaning of the more frequently used word *fairy*. He thinks it more likely that the concept of "fatedness," a quality "which can control and direct the actions of humanity," was the central connotation. The etymology may not derive from *fata* and then *fae*, but from a term denoting this concept of "fatedness." There were also words in Old English--*faege*, that meant "fated, doomed to die," *aelf* meaning "supernatural," and *scinu* representing various supernatural appearances. It is possible that when the term *fairy* was imported into Britain

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62 Keightley 4-13. Keightley devotes a sub-chapter to this topic. For an up-to-date reassessment consult Noel Williams, " The Semantics of the Word *Fairy*: Making Meaning Out of Thin Air," The Good People 457-78.

63 Williams 462.

64 Williams 463.

65 Williams 463-4.

it incorporated some of the connotations of these Old English words.[66] Whatever the precise etymology, Williams contends that the notion of "fatedness" has been key in the development of the word *fairy* since its earliest occurrences.[67]

Another important point to consider is that the word *fairy*, as it emerged in the twelfth century, was initially a literary term. Ordinary people would have retained Old English words.[68] It is not clear when *fairy* was adopted into commonplace language. Scottish literary evidence shows us that the term was well established in Scotland by the fifteenth century.

The word 'fairy' and 'elf' have been used interchangeably in Scotland. The earliest recorded usage of these words in Scotland appears in an anonymous poem entitled "King Berdok,"[69] written c. 1450, and a poem by Robert Henryson (c.1425- c.1508) entitled, "Orpheus and Eurydice,"[70] written c. 1470-80, though these terms must have been known well before these dates. "King Berdok" falls in love, however the woman's father, who he discovers is the Fairy King, does not appear to approve of Berdok as a suitor. "The king

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66 Williams 466-7. There is no definitive proof of the influence of Old English *faege* on Old French *faer*, but Williams thinks that the possibility is strong.

67 The earliest occurrences of *fairy* are found in French Medieval Romances of the 12th c. and later. Such Romances would have been known to the educated classes within Scotland. The earliest recorded usage of 'Elf' is found in Bald's Leechbook, a mid-10th c. Anglo-Saxon manuscript including cures for 'elf-shot.'

68 Williams 468-70. Many of these words, though they almost vanished from official usage, survived in the oral tradition.

69 "King Berdok," The Oxford Book of Scottish Verse, ed. John MacQueen and Tom Scott (London: Oxford UP, 1981) 39-40. The date ascribed to this poem, 1450, is uncertain.

70 Robert Henryson, "Orpheus and Eurydice," The Poems of Robert Henryson, vol. 3 ed. G. Gregory Smith (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1908) 26-87. There are three translations given: Chepman and Myllar, Asloan, and Bannatyne. For first appearance of romance, c.1330 in Auchinleck MS., see A. J. Bliss, ed. Sir Orfeo (London: Oxford UP, 1961). Also see ballad 'King Orfeo.' AT 400 (variant). Motif F81.1; F322.2; R112.3.

of Fary hir fader then blew out, And socht Berdok all the land about."[71] Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" is the story of a king who must travel to the underworld in search of his abducted queen. Regrettably, for Eurydice, King Orpheus is not successful in bringing her back. The pertinent passages in Henryson are; "Erudices, your quene, Is with [the] fary tane befor myne ene," "the quene of fary Claucht hir wp sone, and furth with hir can cary," and "thoucht scho be like ane elf, Thare is na cause to plenye."[72]

The first appearance in Scotland of the term 'fair folks,' occurs in Virgil's Aeneid, translated into Scottish verse in 1513 by Gavin Douglas (c. 1474-1522).[73] The verse reads, "With nymphis and fawnys apon euery syde, Quhilk fairfolkis, or than elvys, clepyng we."[74] Of related interest, though not covered by this thesis, comes an early reference to the brownie from the writings of historian and theologian John Major. Commenting on his native region of East Lothian he attested to the firm belief in brownies in his treatise Expositio in Matthaeum (1518), stating "Isti Fauni et vocati *brobne* [brownies]."[75]

It is apparent that the word 'fairy' has a long, if not cloudy, semantic lineage. It would also seem, if Noel Williams's contention is correct, that the word may have once held other connotations such as that of general

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71 "King Berdok" 40.

72 Henryson (Asloan Transcript) line 118-9; (Asloan Transcript) line 125-6; (Chepman and Myllar) line 242-3.

73 Gavin Douglas, trans. Virgil's *Aeneid*, 1513. ed. David F. C. Coldwell (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1959).

74 Douglas, vol. 3.VIII. vi. 7. Also in the text: "I wirschip nowder ydoll, stok nor elf," vol. 3. Prol. 154.

75 John Major, Expositio in Matthaeum (Paris, 1518) fol. xlviii, qtd. in John Major, A History of Greater Britain 1521. ed. and trans. Archibald Constable (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1892) xxx.

'fatedness.'

Betwixt and Between: What are Fairies?

Throughout the ages there have been numerous appellations and definitions given to the phenomenon called fairies, and while most are generally agreeable, there does exist a degree of incongruity. One of the earliest, and best, accounts of the fairy tradition in Scotland was provided by an episcopalian minister, Robert Kirk's The Secret Commonwealth (1691). The importance of his work to our understanding of the nature of fairy belief, and other supernatural phenomena, cannot be stressed enough since as he tells us he drew upon a range of informants and tradition-bearers almost in the manner of a modern folklorist.[76] His contribution has provided us with a fountainhead of knowledge and a rare insight into various aspects of belief in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Kirk opined that fairies were a distinct order of created beings, possessing intelligence, and having "light changable bodies" that could be "best seen in twilight," though usually only by "seers or men of the second sight." In many ways their lives paralleled humans, including appearance, but they lived in a state "betwixt man and angell."[77] That the fairies existed in this betwixt and between condition could make them difficult to define, often leading to statements of what they were not rather than what they were. Sir Walter Scott described the problem as thus, "the fairies were a race which might be described by negatives, being

[76] See for example Kirk 52, 54, 59, 61. For more on Kirk see chapter five, below.
[77] Kirk 49-51.

neither angels, devils, nor the souls of deceased men."[78] However, this did not prevent Scott from formulating his own opinions on the nature of these puzzling beings. In his Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802-3)[79] he described fairies as a capricious, diminutive race who dressed in green, rode horses in invisible processions, and inhabited conical shaped hills. They frequently danced on the hills by moonlight, leaving behind circles or fairy rings in the grass; they went hunting, attacking cattle and humans with elf-shot. Scott considered that Scottish fairies never received the "attractive and poetical embellishments" that their English counterparts did. He speculated that this was perhaps due to the stricter persecutions these creatures suffered under a presbyterian clergy which had the effect of "hardening their dispositions, or at least in rendering them more dreaded by those among whom they dwelt." He also suggested that the landscape of Scotland may have been conducive to a more malevolent and terrifying breed since,

> we should naturally attribute a less malicious disposition, a less frightful appearance, to the fays who glide by moon-light through the oaks of Windsor, than to those who haunt the solitary heaths and lofty mountains of the North.[80]

The Irish antiquarian, Thomas Keightley, used fairy to denote a variety of meanings: "illusion, enchantment; the land of enchantment, fairyland; the people of fairyland; and the individual denizen of fairyland."[81] The Oxford

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78 Scott, Letters on Demonologie and Witchcraft 121.

79 Walter Scott, Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, 3 vols. 1802-3. 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1932).

80 Scott, Minstrelsy 213-4.

81 Kevin Crossley-Holland, intro. The Fairy Mythology by Thomas Keightley. N. pag.

English Dictionary[82] defines fairy as a supernatural being of diminutive size, that uses magic to "meddle for good or evil" in human affairs; other definitions include an "enchantress" and a general state of "enchantment" or "illusion."

Fairy Origins: Folk and Learned Ideas

There are, without a doubt, as many speculations as to the origins of fairies as there are variations of fairies themselves, whether they be ghosts, or the souls of the Pagan dead, existing between heaven and earth as they were not baptized, or that they were originally nature spirits or mythological deities.[83] Perhaps they are a folk memory of an actual race of people driven into remote and inaccessible areas, or a similarly remembered race who were believed to be diminutive in size, or a shady recollection of the Druids. Additionally, they might be fallen angels cast out of heaven by God. Whatever their believed origin there is, perhaps not unexpectedly, a lot of overlap between theories and between folk and learned traditions.

That fairies are the souls of the dead, or ghosts, has been a fashionable opinion amongst commentators and, at times, a confusingly entwined yet distinct tradition of the folk. One need look no further than the depositions given by accused witches Bessie Dunlop (1576) and Alison Peirson (1588), who both clearly maintained a linkage to the fairy realm through men who were once ordinary living and breathing mortals, to know something of the

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82 Hereafter cited OED.

83 Scotland does not seem to have had the equivalent of Ireland's Tuatha Dé Danann, or the Welsh Tylwyth Teg.

complexity of the connection.[84] Folk customs, such as the offering of meal and milk to appease the fairies, were also carried out to placate the dead. In 1656 the presbytery records of a meeting at Kinlochewe reported the "pouring of milk upon hills as oblationes."[85] Often, the offerings were poured or left on top of neolithic burial chambers. The parishioners of Robert Kirk held divided opinions about the nature and origin of the citizens of Fairyland, though most believed that the dead were in some way connected, or shared a relationship with fairies. Some thought the fairies to be caught in a state of limbo, a condition which seems to have distressed them: "Som (men) say their continuall sadness is because of their pendulous state . . . as uncertain what at the last revolution will becom of them, when they are lockt up into an unchangable condition."[86] Others averred that the "subterranean people" were "departed souls attending a whil in this inferior state, and cloth'd with bodies procured through their alms-deeds. . . ."[87] Second sighted people told Kirk they often saw fairies attending funerals, where they would eat, carry the coffin "among the midle-earth men to the grave," and appear as a "double-man," also known as a "reflex-man or co-walker."[88] Places believed to be fairy hills were also popularly believed to house the souls of the ancestors and "a mote or mount was dedicate beside everie church-yard, to receave the souls, till their adjacent bodies arise, and so become as a fayrie-hill."[89]

Tales and legends accumulated through the fieldwork of American

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84 See below chapter two, 79-82.

85 Presbytery record of meeting at Kinlochewe, 9 Sept. 1656, qtd. in Donald A. Mackenzie, Scottish Folk-Lore and Folk-Life (Glasgow: Blackie, 1935) 219.

86 Kirk 57.

87 Kirk 58.

88 Kirk 52.

89 Kirk 61.

Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz, in the first decade of this century, have shown some people believed fairies were spirits of the dead, others thought they were both spirits of the dead and other spirits not the dead, while some explained they were like the dead, but not to be identified with them.[90] The scholarly opinion of Evans-Wentz, based on the voluminous, cross-cultural study of fairy belief he had undertaken, was that comparisons could be made between the dead and fairies. Evans-Wentz contrasted Breton death legends and customs with the fairy traditions found in Scotland, Ireland and Wales and uncovered several overlapping areas.[91] His conclusions may have been influenced by his Oxford teacher Andrew Lang who, commenting on the creatures of Robert Kirk's treatise, found them like "a lingering memory of the Chthonian beings, 'the Ancestors,'" and pronounced that "there are excellent proofs that fairyland was a kind of Hades, or home of the dead."[92] Lowry C. Wimberly makes the point that in the English and Scottish ballads "we are confronted with striking resemblances between the ballad ghost and the ballad fairy."[93] His research supports the folk idea of a close relationship between fairies and the souls of the dead.

Postulations based on the premise that fairies are a folk memory of a former race of people, a conquered race who were pushed out to the periphery

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90 Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz, The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries, 1911 (New York: Citadel, 1990) 84-116. See also "A Dead Wife Among the Fairies," Alan James Bruford and Donald Archie MacDonald, eds., Scottish Traditional Tales (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994) 357.

91 Evans-Wentz 218-21.

92 Andrew Lang, intro. The Secret Commonwealth, by Robert Kirk. 1691 (London, 1893) xxiii.

93 Wimberly 165.

of society, have fuelled the imagination of many scholars on this subject.[94] Of particular significance is a theory accredited to and made famous by David MacRitchie that fairies were an actual race of small or "little" people, in fact the original Pictish peoples of Scotland and Ireland.[95] However, an article written by Herbert Hore, "Origin of the Irish Superstitions Regarding Banshees and Fairies," in which he argues that the first fairies were Picts, ante-dates MacRitchie by thirty years.[96] The esteemed collector of highland folktale, John Francis Campbell of Islay, also predates MacRitchie's theory. In 1860 he wrote:

> Men do believe in fairies, though they will not readily confess the fact. And though I do not myself believe that fairies *are*, in spite of the strong evidence offered, I believe there once was a small race of people in these islands, who are remembered as fairies,. . . the fairy was probably a Pict.[97]

Campbell argues persuasively that there are more reasons to assume fairies were once real people than "creatures of the imagination," or "spirits in prison," or "fallen angels" because the evidence of their "actual existence is very much more direct and substantial," not to mention that all European nations have had similar beliefs "and they cannot all have invented the same

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94 For example, Elwood Trigg, Gypsy Demons & Divinities: The Magic and Religion of the Gypsies (New Jersey: Citadel, 1973) 161-3, speculates the popular image of fairies may have derived from the appearance and activities of gypsies, and 'brownies' originated from a connection between the complexion of gypsies and descriptions of fairies as being 'dark.'

95 David MacRitchie, The Testimony of Tradition (London, 1890) and Fians, Faeries and Picts (London, 1893).

96 Herbert Hore's article was written not later than 1844. MacRitchie maintained he and Hore arrived at their conclusions independently and were not known to one another, in Scots Lore 1.7 (Glasgow, 1895) 404.

97 John Francis Campbell, Popular Tales of the West Highlands, 1860. 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1994) vol. 1. 66-7.

fancy."[98]

Walter Traill Dennison, a collector of Orkney folklore, associated the fairies with the Picts, and also pointed out that prehistoric burial mounds were believed to be trowie homes.[99] Folk traditions are not entirely devoid of this Pictish theory, consider the usage of the word "pechts" or "pecht houses," yet it is difficult to establish how far back in time the association between Picts and supernatural entities really goes and whether or not this was a 'learned' imposition upon folk ideas or vice versa. Late nineteenth and twentieth century commentators generally state that folk traditions surrounding the Picts confused them with gnomes, brownies and fairies because of the nature of Pictish archaeological remains; brochs, that have small entrances and tiny steps, and souterrains which are low-roofed and underground, contributed to the supposition that the Picts were of small stature.[100] In fact, the fallacy that the Picts were short and lived underground can be traced back to the eleventh century History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen by Adam of Bremen, and the anonymous Historia Norwegiae, written c.1200.[101] Both histories are reflective of the type of propaganda that must have followed the subjugation of Pictish life and culture by the Scots and Vikings. Archaeological data of the bones of Pictish people has shown that the Picts were not a short race, nor has there ever been a particularly short race of people living in Scotland.

The connection between fairies and former races of people comes in a

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98 J. F. Campbell vol. 1. 72.

99 He also speculated that the fin folk and sea-trows may have been confused with Lapps, Finns or the "Esquimaux." See Walter Traill Dennison, Orkney Folklore and Traditions (Kirkwall: Herald P, 1961) 16. Motif F211.0.1; F221.

100 SND 'Pecht.' Motif F221.

101 Anna Ritchie, Perceptions of the Picts: From Eumenius to John Buchan (Rosemarkie: Groam House Museum, 1994) 20.

slightly different form from Rev. Dr. Cririe. In 1803, he was the first to publish the theory that fairies are a folk memory of Druids.[102] Three years later Rev. Patrick Graham made similar assertions, suggesting that fairy changelings were actually children stolen by druids in order to procure "the necessary supply of members for their order."[103] Robert Dinnie maintained that the belief in fairies

> doubtless arose from the circumstance that the priestesses or female Druids, who performed some of the rites of their religion while living in retired places, were called by the poets the 'nymphs of the groves,' which gave rise to the fancy of ignorant people that charming fairy women, clad in green apparel, inhabited remote places, such as woods, valleys, hills, and rude dens.[104]

The sixteenth century English demonologist and debunker of the witch hunt, Reginald Scot, makes reference to an intriguing tale of an urisk[105] in the north of Scotland, a reputed giant and father of the fairies:

> this Balkin ('lord of the northern mountains') . . . was shaped like a satyr and fed upon the air, having wife and children to the number of twelve thousand, which were the brood of the northern fairies, inhabiting Southerland [Sutherland] and Cateness [Caithness] with the adjacent islands.[106]

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102 Cririe, Scottish Scenery, 1803, qtd. in Evans-Wentz xxxi.

103 Graham 263.

104 Robert Dinnie, History of Kincardine O'Neil (Aberdeen, 1885) 103.

105 The urisk is half human and half goat, with long hair, teeth and claws. Like the brownie they helped with farm chores and were once regarded as a sign of prosperity.

106 Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1584. Introd. Montague Summers (London: Rodker, 1930). Motif F460.

That the fairies were sired by a superior being is not uncommon, though by far the most preeminent 'father' is no less than God himself. The notion of fairies as the fallen angels expelled, with Lucifer, from heaven by God is particularly prevalent in both written record and oral tradition. Perhaps part of the prominence of this theory has been that the fairies are accounted for on biblical authority. Such interconnections between fairy belief and Christian belief is a theme that will arise with surprising frequency in subsequent chapters. On John Brand's visit to Orkney and Shetland in 1700 he surmised that fairies were evil spirits and fallen angels.[107] Alexander Carmichael recorded these evocative lines from an old man of Barra:

> Not of the seed of Adam are we
> Nor is Abraham our father,
> But of the seed of the Proud Angel
> Driven forth from Heaven.[108]

Murdoch MacLean from Barra, reasoned that though the fairies must be spirits it was his firm belief "that they are not the spirits of dead men, but are fallen angels."[109] Ernest Marwick relates a Shetland belief:

> When the angels fell, some fell on the land, some on the sea. The former are fairies [the latter were often said to be the seals]. A fairy once met a man and asked him if he might be saved. The man said, Yes if you can say 'Our Father which art in heaven.' The fairy tried but could only [say], 'Our Father which wert in heaven,' and went away lamenting.[110]

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107 John A. Brand, A Brief Description of Orkney, Zetland, Pightland Firth and Caithness, 1701 (Edinburgh, 1883) 170. Motif F251.6.

108 Alexander Carmichael, Carmina Gadelica 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1928-54) vol. 2. 352-3. Motif F251.6; F251.10.

109 Evans-Wentz 113. Motif F251.6.

110 Marwick, The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland 46. ML 5050.

Extinction of a Species: The Retreat of the Fairies?

It is a curious phenomenon that each generation perceives that the former generation was, not only more "superstitious," but generally had more "folklore." Hugh Miller's (1802-1856) metaphorical explanation encapsulates this sentiment:

> I see the stream of tradition rapidly lessening as it flows onward, and displaying, like those rivers of Africa which lose themselves in the burning sands of the desert, a broader and more powerful volume as I trace it towards its source.[111]

R. Menzies Fergusson was saddened by the decline in supernatural belief generally:

> These credulous times are long, long gone by, and we can see no more the flitting sea-trow or the peculiar Finnman. Civilization has crept in upon all fairy strongholds and disenchanted the many fair scenes in which they were wont to hold their courts . . . the light of science has shone upon every green mound and dispossessed it of its fairy inhabitants.[112]

The notion that the fairies are always slightly out of reach, slipping out of our grasp as they vanish into the mists of time is by no means new. Almost every generation seems to have thought that fairy belief was stronger in the previous generation.[113] This is perhaps an oversimplification, for it is true that from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries (and probably beyond)

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111 Hugh Miller, Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland, 1835 (Edinburgh: B & W, 1994) 2.

112 R. Menzies Fergusson, Rambling Sketches in the Far North (Kirkwall, 1883) 121-2.

113 Katharine Briggs commented on this trend in The Fairies in Tradition and Literature (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967) 3. Motif F388.

fairies were no laughing matter. They were taken very seriously indeed. However, even at the height of their influence it is possible to find this theme of, what Barbara Rieti calls, "the perpetual recession of the fairies."[114]

The theme was picked up by such well known English authors as Chaucer and Dryden. A passage in the Canterbury Tales, blames the decline of fairies on the priests and holy men:

> In th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour, . . .
> Al was this lond fulfild of fayerye.
> The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,
> Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede, . . .
> I speke of manye hundrid yeres ago;
> But now kan no man se none elves mo,
> For now the grete charitee and prayeres
> Of lymytours and othere hooly freres, . . .
> This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes . . . [115]

Dryden similarly commented:

> I speak of ancient times, for now the swain
> Returning late may pass the woods in vain,
> And never hope to see the nightly train.[116]

Scotland's writers and antiquarians have been no stranger to the recessive qualities of the fairies. A nineteenth century minister, the Rev. D. W. Yair of Firth (Orkney), lamented:

> No more shall they be found,

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114 Rieti, Strange Terrain 51. Wirt Sikes thought that the practice of "relegating fairy belief to a date just previous to its own" was not applicable to "superstitious beliefs in general." The validity of this statement remains inconclusive, though it would seem that similar comments have been made about other supernatural beliefs, such as witches, banshees, and selchies.

115 Geoffrey Chaucer, "Wyf of Bathes Tale," The Canterbury Tales, 1387-1400. The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (London: Oxford UP, 1957) 84. According to Noel Williams, Chaucer used *fayerye* primarily to denote a kind of place or experience, and used *elf* for a type of creature. On four occasions he used *fayerye* collectively of creatures, but never to describe an individual. See Williams 469.

116 Dryden, qtd. in Sikes 4.

> Travel all the country round,
> Over hill, through dale, up river:
> They are all underground,
> And hidden from the sound
> Of our voices, should we call on them forever.[117]

Hugh Miller saw the dimming of the fairies as a product of growing up. He sadly relates:

> But the marvels of his childhood had been melting away, one after one--the ghost, and the wraith, and the fairy had all disappeared; and the wide world seemed to spread out before him a tame and barren region, where truth dwelt in the forms of commonplace, and in these only.[118]

J. F. Campbell noted a decline in fairy belief in the Western Isles and its passing out of the mouths of oral culture and into the pages of written culture:

> Fairy belief is becoming a fairy tale. In another generation it will grow into a romance, as it has in the hands of poets elsewhere, and then the whole will be either forgotten or carried from people who must work to 'gentles' who can afford to be idle and read books.[119]

John Firth, writing of Orkney in the 1920s, commented:

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117 D. W. Yair, "Lament for the Departure of the Fairies," qtd. in R. Menzies Fergusson, Rambling Sketches in the Far North (Kirkwall, 1883) 110-2. Fergusson also quotes the English poet Lord Lytton, who composed the "Complaint of the Last Faun,"

> The youth of the earth is o'er,
> And its breast is rife
> With the teeming of life
> Of the golden tribes no more.

118 Hugh Miller, Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland, 1835 (Edinburgh: B and W, 1994) 323-4.

119 J. F. Campbell vol. 1. 17.

> It is remarkable how enlightened people, even within the last generation, believed in, and feared, the malicious tricks of the fairies on the occasions of births and deaths, though long since they had ceased to believe in their interference in the ordinary affairs of life.[120]

Sometimes it is not the fairies that are perceived to be disappearing but their cousins, the brownies. Reginald Scot wrote, in 1584, that Robin Goodfellow, the English equivalent of the brownie, was not as feared as he had been a hundred years previously, and had been replaced by a fear of witches.[121] In 1774 Low's observations in Shetland found that "witches and fairies and their histories, are still very frequent in Schetland, but Brownies seem, within this century, to lose ground."[122]

As to why there has been a general contagion throughout history of ascribing certain traditions or beliefs to a previous age there is no easy answer, though there have been many who have recognized the symptom. Wirt Sikes observed that

> Educated Europeans generally conceive that this sort of belief is extinct in their own land, or, at least their own immediate section of that land. They accredit such degree of belief as may remain, in this enlightened age, to some remote part . . . But especially they accredit it to a previous age.[123]

Barbara Rieti's fieldwork in Newfoundland has demonstrated that fairy

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120 John Firth, Reminiscences of an Orkney Parish together with Old Orkney Words, Riddles and Proverbs (Stromness, 1920) 74-7.

121 Reginald Scot 1584, qtd. in Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (1971; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) 725.

122 Low 1774, qtd. in Black 82.

123 Wirt Sikes, British Goblins: The Realm of Faerie, 1880 (N. p.: Llanerch, 1991) 3.

belief is by no means extinct, even if somewhat reduced in status. Interviews with informants disclosed that conversation about fairy belief was a way to discuss the past and reflect on how times have changed. She says, the fairies' "perceived recession makes them an evocative symbol of the past, and conveys an image of a time in which the way of life and worldview were more amenable to fairy tradition than today."[124]

The reasons behind why the fairies were fading are varied. The leading explanations are the Reformation, industrialization, the growth of science and technology, and a rise in notions of rationality and reason. William Cleland (c. 1661-89) attributes the disappearance of Scottish fairies to the Reformation. Though his commentary is in fact a defamation of Catholicism and propaganda for the Covenanters, it is interesting to see the connection he makes between the Catholic faith and the existence of fairies. Talking to Parnassus he says:

> There's als much virtue, sense, and pith,
> In Annan, or the water of Nith,
> Which quietly slips by Dumfries,
> Als any water in all Greece.
> For there, and several other places,
> About mill-dams, and green brae faces,
> Both Elrich elfs and brownies stayed,
> And green-gown'd fairies daunc'd and played:
> When old John Knox, and other some,
> Began to plott the Haggs of Rome;
> Then suddenly took to their heels,
> And did no more frequent these fields;
> But if Rome's pipes perhaps they hear,
> Sure, for their interest they'll compear

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124 Rieti, Strange Terrain 181.

Again, and play their old hell's tricks.[125]

Another prevalent view is that it was the industrialization of the landscape that drove the fairies from their homes. There is a curious example of this given by Evans-Wentz who said that Glen Shee was once teeming with fairies until the steam-whistle scared them underground--a somewhat inappropriate metaphor since there has never been a railway in the vicinity of Glen Shee![126]

The synonymity between the past as an age of irrationality and darkness, and the present as an age of reason and light, was a sentiment that was strong among the educated classes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and left a legacy of prejudice well into the twentieth century. A philosopher of the 'Scottish Enlightenment,' Adam Ferguson, wrote that superstition had been relinquished by the "light of true religion, or to the study of nature, by which we are led to substitute a wise providence operating by physical causes in the place of phantoms that terrify or amuse the ignorant."[127] An English tourist, Sir John Stoddart, who visited Scotland in 1799-1800, and furthered the equation between the irrational and rational into geographical terms, (that is Scotland = irrational; England = rational). Said he, "it is not surprising, that a country like this should be marked by

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125 William Cleland, Effigies Clericorum, qtd. in Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, A Historical Account of the Belief in Witchcraft in Scotland (Glasgow, 1884) 22-3. Cleland was a Covenanting poet. He fought at Drumclog and Bothwell Brig, took part in Argyll's rebellion 1684, and was appointed commander of the Cameronian Regiment. He was killed at the seige of Dunkeld, fighting against a Jacobite army. From Gordon Donaldson and Robert S. Morpeth, A Dictionary of Scottish History (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977).

126 Evans-Wentz 86.

127 Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society, 1767, ed. D. Forbes (Edinburgh: n.p., 1966) 90-1, qtd. in Thomas 765.

superstitions." Expressing a view which (as was noted above) would later be embraced by Scott, it was the very landscape that made the Scots a more 'superstitious' race; "the scenery here is very favourable to the excursive flights of the imagination." However, Stoddart was kind enough to point out that there was hope for Scotland yet as "in general, I found, that they [superstitions] were wearing fast away. Every peasant spoke of the belief in them, as originating in times of darkness, and contrasted it with the clear and accurate knowledge of the present day."[128]

Even Sir Walter Scott, who was after all regarded as the great doyen of Scottish fairy belief, betrayed the snobbery of his class when he reviewed John Galt's gothic novel The Omen in 1826. Whereas gothic sensibility was quite acceptable in writers such as Byron or Galt, men of breeding could no longer sustain "any belief in the superstition of the olden time, which believed in spectres, fairies, and other supernatural apparitions. These airy squadrons have long been routed, and are banished to the cottage and the nursery."[129]

It has been said that nineteenth century religious revivalism weakened the power of the fairies. In 1838 a Shetland laird was quoted as having said to a tenant, "the Methodist preachers are driving away all the trows and bogues and fairies."[130] It was also said in Shetland that the prayers of a Free Church minister, James Ingram, forced the trows to leave Unst and emigrate to the

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128 John Stoddart, Remarks on Local Scenery & Manners in Scotland during the years 1799 and 1800, 2 vols. (London, 1801) 58, 66.

129 Qtd. in James Hogg, The Three Perils of Man: War, Women and Witchcraft ed. Douglas Gifford (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1996) xvii. I am indebted to Professor Gifford of Glasgow University for drawing Scott's review to my attention and for his clarification of 19th century ideas about the supernatural.

130 James Catton, The History and Description of the Shetland Islands (London, 1838) 117.

Faroe islands.[131]

In 1845 the New Statistical Account, Inverness-shire recorded that a late principal of Aberdeen University contributed "by his benevolent exertions in an eminent degree to the expulsion of fairies from the Highland Hills."[132]

A minister in South Ronaldsay (Orkney) attributed the retreat of the fairies to the march of progress, as he saw it. He reported in 1912:

> Times have changed, surroundings are different, and the atmosphere seems to be healthier, and life itself more wholesome. People are more practical and less sentimental, they have less time to muse on the past, or to be amused with fairy tales. The Hill Trows, the Water Trows, and even the Kirk Trows, have nearly all disappeared before the advance of light and truth. Perhaps we are all indebted to the Penny Post, the daily papers, and the weekly steamers, than anything else for the disappearance of the old fairies. The best way to dispel darkness is to pour in light.[133]

Evans-Wentz talked to a highlander called John Dunbar from Invereen who told, speaking partly from experience and from what his parents had taught him:

> I believe people saw fairies, but I think one reason no one sees them now is because every place in this parish where they used to appear has been put into sheep, and deer, and grouse,

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131 James R. Nicolson, Shetland Folklore (London: Hale, 1981) 83. Ingram died in 1879. See also, "The Last Trow in Yell," Bruford and MacDonald 372-3.

132 Qtd. in I. F. Grant, Highland Folk Ways (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) 137.

133 A. Goodfellow, Sanday Church History (Kirkwall: n.p., 1912) 374-5, qtd. in George Marshall, In a Distant Isle: The Orkney Background of Edwin Muir (Edinburgh: Scottish AP, 1987) 73.

and shooting.[134]

John said there was a story that the fairies had a premonition of the coming of the sheep and told of the ensuing fight between them as the fairies tried to protect their ancient domains. Here is a new twist in the history of the Highland Clearances.

R. Menzies Fergusson, who was so saddened by the decline of supernatural belief traditions generally, put their downfall down to the new wave of mercantile greed and capitalism:

> At one time it [Orkney] must have been teeming with trows or fairies, witches, elves, mermaids; but these imaginative superstitions are fast giving way before the stern fight for gain, that so often dulls the lively imagination and robs life of all its poetry.[135]

A somewhat sceptical, if not humorous, explanation is given in an 1850s guidebook to the highlands:

> There are still some who have seen and can tell wondrous stories of the fairies before the gaugers put them to flight by their odious tax upon the generous liquor which was required to warm and expand the heart ere those airy inhabitants condescended to reveal themselves to the eyes of man.[136]

Isabel MacDonald, with respect to the Gaelic speaking areas of Scotland, suggested when "English grammar invaded the highlands . . . the fairies

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134 Evans-Wentz 94.

135 Fergusson 109.

136 G. & P. Anderson, Guide to the Highlands (1851) 682, qtd. in M. MacLeod Banks, British Calendar Customs: Orkney and Shetland (Glasgow: Wylie, 1939-46) 16.

retreated before it."[137] Ernest Marwick wrote of the opening by archaeologists of an Orkney mound, believed to be the home of the fairies, which had the psychological effect of stripping away any mystery the place once held.[138] The mystery of Fairyland itself, and those who dwelt within it form the subject of the next chapter.

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137 Isabel MacDonald, The Fairy Tradition in the Highlands and Some Psychological Problems (Keighley: Rydal P, 1938) 35.

138 Marwick, The Sufficient Place, unpublished autobiography. Referred to in Marshall, 73.

Chapter Two

The Secret Commonwealth: Themes and Motifs

And see not ye that bonny road,
Which winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where you and I this night maun gae.
(Child 37A:13)

Through analysis of taleroles in Otherworld balladry, David Buchan contended that such ballads functioned as conveyors of useful cultural knowledge, "the portrayal of both the personnel and the environment of the Otherworld conveys important cultural information about not only the world around, but the world around that."[139] This knowledge can only be conveyed if the audience of the ballad performances is aware of the figurative language employed. Barre Toelken points out that the usage of green,[140] or particular plants and trees, the combing of hair or plucking of fruits, is only significant if the connotative meaning is understood as well as the denotative meaning. The majority of the audience must recognize the figurative language or the meanings are lost.[141] Naturally, this argument can be extended to incorporate folktale, legend, myth, narrative, custom, and so on, but can it be applied to folk belief?

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139 David Buchan, "Taleroles and the Otherworld Ballads," Tod und Jenseits im Europäischen Volkslied, ed. W. Puchner (Ioannina: U of Jannina, 1989) 254.

140 For references to green as the typical fairy colour see 74, 76.

141 Barre Toelken, "Figurative Language and Cultural Contexts in the Traditional Ballads," Western Folklore 45:2 (1986): 128-42.

This chapter will address the major themes and motifs that occur in the fairy tradition of early modern Scotland. Firstly, accounts of the journey to Elfland, including the methods of transportation, will be examined. The location of this preternatural world, descriptions of this land, and the concept of a "landscape of the supernatural," are also considered. The appearance of fairies, including the vexed question of stature, as well as their attributes and associations, will be discussed, followed by some consideration of what the fairies do by way of activities and pastimes. And lastly, the social and political structures within fairydom, with particular stress on the monarchical aspects, will be assessed.

That fairy belief was once, and in some circles still is, a very vibrant and integral part of the Scottish supernatural belief system is undeniably true. That fairy belief is unique to Scotland is categorically untrue. Part of the fascination of this subject is the universality of its contents. However, as this study is intended to focus upon Scotland, and due to the constraints of space, very little comparative material has been covered. To compensate for this loss, if only on a small scale, sources dealing with the categorization of tale and motif type have been consulted: Reidar Th. Christiansen's The Migratory Legends, Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk Literature, Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson's The Types of the Folktale, and Alan Bruford's provisional index of fairy legends compiled for the School of Scottish Studies.

The Road to Elfland[142]

It is quite possible that the most remarkable depiction of the journey to Elfland known to exist, in the ballads or any other source, is of that taken by Thomas Rymer. It is the most elaborately described journey of its kind. It is alluring in its attention to detail and phantasmal atmosphere. Seduced by the Queen of Elfland, Thomas is taken, part way on horseback, on an incredible journey to her country. He travels through subterranean caverns and luscious orchards,[143] in a land of perpetual twilight, from where he can hear the roaring of the sea. The crossing of some sort of water barrier is a common requirement for many travellers to the Otherworld, found time and time again in myths, legends, sagas and medieval romances. Henryson told us that Orpheus had to cross a water barrier on his descent to Hell whilst trying to find his wife Eurydice.[144] Thomas is by no means free from this preternatural obstacle and, in Child 37C:15, must wade across water. In most versions of this ballad, however, Thomas is faced with a more horrific task than many of his fellow adventurers to the Otherworld in that he must wade through rivers of blood:

> For forty days and forty nights
> He wade thro red blude to the knee. (37A:7)

Thomas Rymer's sanguinary adventure is a vivid depiction, if not alarming

142 ML 4075; 5006. Motif F320; F370.

143 Motif F92; F162.1.

144 Henryson, "He passit furth ontill a ryvir deip, our it a brig," (Bannatyne, line 261-2). See chapter one, 25-6. The Celtic theme of the hero's journey to the Otherworld is taken, like Orpheus, by Thomas Rymer. For other examples see Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989). Motif F81; F141; F162.2.

portrayal, of this significant stage of the journey. Another notable part of Thomas's journey is the point at which the Queen shows him the three possible roads, or "ferlies three,"[145] that could be taken. The cosmography given is an interesting blend of pre-Christian and Christian thought.[146] Thomas rests his head on the Queen's knee and at once is able to see the paths. In Child 37A:12 and 37C:11 the Queen explains that the first route is the path of righteousness, whereas in 37B:10 the road leads straight to the gates of Hell. The second track, in 37A:13, 37B:11 and 37C:12, leads to Heaven. The third trail, and the one Thomas is to be taken down in 37A:14 and 37C:13, will take them to Elfland.

In the ballad of 'Tam Lin' no details are given of his journey to Fairyland other than the assumption that he too is led there by the Queen of Elfland. Janet's journey to the magical site of Carterhaugh can perhaps be interpreted as a trek to the Otherworld, only no details of her journey are noted either. In 'The Wee Wee Man' (38A:5 and 7) there is a similarly sparse account. Again, all that seems clear is that the mortal is accompanied by a fairy guide and they travel on horseback.

Interestingly enough, not much is made of the actual journey to Elfland in the confessions of accused witches either. There is nothing to compete with the excursion undertaken by Thomas Rymer. Generally speaking, within the witch trial testimonials, the accused report that they were escorted to the abode of the fairies, or else they accidentally stumbled across their homes or favourite haunts. No mention is made of the mode of

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145 Child 37C:10. 'Ferlie' means "an unusual or strange sight; a wonder, marvel." It can also signify "to pry into what does not concern one." SND.

146 Wimberly 116-9.

transportation, though one might assume they walked or possibly rode on a horse. One other possibility is that the fairies carried the human visitor via a whirlwind or some other form of levitation. There are several accounts of people claiming to have been carried quite significant distances, often finding themselves in places quite unknown to them. At her trial in 1588 Alison Peirson of Byrehill related that her uncle was "careit away with thame out of middil-eird: And quhene we heir the quhirll-wind blaw in the sey, they wilbe commounelie with itt, or cumand sone thaireftir."[147] Bessie Flinkar of Edinburgh, tried in 1661, said she was taken "upon the hills by a whirle of wind & masked herselfe, & (th)e(r) danced with the rest."[148] Isobel Gowdie of Auldearn was tried for witchcraft in 1662. She referred to a saying that would enable flight; "I haid a little horse, and wold say, 'HORSE AND HATTOCK, IN THE DIVELLIS NAME!' And than ve vold flie away," and also, "we wold ryd, we tak windle-strawes, or been-stakes, and put them betwixt our foot, and say thryse, '[HORSE] and hattok, horse and goe, Horse and pellattis, ho! ho!'"[149] The Miscellanies of John Aubrey (1626-97) notes two cases involving the phrase 'Horse and Hattock' and fairy levitation. They were communicated to him in a letter dated 1695 by a Scottish gentleman named Stewart, tutor to the Duffus family. The first incident was claimed to be a seventeenth century

147 Trial of Alison Peirson, 28 May 1588. Robert Pitcairn, Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1833) vol. 1. 164.

148 Trial of Bessie Flinkar, 1661. (Case 396). Christina Larner, Christopher Hyde Lee and Hugh V. McLachlan, A Source-Book of Scottish Witchcraft (Glasgow: SSRC, 1977) 258. Motif F261; F282. Bruford index F22; F34. Bruford says type F22 is rare outside the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

149 Trial of Isobel Gowdie, 13 April, 3rd and 15 May 1662. Pitcairn vol. 3. 604, 607. Isobel's trial is unusual in that it was given "without ony compulsitouris." In other words, her confession was voluntary and no torture or compulsion was used to extort a confession. Isobel appears to be referring to what we can identify as a well known migratory legend, ML 3045. Motif F241.1.7.

legend concerning an ancestor of the Duffus family who, walking in fields, heard a whirlwind and voices saying 'Horse and Hattock.' The man repeated the phrase, was promptly swept up in the melee, and woke up the following day in the King of France's cellar with a silver cup in hand. The cup, and the legend, came to be known as 'the fairy cup.'[150] The second incident was an eye-witness account from the tutor Stewart who, when a schoolboy, was in a churchyard with friends when they heard a whirlwind. One of the boys shouted "Horse and Hattock, with my top," which resulted in the top being lifted in the air and carried to the other side of the church.[151]

The spectacle of the fairy whirlwind is a theme found with relative frequency in nineteenth and twentieth century folktale collections.[152] J. G. Campbell spoke of the phenomena as travelling in "eddies of wind . . . whirling about straws and dust, and as not another breath of air is moving at the time their cause is sufficiently puzzling."[153] In Gaelic the eddy is known as *oiteag sluaigh* or "the people's puff of wind."[154]

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150 Another legend involving 'The Fairy Cup,' recorded by William of Newburgh, involves a man who happens upon a fairy banquet, is offered a drink but pours out the contents and makes off with the vessel. Though pursued he escapes. The cup became the property of the English King William the Elder. Later, the cup passed to the Scottish King David and was kept in the treasury of Scotland until the reign of William, at which point it passed back to Henry II of England. Guiliemi Newbrigensis Historia, sive Chronica Rerum Anglicarum Book I. Chapter 28. ML 6045. Motif F352; F352.1.

151 See Pitcairn vol. 3. 604 footnotes; Scott, Minstrelsy 220-1. ML5006; ML 6050. Motif F282; F282.2; F282.4(a) (Baughman).

152 For example, "The Tale of Donald Daoilig" J. F. Campbell, More West Highland Tales, 1960 (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1994) vol. 2. 17-20; "A Man Lifted by a Sluagh," Bruford and MacDonald 71-2.

153 J. G. Campbell, Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1900) 24.

154 J. F. Campbell, More West Highland Tales, vol. 2. 18.

Liminal Worlds: The Location of Elfland

The relationship of fairy activity with specific temporal and spatial locations is very strong and is a motif that occurs repeatedly. "Liminal" is a term derived from Latin *limen* meaning "threshold."[155] The concept of liminality, applied here to the 'supernatural' landscape, is usually associated with the work of Arnold van Gennep on rites of passage. He identified 'liminal rites' as 'rites of transition,' that ambivalent in-between state during a rite of passage when a person moves from one social position to another.[156] Following the lead of folklorist Peter Narváez on the subject of fairy belief in Newfoundland, van Gennep's temporal usage of liminality will be supplanted with a spatial interpretation and applied to the fairy landscape of Scotland. Fairy belief, as with many folkloric traditions,[157] established "proxemic boundaries on the cognitive maps of community residents, boundaries which demarcated geographical areas of purity, liminality, and danger."[158] It is in the area between known space (purity) and unknown space (danger) that encounters with the fairies frequently took place. Van Gennep described those who found themselves in this transitional state as "physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he [or she] wavers between two worlds."[159] The diagram created by Peter Narváez, used here in slightly modified form, exemplifies how these worlds

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155 Victor Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Ithica: Cornell UP, 1979) 94-130.

156 Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960) 11.

157 For example, mummering or guizing, ghost legends, witch beliefs, anomalous lights, and so on.

158 Peter Narváez, "Newfoundland Berry Pickers 'In the Fairies': Maintaining Spatial, Temporal, and Moral Boundaries Through Legendry," The Good People: New Fairylore Essays ed. Peter Narváez (New York: Garland P, 1991) 337.

159 van Gennep 18.

intersect [see Table 3].[160]

There is a wide scope of information with regard to the location of Elfland, although the details are confusing and often fragmentary. Lowry Wimberly discovered through his study of folklore in the classical ballads that the dwelling places of the fairies were remarkably diverse. He asks:

> Is the abode of the departed, or the land of the elves and demons, associated with the forest; is it on a hill or mountain; is it subterranean, submarine, over the sea, or on an island; is it far away; is it terrestrial or celestial?[161]

We can answer this question with a resounding affirmative to all of the above. Not exceedingly clear directions, perhaps, which may explain why so many mortals were either escorted to Fairyland by a fairy guide or else stumbled upon it inadvertently. From the musings of Sir David Lindsay (c.1490-c.1555) in the "Complaint of the Papingo," the poet imagines that the entrance to Fairyland is in a wilderness:

> Bot sen my spreit mon from my bodye go,
> I recommend it to the quene of Fary,
> Eternally into her court to tarry
> In wilderness amang the holtis hair.[162]

From the poetry of folk tradition, Fairyland similarly exists in a kind of wilderness, in the sense that it is removed in some way from normal surroundings. As has already been surmised, Thomas Rymer's Elfland existed in some sort of subterranean locale:

> And he saw neither sun nor moon,

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160 Narváez, "Newfoundland Berry Pickers 'In the Fairies'" 338.
161 Wimberly 121.
162 David Lindsay, "Complaint of the Papingo," qtd. in Scott, Minstrelsy 205.

But heard the roaring of the sea. (37A:7)[163]

Likewise, the enchanted wood in 'Tam Lin' has neither sun nor moon:

Seven days she tarried there,
Saw neither sun nor meen. (39G:10)[164]

'The Elfin Knight' (2A:1) "sits on yon hill," Tam Lin (39A:23) was taken "In yon green hill to dwell," and 'Sir Cawline' (61:14) fought the Elf King at "Eldrige Hill" upon which grew a "thorne."[165] In 'The Wee Wee Man' (38A:5) a mortal is taken to "yon bonny green," as the woman in 'The Queen of Elfan's Nourice' (40) is led to a glen. 'Lady Isabel and The Elf-Knight' 4A highlights a forest, while 4B prefers a well. 'Tam Lin' merges both of these locations, appearing to Janet in a forest by a well.[166] The fairy lover in 'Hind Etin' (41A:2 and 7) takes his mortal wife to "Elmond's wood" where he actually builds her a bower made from the highest tree in the forest. In 41B:7, whilst still within the forest, the mortal bride is kept more or less a prisoner inside a very deep cave.

There is fair mention given to the location of the home of the elves in the witch trials. Virtually every example places the fairies beside or inside hills. The trial of Lady Fowlis or Katherine Ross in 1590, reported that she "wald gang in Hillis to speik the elf folk."[167] In 1615, Jonet Drever was

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163 Motif F141; F211.3.

164 Medieval chroniclers Ralph of Coggeshall and William of Newburgh both record the Suffolk story of the 'Green Children' who came from St. Martin's Land where "they saw no sun, but enjoyed a degree of light like what is after sunset." See Keightley 281-3. Motif F103.1 (Baughman); F211.3.

165 Motif F211.

166 Motif D926.

167 Trial of Katherine Ross Lady Fowlis, 22 July 1590. Pitcairn vol. 1. 196. Motif F211.

convicted for the "fostering of ane bairne in the hill of Westray to the fary folk, callit of hir our guid nichbouris."[168] In Shetland Katherine Jonesdochter, tried in 1616, saw trows on a hill called "Greinfaill."[169] John Stewart, tried in Irvine in 1618, regularly met with the fairies on top of "Lanark hill" and "Kilmaurs hill."[170] When asked if she had any "conversatioun with the ffarye-folk" Isobell Haldane, tried in Perth in 1623, said that she had been taken out of her bed one night "quhidder be God or the Deuill scho knawis nocht" and was carried "to ane hill-syde: the hill oppynit, and scho enterit in."[171]

Nowhere in the witch trials does anyone specifically refer to the forest as a location for Elfland, though a hawthorn tree is mentioned by Bessie Dunlop, from Lyne, as a place to meet with fairies. Bessie, whose trial occurred in 1576, once met with Thomas Reid at the "Thorne of Damwstarnok," while on another occasion she saw the laird of "Auchinskeyth," at a thorne, beyond Monkcastle.[172] Bessie also witnessed a fairy host on horseback gallop straight in to "Restalrig-loch." She related how they made such a "dynn [loud noise] as heavin and erd had gane togidder; and incontinent, thai raid in to the loich, with mony hiddous rumbill."[173]

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168 Trial of Jonet Drever, 1615. The Court Books of Orkney and Shetland, 1614-1615, ed. and transcribed Robert S. Barclay (Edinburgh: Constable, 1967) 18-20. Jonet allegedly had "conversatioun with the fary" for 26 years. Westray is an Orkney island. Motif F211; F305.

169 Trial of Katherine Jonesdochter, 2 Oct. 1616. Gordon Donaldson, ed. Court Book of Shetland 1615-1629 (Lerwick: Shetland Library, 1991) 38-43. Motif F211.

170 Trial of John Stewart, 1618, Irvine. Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft 134-5. Scott says a copy of a record of this trial, which took place in Ayrshire, was sent to him by a friend who wished to remain anonymous. Motif F211.

171 Trial of Isobell Haldane, 15 May 1623. Pitcairn vol. 2. 537. Motif F211; F320.

172 Trial of Bessie Dunlop, 8 Nov. 1576. Pitcairn vol. 1. 52, 58. A 'thorne' or hawthorn tree. In Thomas Rymer, 37C: 17. The Eildon tree, under which Thomas sits, is almost certainly a hawthorn. Motif D950.13.

173 Motif F212; F241.1.0.1.

Her fairy contact, Thomas, explained that they were the "gude wichtis that wer rydand in Middil-zerd."[174] Alison Peirson also spoke of her uncle being taken from "middil-eird"[175] by the fairies. Elspeth Reoch, tried in Orkney in 1616, first met the fairies at a loch side in the district of Lochaber.[176]

Robert Kirk was aware that "there be manie places called fayrie hills, which the mountain-people think impious and dangerous to peel or discover."[177] Walter Scott mentioned that mountain lakes, pits on top of high hills, or wells were thought to lead to Fairyland.[178]

Thomas Rymer may have escaped Elfland in the ballad but in Scottish legend he still lies sleeping, like King Arthur, waiting for his time to return. There is more than one candidate for the precise location of his slumber; the Eildon Hills, place of his capture in the ballad, is the most favoured but Dumbuck Hill,[179] near Dumbarton, is another while MacCodrum, a Uist bard, referred to Tomnahurich Hill in Inverness as Thomas's resting place: *"Dar thigedh sluagh Tom na h-iubhraich, Co dh'eireadh air tùs ach Tòmas?"*[180]

What begins to emerge from discussions about locality is that there are

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174 Pitcairn vol. 1. 53. Ballads, such as 'Sir Cawline' (61:25) and 'Sweet William's Ghost' (77B:8) mention "middle-earth" but its precise meaning is unclear. I interpret it to represent this world, the natural world of mortals.

175 Pitcairn vol. 1. 164.

176 Trial of Elspeth Reoch, 1616. Maitland Club Miscellany 187-91. Elspeth was born in Caithness.

177 Kirk 61. He said two women saw a vision of hidden treasure in a hill called *"Sith bhruaich* or Fairie-Hill." Motif F211; F244.

178 Scott, Minstrelsy 195. Magic wells, according to Juliette Wood, function in Scottish tradition "as the extreme limit of the known world." See "Lakes and Wells: Mediation Between the Real World and the Otherworld in Scottish Folklore," Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance eds., Dietrich Strauss and Horst Drescher, Scottish Studies 4 (Frankfurt: n.p., 1986) 526. Motif D926; F92; F211.

179 Legend says the last person to enter Dumbuck Hill saw Thomas resting his head on his elbow. Thomas asked the man "Is it time?" at which the man fled. MacKenzie 107.

180 MacKenzie 107. "When the hosts of Tomnahurich come, who should rise first but Thomas?" Motif D1960.2.

specific places connected with fairies--a supernatural landscape coinciding with the natural landscape. Christina Larner made the same observation regarding places associated with witches and the witches' sabbats. The locations, when given in trial confessions, are nearly always local and specific.[181] Working on the place-names of Argyll, H. Cameron Gillies found that "man, in fact, takes and makes the outside world to be like himself, a sort of second self." Though Gillies has chosen to use by way of example the predisposition of the Gael to give "the same names as he gave to those of his own body"[182] his sentiment, that humankind defines the world around them in relation to themselves, could be expanded. In a similar fashion place-names and landscapes can also be seen to incorporate and reflect the beliefs and ideas of people.

A native of the Appin region, Donald McIlmichall, tried in Inverary in 1677, stated that "on a night in the moneth of November 1676 he travelling betwixt Ardturr and Glackiriska at ane hill he saw a light not knowing quhair he was." Inside the hill he encountered several fairies. Additionally, he met the fairies "in Leismore [Lismore] and at the Shian of Barcalden."[183] A look at the current ordnance survey map shows, between Ardtur and Glaceriska, a place called Dalnasheen (lit. The field of the fairy hill).[184] In Gaelic *sìthean* means 'a green, little pointed hill, a fairy hill.' The words 'sheen' and 'shian' are clearly an anglicization of the Gaelic. The "Shian of Barcalden" is currently South Shian on the south side of Loch Creran and there is indeed a

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181 Christina Larner, Enemies of God (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981) 154.
182 H. Cameron Gillies, The Place-Names of Argyll (London: Nutt, 1906) 7.
183 Trial of Donald McIlmichall, 27 October 1677. J. N. R. MacPhail, Highland Papers, ser. 2 vol. 20: 3 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1928) 37. Motif F211; F369.7.
184 Gillies 7, 73.

small hill there. It is adjacent to a skerry named Sgeir Caillich, probably referring to the cailleach bheur, the old woman of winter, a figure of great prominence in highland supernatural belief.[185] On the other side of the loch and east of Eriska is North Shian.

Sean Kane's work on myth and mythtellers assumes that myths are tangible things, strongly interconnected with nature and with place. A map of mythtime "wouldn't be a unified map, of course, because there is no singleminded order to mythtime. Instead, there would be places of local meaning where mystery is felt."[186] Fairy belief is also demarcated by a temporally and spatially specific 'geography.' I propose that what we have in the description given by Donald McIlmichall is an example of such a region: an "oral narrative map of a landscape touched everywhere by footprints of the supernatural."[187] The recording and plotting of all known fairy related locations in Scotland would create a significant map in its own right;[188] if it were possible to plot all known examples of Scottish supernatural locations we would have the makings of an atlas!

Not exclusive to, but nonetheless of great significance to the supernatural landscape, is the concept of boundaries. Kane, among others, demonstrates that boundaries are "vital to the whole structure of myth" however, boundaries are equally applicable to many areas of folklife and lore, such as folk customs, material culture, folk religions, and folk beliefs. Any

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185 See D. A. Mackenzie. Motif A1135.

186 Sean Kane, Wisdom of the Mythtellers (Peterborough: Broadview P, 1994) 61.

187 Kane 75.

188 Some localized studies have been done on aspects of Scotland's supernatural landscape. For example, see E. B. Lyle, "A Reconsideration of the Place-Names in 'Thomas the Rhymer,'" Scottish Studies 13 (1969) 65-71; and Louis Stott, Enchantment of the Trossachs (Stirling: Creag Darach P, 1992).

discussion about supranormal creatures, metaphysical experiences or supernatural landscapes is near impossible without some grasp of the fundamental role boundaries play. Boundaries exist at the junctures between the world of the natural and the supernatural. Like a membranous film they separate and delineate one place or one state from another:

> this separation of the mysterious and the familiar has a practical advantage. It segregates the world of mystery from the world human beings have some control over. Without that boundary, the world of mystery does not stand apart from the world of human making; each world contaminates the other.[189]

Boundaries between regions and territories, "like boundaries between years and between seasons, are lines along which the supernatural intrudes through the surface of existence."[190] Crossing boundaries can be a physical, a spiritual, or a mental event. They can be crossed intentionally or unintentionally, by humans or non-humans, symbolically or substantively. Every human being, indeed every living thing, has crossed some sort of boundary: for instance, all life forms experience birth and death. A process of exchange is all that is necessary to create boundaries.

When Janet goes to "Carterhaugh"[191] in the ballad of Tam Lin, she is on the threshold of a boundary, tenuously separating her from the Otherworld. Though she is able to communicate, and indeed to have sexual relations with Tam Lin, she herself does not cross the boundary that so

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189 Kane 102-3.

190 Rees 94.

191 'Carterhaugh' Child 39 A, B, H, I. Also 'Kertonha' C; 'Chaster's Wood' D; 'Charter's ha' E; 'Chester Wood' F; 'Charter's Wood's' G.

fatefully ensnared her lover. Whilst Janet presumably recognized the markers delineating this liminal space, Tam Lin evidently did not or could not.

It has been established that encounters with the fairies were widely believed to have taken place in specific geographically defined areas: liminal boundaries where this world and the Otherworld were thought to converge. It should of course be noted that the fairies are themselves liminal creatures. For example, Robert Kirk mentioned that fairies are "best seen in twilight," and live in a state "betwixt man and Angell."[192] Elfland was conceived to exist in the 'other' space. A place that was so near and yet so far. It was, in many ways, an inversion of the human world, with its own laws. Unlike conceptions of Heaven and Hell, generally believed not to be earthbound, Fairyland existed on earth.[193] It could be reached voluntarily, though more typically involuntarily, by crossing over the liminal space which precariously separated this world from the Otherworld.

The demarcation of particular areas as fairy places may have served a larger social purpose; to protect community members from known, or perceived, dangers.[194] To be alone on the hills, by water, in the forest, basically away from the home, the village or town, and away from the social group was to be imperilled. The need to belong comes across time after time in

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192 Kirk 49-51.

193 Sometimes Hell is believed to be located in the earth's core. Howard Rollin Patch said "the Other World of the Celts was . . . located on this earth, often in the west, and sometimes took the form of the Isles of the Blessed, the Land-beneath-the-Waves, the hollow hill, or the land beyond the mist, or varying combinations of these." The Other World: According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1950) 27.

194 Peter Narváez constructs an intelligent argument about the various dangers associated with being removed from the community in some way (such as berry picking), and the fairy narratives that developed around this theme, in his article "Newfoundland Berry Pickers 'In the Fairies.'"

narratives of fairy belief. One is lost without family and friends or the relative safety of community. However, in some instances, that very separation, to be alone or individuated in some way, could lead to increased power or status in the community such as the acquisition of second sight, prophecy, healing, or communication with the Otherworld; so to be alone, among fairy infested places, was empowering.[195]

While examining the key elements of the stereotype of the witch, Carlo Ginzburg suggested that night flights taken to diabolical sabbats constituted, however distorted, a very ancient theme: "the ecstatic journey of the living into the realm of the dead." He concluded that the folkloric nucleus of the witches sabbat could be found here.[196] Could it be that beliefs surrounding the journey to Fairyland share a similar origin or root, going into the beyond, and returning?

Ferlies to Find: Descriptions of Fairyland

Once prospective travellers have made it to Elfland they invariably find it to be a land of unrelenting beauty and compelling mystique; a sort of subterranean Elysium. Literary sources, such as the poem "The Maner of the Crying of ane Playe," attributed to William Dunbar (c.1465-c.1513), frequently tell that the sojourner in Fairyland went there in search of wonders:

> I am the nakit Blynd Hary,
> That lang has bene in the fary

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[195] Concept borrowed from Ruth Holmes Whitehead, Stories From the Six Worlds: Micmac Legends (Halifax: Nimbus P, 1988). Motif F340.

[196] Ginzburg, Ecstasies 101, 307. Motif F81.

ffarleis to fynd.[197]

Similarly, folk balladry emphasizes the marvels of this subterranean kingdom. 'King Orfeo' (19) describes a hall where fine music is appreciated. 'Thomas Rymer' evokes images of a Celtic overseas paradise,[198] abundant in fruit trees, flowers and fine clothes. The Queen of Elfland describes her jurisdiction as a court. 'Tam Lin' (39D:9 and 15) similarly refers to a "fairy court" that is "a pretty place, In which I love to dwell." In 'The Wee Wee Man' the elfin Otherworld is described as a "bonny green," filled with music and dancing, in a bonny hall:

> Whare the roof was o the beaten gold,
> And the floor was o the cristal a' (38A:5, 7 and 8)

Descriptions of Fairyland in the witch trials are also remarkably favourable. Alison Peirson, though she finds the fairies often cruel to her, comments that the "Court of Elfane" is a place of "pypeing and mirrynes and gude fcheir."[199] Isobel Gowdie's confession records:

> We went in to the Downie-hillis; the hill opened, and we cam to an fair and lairge braw rowme, in the day tym. Thair ar great bullis rowtting and skoylling ther, at the entrie. . . .[200]

Donald McIlmichall, attracted by light coming from a hill, approached and said that he saw "a great number of men and women within the hill

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197 William Dunbar, "The Maner of the Crying of ane Playe," in John Asloan, The Asloan Manuscript, 1515. Ed. W. A. Craigie, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1925) Vol. 2. 149. line 10-2. See chapter two, 67 for more on 'Blynd Hary.'

198 Wimberly 140.

199 Pitcairn vol. 1. 163.

200 Pitcairn vol 3. 611. Rowtting means "a roar; bellowing of cattle," and skoylling means "a yell, a high-pitched roar or bellow, esp. of a cow." SND. ML 6055. Motif F211; F241.2.

quhair he entered haveing many candles lighted." At first the inhabitants seem to have been of two minds whether they should allow the intruder to stay or not, "sum of them desired to shutt him out and others to have him drawine in." However, Donald was eventually admitted.[201] Kirk described fairy homes as "large and fair, and (unless at som odd occasions) unperceivable by vulgar eyes,. . . having for light continuall lamps, and fires, often seen without fuel to sustein them."[202]

Fairyland's propensity to vanish into thin air occurs in the ballad 'The Wee Wee Man' (38A: 8) "in the twinkling of an eye," despite the fact that only moments before there stood a great hall filled with activity. Analogous sudden disappearance is noted in the 1597-8 trial of Andrew Man:

> Thow grantis the elphis will mak the appeir to be in a fair chalmer, and yit thow will find thy selff in a moss on the morne; and that thay will appeir to have candlis, and licht, and swordis, quhilk wilbe nothing els bot deed gress and strayes.[203]

Recorded in 1774, a farmer from Orkney said he observed at the Broch of Burrian "near his house in Harray, on a Christmas day, a large company dancing and frolicking," but upon his approach they all disappeared.[204]

Many people claimed to have seen the dead in Fairyland, sometimes known to them but sometimes not. Bessie Dunlop saw the laird of Auchinskeyth riding with the "fair-folk," though he had been dead for nine

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201 Highland Papers 37.

202 Kirk 54.

203 Trial of Andrew Man, 1597-8. Miscellany of the Spalding Club vol. 1. part 3 (Aberdeen, 1841) 121-2. Motif D2031.0.2

204 Low 1774. xlii. See Black 35-6.

years.[205] Alison Peirson claimed she had "freindis in that court quhilk wes of hir awin blude."[206] Andrew Man said he knew "sindrie deid men in thair cumpanie, and that the Kyng that deit in Flowdoun and Thomas Rymour is their."[207] J. F. Campbell was still able to hear, in the mid-nineteenth century, tales of people thought to be dead, seen alive in Fairyland.[208]

Often the sojourn in Elfland is accompanied by a distorted sense of time. What may seem only a few minutes or an evening frequently turns out to have been weeks, years, or if particularly unlucky, centuries. Even more problematical, for the captive who has been gone longer than an ordinary human lifetime, upon returning to the natural world they age rapidly or simply crumble into dust.[209]

Physical and material descriptions of fairies and their property

Descriptions of the physical nature and material property of fairies are relatively consistent. However, there is one area where contentions arise and that is with the stature of the fairy folk. While on the whole Scottish fairies are reportedly of human size[210] some discrepancies exist. There are occasional

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205 Pitcairn vol. 1. 57. Motif F251.2.

206 Pitcairn vol. 1. 162. Motif F251.2.

207 Miscellany of the Spalding Club 121. The King referred to is James IV who died at the Battle of Flodden, 9 September 1513. Andrew referred to Thomas Rhymer in a different context, saying the Queen of Elphin told him he would be "weill interteneit, but wald seik thy meat or thow deit, as Thomas Rymour did." 119. Motif F251.2.

208 J. F. Campbell vol. 1. 432.

209 Walter Map De Nugis Curialium (1209) has story of 'King Herla' who was led to the underworld by a dwarf for what seemed three days but was two hundred years. Also see J. F. Campbell, and Bruford and MacDonald for 19th and 20thc. folktale examples. Bruford index F21. Motif D1896; D2011; F377; F378.1.

210 Motif F239.4.1

references to pygmies or little people; enough, perhaps, to warrant speculation as to whether these smaller creatures are a regional variant, the remnants of an even older tradition, a distinct class of fairy, or, what seems most probable, a competing tradition. Scotland's southern neighbour clearly seems to have had a smaller variety of fairy.[211] Its first appearance, in the written sources, is found in an eleventh century Anglo-Saxon book of remedies under the heading, "*Wip dweorh*," which means "against the dwarf."[212] Stunning for both a wealth of detail and a remarkably early date comes another hint of small fairy folk, though this time it is a Welsh source. Gerald of Wales (c. 1145-1223), whilst on a tour of Wales in 1188, recorded the story. The tale, purported to be true, involves a young boy's encounters with "little folk."[213] Though Gerald never specifically refers to fairies the details of the story are strongly reminiscent of them. Gerald reports that the encounters allegedly took place "somewhat before our own time [1188]" though a priest, by the name of Elidyr, made claims that he had been the person involved. Elidyr, at the tender age of twelve, ran away from home. For two days he hid in the hollow bank of a river. In due course he was approached by two tiny men, "no bigger than pigmies," who announced to the boy, "If you will come away with us . . . we will take you to a land where all is playtime and pleasure." Elidyr followed the small men to their subterranean domicile, of

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211 Though fairies of medieval romance are human size, some medieval chroniclers discuss smaller fairies, eg. Map's 'King Herla'; Gervase of Tilbury's Otia Imperialia (1211) 'portunes.' Diminutive fairies were introduced to English Literature in Lyly's Endimion and Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Motif F239.4.2; F239.4.3.

212 Maureen Duffy, The Erotic World of Faery (London: Cardinal, 1989) 28. The book of remedies is generally referred to as Lacnunga. Then, as now, dwarf implied smallness.

213 Account that follows is from Gerald of Wales, The Journey Through Wales, 1188, trans. Lewis Thorpe, ed. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) 133-6. Motif F162.1; F162.2; F370.

which he gives a full and lavish account. He seems to have lived among them for quite some time, learning their language[214] and he was allowed frequent trips back to the "upper world," making himself known only to his mother. His account begins with a journey, reminiscent of the voyage taken by True Thomas:

> They led him first through a dark underground tunnel and then into a most attractive country, where there were lovely rivers and meadows, and delightful woodlands and plains. It was rather dark, because the sun did not shine there. The days were all overcast, as if by clouds, and the nights were pitch-black, for there was no moon nor stars.

Elidyr goes on to describe the creatures he saw, beginning with his introduction, in the presence of the entire court, to their King:

> They were amazed to see him, and the king stared at him for a long time,. . . All these men were very tiny, but beautifully made and well-proportioned. In complexion they were fair, and they wore their hair long and flowing down over their shoulders like women. They had horses of a size which suited them, about as big as greyhounds. They never ate meat or fish. They lived on various milk dishes, made up into junkets flavoured with saffron. They never gave their word, for they hated lies more than anything they could think of. Whenever they came back from the upper world, they would speak contemptuously of our own ambitions, infidelities and inconstancies.

Elidyr's sojourn in this twilight world was eventually brought to a grinding

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214 David FitzGerald, the Bishop of St. David's (Gerald's uncle), said the words that Elidyr recalled closely resembled Greek.

halt after he had greedily attempted to steal a golden ball from the little folk. After that, he was never able to find the tunnel entrance again. Regrettably no such detailed account, of such an early date, has yet been uncovered for Scotland though there are ample parallels to Elidyr's tale at later periods. However, it may be significant that areas of Southern Scotland, in the time of Gerald of Wales, had recently been Welsh speaking[215] and therefore some Scots may have been aware of this story. Unfortunately there is no proof for this conjecture.

Turning to the Scottish evidence we find what may be indirect evidence for smallness as a trait of fairy folk in a most unlikely source; that of Blind Harry, author of Scotland's beloved vernacular poem, "Wallace."[216] However, it is not with the poet's work the present interest lies but with his name. In the highly speculative, though not entirely unconvincing, critical work Mythical Bards and the Life of William Wallace the author, W. H. Schofield, postulates that Blind Harry is not the writer's real name but a pseudonym borrowed from a mythical character known within the popular culture of the day.[217] Though he draws on several disparate sources to prove his thesis, Schofield relies heavily upon a poem written c.1500 "The Maner of the Crying of ane Playe," also known in the Bannatyne MS as "Ane Littill Interlud of the Droichis [Dwarf's] Pairt of the Play." In this Interlude the

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215 William J. Watson, The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1926) 135. See also Edward J. Cowan, "Myth and Identity in Early Medieval Scotland," The Scottish Historical Review vol. LXIII. (1984): 130-3.

216 Written c. 1478, this poem celebrated the late 13th-early 14th century hero William Wallace.

217 William Henry Schofield, Mythical Bards and the Life of William Wallace (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1920). See also W. MacKay MacKenzie who says "Blynd Hary" is a degenerate god derived from Odin, possessing supernatural powers, and having only one eye. In The Poems of William Dunbar 1932 (London: Faber, 1970) Appendix D.

dwarf, who arrives in Scotland "with the whirlwind," declares he is "the nakit Blynd Hary," engendered from a race of giants and mythical heroes, and a recent returnee from Fairyland. Not surprisingly Schofield questions the assumption that Dunbar, the probable author of this jocular script, is referring to the same Blind Harry of "Wallace" fame. Whatever the validity of Schofield's claim may be, and there are other possible theories about Dunbar's objective, the character of the dwarf intriguingly fulfills several stereotypical features of the sojourner in Fairyland (e.g. whirlwinds, skewed temporal perception, prophecy), at times reminiscent of Thomas the Rhymer who also went in pursuit of 'ferlies.' Repercussions meted out to the dwarf for leaving that land (e.g. blindness, nakedness, aging), thus breaking taboo, similarly threatened Tam Lin. Yet schizophrenically this dwarf also resembles a shape-shifting, tutelary figure akin to a Brownie or Robin Goodfellow. Once more Schofield speculates upon possible correlatives, such as 'Blind Odin' and 'Blind Ossian,' but also with 'Billie Blin,' a creature of equal mystique which Child called "a serviceable household demon." He is encountered in at least four Scottish ballads and one English ballad.[218]

In the year 1549 firmer evidence for belief in a small race of fairies surfaces in Donald Monro, High Dean of the Isles, Description of the Western Isles of Scotland.[219] This is the earliest known description, from personal observation, of the Hebrides. Monro, during a tour of the island of Lewis, ventured to the northerly tip where there is "ane little Ile callit the *Pygmeis*

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218 Schofield 73-6, 100-3; Child, 67. 'Billie Blin' is found in Child ballads 'Gil Brenton' (5); 'Willie's Lady' (6); 'Young Beichan' (53); 'The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter' (110); and English 'King Arthur and the King of Cornwall.' (30).

219 R. W. Munro, ed., Monro's Western Isles of Scotland, 1549 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961).

Ile, with ane little kirk in it of thair awn handie wark." Natives of Lewis were able to tell Monro that within this kirk the "pygmeis hes bene earthit thair." It is unclear how long the story of the Pygmy Isle had been around. By the time Monro visited, the locals seemingly believed that the Pygmies were dead and buried. Whatever the age of the story, it must have ignited the curiosity of many travellers, including Monro himself:

> Mony men of divers cuntries hes delvit up deiply the fluir of the said kirk, and I myself amangis the lave, and hes fundin in it deip under the earth certane banes and round heids of verie little quantitie, [very small in size] alledgit to be the banes of the saids Pygmeis, quhilk may be licklie according to sindrie storeis that we reid of the Pygmeis.[220]

In 1695 Martin Martin (c. 1660-1719) referred to the island, in A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland,[221] as "The Island of *Pigmies*, or, as the natives call it, *The Island of Little Men*." He mentions that small bones, resembling human bones, had been found giving "ground to a tradition which the natives have of a very low-statur'd people living once here, call'd *Lusbirdan*, i.e. *Pigmies*."[222]

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220 Munro 82-3. The island appears on the ordnance survey map today as Luchruban. Motif F213.

221 Martin Martin, A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland, 1703. 1716. (Edinburgh: Mercat P, 1976). It was written c. 1695. The author is himself a highlander and one of the Martins of Bealach, Skye. The deplorable attitude of Samuel Johnson, whose own tour to the highlands was inspired by Martin, patronisingly said of him, he "was a man not illiterate: he was an inhabitant of Sky, and therefore was within reach of intelligence . . . yet with all his opportunities, he has often suffered himself to be deceived . . . he probably had not the knowledge of the world sufficient to qualify him for judging what would deserve or gain the attention of mankind." In Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D. 1774 , 1785 ed., R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979) 57-8.

222 Martin 19.

Lewis was not the only island to claim a Pygmy race. Martin Martin's visit to Colonsay and Benbecula revealed similar assertions. A fort on Colonsay, by the name of "*Dun-Evan,*" was believed to have once been the dwelling place of "a very little generation of people" called "*Lusbirdan,* the same with *Pigmies.*" On Benbecula the locals had "lately discover'd a stone vault" containing many small bones. However, in the Benbecula findings, theories as to the origins of the bones were divided:

> Some said they were the bones of birds, others judg'd them rather to be the bones of Pigmies. The Proprietor of the Town enquiring Sir *Normand Mackleod's* opinion concerning them, he told him that the matter was plain as he suppos'd, and that they must be the bones of infants born by the nuns there.[223]

An anonymous author, writing in 1665, associated pygmies with northerly climes; "And *Pigmyes,* sometimes visible, sometimes invisible in *Green-Land* and the adjacent rocks."[224] Robert Kirk, though nowhere within the body of his text does he allude to the smallness of fairies, included in his title page the name *lusbartan,*[225] which is probably the same word as Martin Martin's *Lusbirdan.* Furthermore, in Kirk's glossary, he gave as a definition of elves, "A tribe of the fayries that use not to exceed an ell in stature."[226]

A description given by Walter Ronaldson from Kirktown of Dyce, and

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223 Martin 82, 249. His notes add that Catholic inhabitants were displeased with this particular explanation, and covered over the vault, Martin speculating so it could not be proven.

224 "A Discourse concerning Devils and Spirits," appended to 1665 edit. of Scot 514.

225 See also chapter one, 22. A connection may possibly exist between the Irish leprechaun, or lupracan. On the leprechaun, see John J. Winberry, "The Elusive Elf: Some Thoughts on the Nature and Origin of the Irish Leprechaun," Folklore 87 (1976): 63-75.

226 Definition in "An Exposition of the difficult Words in the forgoing Treatises," Kirk 115. An ell in Scotland was thirty-seven inches.

brought before the Aberdeen court in 1601 for "familiarity with a spirit," may further the possibility that a race of smaller supernatural beings were popularly believed to exist. Some twenty seven years prior to his trial, a spirit first came to Ronaldson's door, and continued to come twice a year for several years thereafter. Initially he never saw the spirit but one Michaelmas night, while he slept, it came and "sat down anent the bed upon a kist, and callit upon him, saying 'Wattie, Wattie!'" When Ronaldson awoke he "saw the form of it, whilk was like ane little body, having a shaven beard, clad in white linen like a sark." The creature spoke to him and told him where to find "baith silver and gold" hidden at a house in "Stanivoid."[227]

An interesting depiction given by Isobel Gowdie is that of the "little ones, hollow, and boss-baked! They speak gowstie lyk." When we consider that "boss-baked" may possibly represent diminutive and hump-backed while "gowstie" means roughly or gruffly, it could be that Isobel is talking about a trow-like creature and hence, the closest thing so far found in the witch trials to the Wee Wee Man of the ballads.[228]

The ballad of 'The Wee Wee Man' is the only example in the Child corpus of small fairies. In every other case the ballad fairy is of human size. The Wee Wee Man is different in other ways also:

> His legs were scare a shathmont's [6 inches]
> length,
> And thick and thimber was his thigh;
> Between his brows there was a span,

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227 Trial of Walter Ronaldson, 20 Nov. 1601. Aberdeen Presbytery Records (Aberdeen, 1846). Ronaldson, with friends, searched for the treasure but was unsuccessful. However, he maintained that "there is gold there, gif it was weel sought." ML 8010. Motif F244; N538; N570.

228 Pitcairn vol. 3. 607.

> And between his shoulders there was three.
> (38A:2)

Perhaps we have in 'The Wee Wee Man' a creature similar to the dwarf, gnome or kobold found in Teutonic and Scandinavian traditions. His hideous appearance and superhuman strength, "He took up a meikle stane, And he flang't as far as I could see,"[229] adds credence to this theory.[230] In version B the fairy ladies are also diminutive and they dance with "wee wee Knichts."[231] These latter creatures are closer in appearance, excepting size, to the beautiful fairy folk of 'Thomas Rymer' and 'Tam Lin'.

One last proposal on the impossible question of height is that it is theoretically possible that a fairy could alter its own height at will, a form of shape-shifting. After all, Andrew Man would tell that the Fairy Queen could drastically alter the appearance of her age at whim. J. G. Campbell's work on highland fairy tradition suggested they had an ability to change their size. However, Campbell started out with an impression that the "true belief" in fairies was that they were already a small race, "the men 'about four feet or so' in height, and the women in many cases not taller than a little girl" and that over time the human proclivity to exaggeration took the descriptions of their littleness to even greater (or smaller) extremes.[232]

In Scott's version of 'Tam Lin' some stanzas referred to the ability of fairies to alter their shape:

> Our shapes and size we can convert
> To either large or small; (39I:34)

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229 Child 38A:3. Motif F253.1.1.

230 Wimberly 171. Motif F451.

231 Child 38B:8. Motif F239.4.3; F261.

232 J. G. Campbell 10.

Child was suspicious of these stanzas, putting them in an appendix, in spite of the fact that a central motif in this ballad is shape-shifting. Consider also the trial of Bessie Dunlop, who said of her fairy contact: "Thane Thome Reid went away fra me, in throw the yard at Monkcastell; and I thocht he gait in at ane naroware hoill of the dyke nor ony erdlie man culd haif gane throw."[233] The passage is ambiguous as to what Thome has done; perhaps he had the ability to disappear or maybe he was able to become smaller and passed through an entrance to Fairyland. Kirk does tell us of the fairies that, "their bodies of congealed air, are som times carried aloft, other whiles grovell in different shapes, and enter in anie cranie or cleft of the earth (where air enters) to their ordinary dwellings."[234]

Strength is a trait belonging to the fairy lover in 'Hind Etin' (41B:7), who casually rips a tree out by the roots then carves out a cave "monie fathoms deep," and to the Elf King in 'Sir Cawline' (61:15) described as "the eldrige king, that is mickle of might." The notion of invisibility,[235] which was touched upon earlier in 'The Wee Wee Man' also occurs, though in another form, in 'Hind Etin' (41A:8) when the bower that is built is described as "appearance it had nane." Tam Lin also seemed to possess the ability to appear and disappear at will. He chooses to reveal his presence to Janet only after she has picked a rose.[236] Robert Kirk said the bodies of fairies were "so plyable through the subtilty of the spirits, that agitate them, that they can make them appeare or disappear at pleasure." Kirk also learned that the

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233 Pitcairn vol. 1. 52.
234 Kirk 50-1. Motif D631; F234.0.2.
235 Motif F235.1.
236 Motif C515; F301.1.1.2.

fairies could make humans vanish when it suited them. In view of witnesses, a man of the second sight became invisible during his confrontations:

> His neighbours often perceivd this man to disappear at a certane place, and then about one hour after to become visible, and discover himselfe neer a bow-shot from the first place,: it was in that place where he becom invisible, said he, that these subterraneans did encounter and combate with him.[237]

The ballad fairies are repeatedly portrayed as lavishly adorned and accoutred beings. They live in opulent courts, eat sumptuous foods, and dress in equally sumptuous clothes. They own or guard treasures beyond the imagination of most mortals, outfitting even their horses in golden bridles and silver bells. The horses themselves are of the finest stock, are usually milk-white, and run swifter than the wind. The fairies are almost always clad in the colour green.[238] In 'Thomas Rymer' (37A:2; and 37C:3) the Queen of Elfland wears a "grass-green silk" skirt and a mantle of green velvet. The "Four and twenty" little fairy women in 'The Wee Wee Man' (38A:6) are similarly "clad out in green." The woman who makes an impromptu appearance in 'Young Beichan' (53M: 15) is identifiable as a fairy due to her choice of attire, "Up starts a woman, clad in green."

It remains uncertain whether the three female characters in William Dunbar's poem "The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo" are

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237 Kirk 50, 59.

238 Green, aside from its association with fairies, is sometimes an ill-omened colour connected with bad luck and death. Motif F233.1; F236.1.6; F236.6; F241; F241.1; F241.1.1.1.

indeed fairy women, as has been argued by A. D. Hope.[239] The poem was written for the court of James IV about the end of the fifteenth century. The reason for believing the women to be supernaturals is found in the opening passage, which is crammed with motifs that would lead a contemporary audience to assume that the women were not of ordinary flesh and blood:

> Apon the Midsummer evin, mirriest of nichtis,
> I muvit furth allane, neir as midnicht wes past,
> Besyd ane gudlie grein garth [enclosure], full of gay flouris,
> Hegeit [hedged], of ane huge hicht, with hawthorne treis;
> Quhairon ane bird, on ane bransche, so birst out hir notis. . . .

Thus attracted, the man secretly approaches and, as he waits under a holly tree, hears voices nearby. Curiosity gets the better of him and he moves closer still, hiding himself under a hawthorn tree. In a green arbour are three "gay ladies," sitting down to a fine feast, and engaged in conversation. The women are,

> All grathit [adorned] in to garlandis of fresche gudlie flouris;
> So glitterit as the gold wer thair glorius gilt tressis,
> Quhill all the gressis did gleme of the glad hewis;
> Kemmit [combed] was thair cleir hair, and curiouslie sched
> Attour [over] thair schulderis doun schyre, schyning full bricht;
> With curches [head-dresses], cassin thair abone, of kirsp cleir and thin [delicate transparent fabric]:

239 A. D. Hope, A Midsummer Eve's Dream: Variations on a theme by William Dunbar (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1971). "The Treatise of the Two Married Women and the Widow."

> Thair mantillis [mantles] grein war as the gress
> that grew in May sessoun. . . .[240]

There are many indications that what the narrator is describing may be more than just three upper class Edinburgh ladies having a girls' night out. The audience would be aware that the time, midnight on Midsummer's Eve, was a night when fairies were abroad. The place, a holly and hawthorn grove, was similarly a location commonly believed to be a fairy trysting site. The attire of the women, who are all wearing green dresses and have their hair combed out and hanging down their backs, is unusual. Fashionable ladies would be unlikely to dress in the way these three women do. Hope suggests it is almost as if they wore some kind of uniform: "the uniform of elves and fairies." Wearing the hair combed down was ordinarily the custom for unmarried women in fifteenth and sixteenth century Scotland, while married women generally wore their hair up or completely covered. The bright, shining light which emanates from the ladies could potentially be interpreted as the fairy light.[241] The narrator's retreat under the "plet thorn," or tangled hawthorn, may have had the counter-magical significance of protecting him from enchantment.

A century later the court of James VI would be familiar with a treatise, written by their monarch, entitled Daemonologie (1597). A passage in this text sets out very plainly some of the main characteristics of the fairy tradition:

> . . . there was a King and Queene of Phairie, of
> such a jolly court and train as they had, how
> they had a teynd, and dutie, as it were, of all

[240] William Dunbar, "The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo," qtd. in Hope 270-1. Motif F230; F263.
[241] Hope 10-1, 16.

> goods: how they naturallie rode and went, eate and drank, and did all other actiones like naturall men and women.[242]

James was by no means sympathetic toward this supernatural tradition. He believed that fairies were nothing less than wicked demons sent by the Devil to undermine Christianity, and those who claimed parlance with them were a threat to society at large.

Descriptions of the fairies within the witch trial evidence is relatively detailed. Andrew Man said the elves were in the shape of, and clothed like, people. The Queen of fairies, he tells, can be old or young at will and shall lie with any man she happens to like. Andrew himself admitted to producing several children with her.[243] Bessie Dunlop described the fairy men as clad in gentleman's clothing and the women in plaid. Elspeth Reoch saw two fairy men; one who was "cled in blak and the uther with ane grein tartane plaid about him."[244] Isobell Haldane "mett a man with ane gray beird."[245] Janet Trall of Blackruthven, tried in Perth in 1623, said they appeared "some of them red, some of them grey and riding upon horses." The "principal of them," according to Janet first appeared to her as a "bonny white man, riding upon a grey horse" though on another occasion he was clad in green.[246] Isobel

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242 King James VI, Daemonologie in forme of a Dialogue 1597, 1597 (London: Bodley Head, 1924) 74. The idea that the fairies enjoyed a tithe, or levy, on all goods is unusual. More commonly it is the fairies themselves who have to pay a teind to Hell. See chapter three, 91-2, 99.

243 Andrew confessed "to have carnall deall with that devilische spreit, the Quene of Elphen, on quhom thow begat dyveris bairnis, quhom thow hes sene sensyn." Trial of Andrew Man, Miscellany of the Spalding Club 119. Motif F301; F305.

244 Maitland Club Miscellany 112.

245 Pitcairn vol. 2. 537.

246 Trial of Janet Trall, 22 May 1623. Extracts from the Presbytery Book of Strathbogie (Aberdeen, 1843) xi-xiii. Motif F233.6; F236.1.3; F236.1.6.

Gowdie described, not only the attire of the sprites she knew, but gave their name as well:

> ROBERT, the Jakis; SANDERIS, the Read Reaver; THOMAS, the Fearie; SWEIN, the roaring Lion; THIEFFE OF HELL, Wait wpon hir self; MAKHECTOUR; ROBERT, the Rule; HENDRIE LAING; and RORIE. We wold ken thame all, on by on, from utheris. Som of thaim apeirit in sadd-dun, som in grasse-grein, som in sea-grein, and som in yallow.[247]

Isobel also said that "'THE READ REIVER'. . . is my owin sprit, that waittis on my selfe, and is still clothed in blak." Of "ROBERT THE JACKIS" she said he was "clothed in dune, and seimes to be aiged. He is ane glaiked [stupid] gowked [fool] Spirit!"[248]

A somewhat unusual description was offered by John Brand, writing about Orkney where "evil spirits also called fairies are frequently seen in several of the Isles dancing and making merry, and sometimes seen in armour."[249] The modern folklorist, Ernest Marwick, similarly said that Orkney fairies had been seen wearing armour, though it is possible he drew his information from Brand.[250]

Like Bessie Dunlop and Elspeth Reoch, Robert Kirk also described fairy apparel as native Scots garb. He said "their apparel and speech is like that of the people and countrey under which they live: so are they seen to wear plaids and variegated garments in the high-lands of Scotland and Suanochs [tartan] heretofore in Ireland." Of their voice and language he said "they speak

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247 Pitcairn vol. 3. 614-5.
248 Pitcairn vol. 3. 606.
249 Brand 63.
250 Marwick, The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland, 45.

but litle, and that by way of whistling, clear, not rough" and "answer in the Language of the place: yet sometimes these subterraneans speak more distinctly then at other times."[251]

Just over a hundred years later another minister gave a description of local beliefs in his parish at Kirkmichael in Banffshire:

> Notwithstanding the progressive increase of knowledge and proportional decay of superstition in the Highlands, these genii are still supposed by many people to exist in the woods and sequestered valleys of the mountains, where they frequently appear to the lonely traveller, clothed in green, with dishevelled hair floating over their shoulders and with faces more blooming than the vermeil blush of a summer morning.

The eloquence of his description seems to owe more to post-Ossianic romanticism than it does to actual experience. Furthermore, his tone is more suggestive of a day spent bird-watching than an encounter with dangerous supernatural forces. He continues:

> At night in particular, when fancy assimilates to its own preconceived ideas every appearance and every sound, the wandering enthusiast is frequently entertained by their musick, more melodious than he ever before heard.[252]

The creature that had an acquaintance with Bessie Dunlop for four years is somewhat of an enigma. Though he acts in most ways like a fairy, and certainly lives and associates with fairy folk, he is not, or at least was not

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251 Kirk 55.

252 Minister of Kirkmichael, 1793. The Statistical Account of Scotland, compiled by John Sinclair. 21 vols. (Edinburgh, 1771-1799) vol. 12. 462.

always, a fairy. Of his appearance, Bessie gives us a full account:

> he was ane honest wele elderlie man, gray bairdit, and had ane gray coitt with Lumbart slevis of the auld fassoun; ane pair of gray brekis and quhyte schankis, gartanit abone the kne; ane blak bonet on his heid, cloise behind and plane befoir, with silkin laissis drawin throw the lippis thairof; and ane quhyte wand in his hand.[253]

What is most startling about this man is that he claimed he died at the Battle of Pinkie, which was fought twenty nine years earlier on 10 September 1547. In order to prove his claim, he told Bessie that if she doubted him she should "gang to Thom Reid, his sone, now officiare in his place, to the Lard of Blair, and to certain utheris his kynnismen and freindis thair, quhom he namit." There was another incident that pointed to his revenant nature. When Bessie was asked whether she had seen him "gangand up and doun the warld" she said that she had seen him "gangand in the kirkyard of Dalrye, amangis the people." Fairy sightings within consecrated ground are not altogether unfamiliar. In Shetland, at the trial of Katherine Jonesdochter, the accused reportedly saw "trowis ryse out of" the Kirkyard of Hillswick, and Holycross Kirk of Eshaness.[254]

In ways quite similar to Bessie's case, Alison Peirson claimed a mortal intermediary between herself and Fairyland, though this man was known to her before his capture by fairies as he was a relative. William Simpson, an uncle of Alison's, seemingly had quite a history of abduction. Alison said he had been kidnapped "be ane mann of Egypt," returned to Scotland twelve

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253 Pitcairn vol. 1. 51. Reminiscent of the wand in the ballad 'Allison Gross.'

254 Donaldson, Court Book of Shetland 38.

years later only to be carried off by fairies.[255]

Thomas Reid and William Simpson's precise relationship to the fairies is unclear. It would seem that they are ghosts of men once mortal, now under the sovereignty of the Queen of Elfland. Thomas had told Bessie that the Queen of Elfame was his mistress and had "commandit him to wait upoun hir, and to do hir gude."[256]

Another hint that the dead could be subsumed into the realm of fairy occurs in the trial of Elspeth Reoch.[257] She said that the black man who came to her, and called himself a fairy man, was "sumtyme her kinsman callit Johne Stewart quha wes slane be McKy at the doun going of the soone [sunset]." He told her he was neither dead nor alive but was forever trapped "betuix the heaven and the earth."[258] What Thomas Reid and John Stewart share in common is a violent, sudden death. They were taken before their time with very little opportunity to prepare for their impending death. Kirk himself stated that the seers avouched that "severals who go to the sith's (or people at rest and in respect of us in peace) befor the natural period of their lyf expyr, do frequentlie appear to them," and that the highlanders averred that the "souls goe to the sith when dislodged."[259]

Interplay between the word 'fairy' and 'spirit' is encountered in October 1675, when the bishop and synod of Aberdeen was engaged in considering "divers complaints that some, under pretence of trances and familiarity with

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255 Pitcairn vol. 1. 164.

256 Pitcairn vol. 1. 55-7.

257 J. A. MacCulloch also thinks that the grey bearded man who led Isobel Haldane out of the fairy hill was a "kind of familiar or ghost, like Thomas Reid and William Simpson." 237.

258 Maitland Club Miscellany 113. Motif F251.2; F375.

259 Kirk 80, 93. Motif F251.2.

spirits, by going with these spirits commonly called the fairies, hath spoken reproachfully of some persons, whereof some are dead, and some living."[260]

Activities and pastimes of the fairy folk

That the fairies are "a sociable people, passionately given to festive amusement and jocund hilarity" is well known, according to W. Grant Stewart.[261] The ballads certainly support this image and relate the fairy love of hunting,[262] of music and dancing, and, let us not forget, of abduction. Beaten by the knight in 'Sir Cawline' (61:25) the elf king promises nevermore to "sport, gamon, or play" on Eldrige Hill. The fairy rade or procession, as mentioned in 'King Orfeo,' 'Allison Gross,' and 'Tam Lin,' is probably their favoured and best known activity.[263]

Andrew Man said that the elves "have playing and dansing quhen thay pleas."[264] On Donald McIlmichall's first sighting of fairies he saw them dancing by candlelight. On subsequent visits he "playd on trumps to them quhen they danced."[265] Sometimes the site where fairies have danced is detectable by circular impressions left in the grass of which Samuel Hibbert said "within such unholy precincts it is hazardous for a Christian to enter."[266]

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260 Aberdeen Kirk Session Records and Chambers, Domestic Annals vol.2. 380.

261 William Grant Stewart, The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland, 1822 (London, 1851) 90.

262 Remarkably there is no motif number ascribed to this practice in Thompson's index.

263 Cromek, Remains of Galloway and Nithsdale Song gives a 19th c. account of a rade. 298-9. Motif F241.1.0.1.

264 Miscellany of the Spalding Club 121.

265 Highland Papers 38. By 'Trumps' is generally understood a jews-harp. Motif F261; F262.

266 Samuel Hibbert, A Description of the Shetland Islands (Edinburgh, 1822) 444-51, qtd. in Black 41. Motif F261.1.1.

In Shetland, the trows were notoriously odd dancers. They were said to 'henk' or 'lunk' which seemed to infer a limping motion.[267]

Robert Kirk discovered that several fairy activities were remarkably similar to human pursuits. He said, "they are sometimes heard to bake bread, strike hammers, and to do such like services within the litle hillocks where they most haunt." Fairy women were said to "spin, verie fine, to dye, to tissue and embroyder." However, Kirk was unsure if their goods were produced by "manual operatione of substantiall refin'd stuffs with apt solid instruments, or only curious cob-webs, impalpable rainbows, and a phantastic imitatione of the actiones of more terrestriall mortals."[268]

With regard to how and what the fairies actually ate, Kirk surmised:

> Some have bodies or vehicles so spungious, thin and defecate, that they are fed by only sucking into some fine spiritous liquor that pierce like pure air and oyl: others feed more gross on the foyson or substance of cornes and liquors, or on corne itselfe.[269]

People who ate a lot yet never seemed to gain any weight were believed, said Kirk, to have "a voracious elve" called "*geirt coimitheth*, a joynt-eater, or just-halver, feeding on the pith and quintessence of what the man eats, and that therefore he continues lean like a hauke or heron, notwithstanding his devouring appetite." How food was stolen by these greedy elves was also explained by Kirk:

> they convey that substance elsewhere, for these

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267 James Nicolson, Shetland Folklore (London: Hale, 1981) 77; Jessie Saxby, Shetland Traditional Lore (Edinburgh: Grant and Murray, 1932) 116-7; John Spence, Shetland Folklore (Lerwick, 1899) 39. Motif 254.1; F261.

268 Kirk 50, 55. Motif F271.0.1; F271.4; F271.4.3; F271.10.

269 Kirk 50. Motif F243.

> subterraneans eat but litle in their dwellings, their food being exactly clean, and served up by pleasant children like inchanted puppets. What food they extract from us is convey'd to their homes by secret pathes, as some skilfull women doe the pith of milk from their neighbours cows.[270]

Indulging in general mischief is, above all, what the troublesome fairies loved most. Kirk comments:

> The invisible wights which haunt houses seem rather to be some of our subterranean inhabitants (which appear often to men of the second sight), than evill spirits or devils, because tho they throw great stons, pieces of earth, and wood at the inhabitants, they hurt them not at all, as if they acted not maliciously like devils, but in sport like [well-wishers] buffoons and drols.[271]

Human visitors to Fairyland were often very much part of the general goings on of their hosts. The well-known account of the 'Boy of Leith,' written by George Burton and reproduced in Richard Bovet's Pandaemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster Opened (1684), is a fairly good indication of this. Burton, who was brought to Leith on business, actually interviewed the boy and finding the story so remarkable conveyed his findings to Bovet. The boy, aged around ten or eleven, said that on every Thursday night he met with a multitude of fairies underneath a hill between Edinburgh and Leith (Calton Hill perhaps) where he played on a drum to

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270 Kirk 53. ML 5081. Motif D2083.3; D2087.6; F365.

271 Kirk 85. 'Well-wishers' was deleted from text and 'buffoons and drols' substituted later. In Scotland 'wicht' or 'wycht' means "a supernatural being . . . *the guid wichts*, the fairies." SND. Motif D1825.1; F399.4.

them. He also went on overnight excursions with them. His descriptions, not only of what he did with the fairy folk, but of what their world was like are relatively expansive:

> they are entertained with many sorts of musick, besides my drum; they have, besides, plenty of variety of meats and wine, and many times we are carried into France or Holland in a night, and return again, and whilst we are there we enjoy all the pleasures the country doth afford.

When asked how he got inside the hill he replied:

> there was a great pair of gates that opened to them, though they were invisible to others; and that within there were brave large rooms, as well accommodated as most of Scotland.

The boy was also gifted with the second sight, presumably an inheritance from time spent in the company of fairies.[272]

The Politics of Fairyland: Social and political structures

It seems clear, given the majority of descriptions, that fairies were aristocratic, engaging in the hunt, playing music and dancing. In many cases their home is described as a hall or court: "thai war the gude wychtis that wynnit in the Court of Elfame."[273] The very title of queen and king of fairy,[274]

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272 George Burton, letter to Richard Bovet, Pandemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster, 1684. Introd. M. Summers (Aldington: Hand and Flower, 1951). See also 'boy of Borgue' in J. F. Campbell, Popular Tales of the West Highlands, vol. 1. 425. ML 4075. AT 503. Motif D1825.1; F211; F370; F377; F379.1.

273 Pitcairn vol. 1. 53.

274 Motif F252.1; F252.2.

so prevalent in the descriptions, is a pretty good indicator of their political structure. The power yielded by this unearthly monarchy was awesome and, according to the protagonist in 'The Wee Wee Man,' the Queen of Fairy was a match for even the most powerful of earthly mortals:

> Though the King of Scotland had been there,
> The warst o them might hae been his queen.
> (38A:6)

As he had discovered with the daily activities of fairies, Kirk similarly found the social and political infrastructure of Fairyland was parallel with their human counterparts. They were organized into "tribes and orders" and had "children, nurses, mareiages, deaths and burials." They also had "aristocratical rulers and laws, but no discernible religion, love or devotione towards God," and would disappear on hearing the name of God or Jesus.[275] They were subject to the same conflicts and controversies that people experienced, having "doubts, disputes, feuds, and syding of parties." In Kirk's eyes this was due to "there being som ignoranc in all creatures,"[276] and the supernatural world was by no means exempt. They were certainly not free from the follies of vice and sin for as Kirk explains, "whatever their own laws be . . . they transgress and committ acts of Injustice," by abducting women to nurse fairy children, stealing human children, and the promiscuity of their "*leannain Sith* or succubi who tryst with men, it is abominable." Kirk continues, "But for swearing and intemperance they are not observed so subject to those irregularities, as to envy, spite, hypocrisy, lying and

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275 Kirk 51, 56.
276 Kirk 62.

dissimulatione."[277]

Donald A. MacKenzie has said that in Gaelic folktales there is no mention of a queen of fairies, and her arrival in Gaelic fairy poetry is of relatively late date. He asserted that W. Grant Stewart and J. G. Campbell's work on Gaelic folktales makes no mention of either a queen or king of fairy and states that the "genuine fairies of folk-belief are nameless and devoid of titles."[278] However, there is evidence from a highland witch trial that some sort of leader or ruler, though not specifically called a king, did exist at one time in at least a part of the Gàidhealtachd. Donald McIlmichall claimed he saw "ane old man as seemed to have preference above the rest" and that this man "seemed to be chief being ane large tall corporal Gardman and ruddie [ruddy complexion]."[279]

If there is some doubt about traditions of a fairy queen or king in the Gaelic speaking areas of Scotland, though probably less than MacKenzie has suggested, the same could not be said of lowland folk tradition or to the traditions heard within the courtly chambers of Scotland's monarchs. The earliest documented evidence for the personage of a fairy queen and king appears in two poems formerly mentioned, the anonymous poem "King Berdok" and Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice."[280] The court of James IV was treated to William Dunbar's burlesque "Now Lythis off ane Gentill Knycht," from which we hear "Quhais father was ane giand keyne

277 Kirk 62. *Leannain Sith* or fairy lovers. Motif F301.
278 MacKenzie 195-6.
279 Highland Papers 38.
280 See chapter one, 25-6.

[giant kind or race], His mother was ane Farie Queyne, Gottin be sossery."[281] At the court of James VI, Alexander Montgomery's (?1545-1597) "Flyting between Montgomerie and Polwart" was well known: "The king of pharie, with the court of the elph quene, With mony alrege [eldrich] incubus, ryddand that nicht."[282]

Elite traditions aside, the notion of a fairy queen and king was also known in the folk tradition of the English speaking areas of Scotland. An Ayrshire woman, Bessie Dunlop, first made acquaintance with the Queen of Elfland when she was in labour. Unlike the majority of descriptions, this queen was far from regal. As J. A. MacCulloch noted, she was "a stout carline who begged for a drink."[283] Alison Peirson of Byrehill was tried in 1588 for "hanting and repairing with the gude nychtbouris and Quene of Elfame." Isobel Gowdie, whilst inside the "Downie-hillis," she was fed meat from the "Qwein of Fearrie" who she described as "brawlie clothed in whyt linens, and in whyt and browne cloathes." She also met the "king of fearrie" whom she said was "a braw man, weill favoured, and broad faced."[284]

Isobel was one of the few, together with others discussed in this chapter, who not only convey information, in David Buchan's model, about "the world around" but also about "the world around that." Such information about fairies clearly owed much to the subjectivity and experience of those who wrote about, or commented on them. For many the

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281 William Dunbar, "Now Lythis off ane Gentill Knycht," William Dunbar: Poems, intro. James Kinsley (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1958) 36: 5.

282 Alexander Montgomery, "Flyting between Montgomerie and Polwart: The Secund Invective: Montgomeryes Answeir to Polwart," Alexander Montgomery: A Selection From His Songs and Poems, ed. and intro. H. M. Shire (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1960) 81-90: line 7-8.

283 MacCulloch 234.

284 Pitcairn vol. 3. 604. Motif F233.6.

fairies were simply a reflection, projection or inversion of contemporary concerns and preoccupations. Nonetheless fairies could only be encountered in very special circumstances. The next chapter will explore the core themes and motifs surrounding the modes of enchantment and disenchantment.

Chapter Three

Enchantments of the Fairies: Themes and Motifs

> . . . quhen sundrie persounes cam to hir to seik help for thair beist, thair kow or yow [sheep], or for ane barne [child] that was tane away with ane evill blast of wind, or elf-grippit, sche gait [went] and sperit at Thom, Quhat mycht help thame? And Thom wald pull ane herb, and gif hir out of his awin hand.[285]

Of great importance to the vast majority of people living in the early modern period was a knowledge of the ways in which creatures from the Otherworld were believed to ensnare or lead astray human beings. It was very important to know how to avoid such capture. There were many ways the fairies had of casting their glamour, or enchantments, therefore it was essential to take certain precautions or make placations to avoid their traps. Inevitably, not all would be successful at eluding beguilement so it was of even greater importance to know if, once captured, there was any hope of escape. In other words, how could people break the fairy spell and disenchant themselves, their friends and loved ones, even their animals. This chapter, by delineating the main themes and motifs, will address these issues.

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285 Bessie Dunlop, Pitcairn vol.1 55.

Fairy Glamourie: The Modes of Enchantment[286]

To say that the ways by which the fairies cast their glamour over mortals are wide and varied is to all accounts an understatement. At times it would seem that there was very little that one could do, or not do, to avoid these capricious creatures. Activities such as eating, drinking, speaking, or sleeping in a tabooed place are all common mistakes human captives have made. Physical contact with an Otherworld being through gifts, music, riddles or charms are equally common traps. Sometimes entrapment is procured through the use of fairy darts, arrows, or blasts. Attacks from fairies are prone to occur beneath apple trees,[287] or close to wells, hills or woods, invariably known to be frequented by the elves. Childbirth is also a vulnerable time. The reasons behind enchantment, if fairies can be said to have a motive, are often to obtain a mortal lover, an earthly nurse or midwife,[288] a human baby, or make a payment or a "teind" to hell.[289]

In the ballads Thomas Rymer is warned not to eat the fruit he sees in the garden nor speak to anyone when he arrives in Elfland. Janet in 'Tam Lin' outwits the Queen by refusing the offer of fairy gifts:

> 'O stay, Tomlin,' cried Elphin Queen,
> 'Till I pay you your fee;'
> 'His father has lands and rents enough,
> He wants no fee from thee.' (39D:33)

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286 'Glamour,' originally a Scottish word meaning "magic, enchantment, witchcraft; a spell," was popularised in literary use by Sir Walter Scott. See SND. Motif D2031; D2031.0.2.

287 Motif D950; D950.10.

288 Human women acting as midwife to fairies is a legend known throughout most of Europe and Asia, Bruford 126. ML 5070. Motif F372; F372.1.

289 Wimberly 275. See also E. B. Lyle "The Teind to Hell in Tam Lin," Folklore 81 (1970): 177-81. A teind is tithe, or the tenth part. In Scotland, "that portion of the estates of the laity which is liable to be assessed for the stipend of the clergy of the established church." See OED. Motif F257.

The very name "Tamlin" may have been given to him by the fairies to keep him trapped in the Otherworld; a sort of naming magic.[290] The Motherwell text does seem to suggest the possibility:

> 'First they did call me Jack,' he said,
> 'And then they called me John,
> But since I lived in the fairy court
> Tomlin has always been my name. (39D:9)[291]

'The Elfin Knight' and 'Lady Isabel and the Elfin-Knight' both speak of a fairy horn or harp.[292] 'King Orfeo' loses his wife to the fairies when she is struck by a fairy dart:

> For da king o Ferrie we his daert,
> Has pierced your lady to da hert. (19A:4)

In versions 39G and K, Tam Lin was asleep under an apple tree at the time of his capture, while Thomas was taken from under the Eildon tree in 37C. In 39E and J, Tam Lin is taken beside a well, and Lady Isabel (4B) escapes death by the Elf-Knight at "Wearie's Well." Magical woods are featured in 'Tam Lin' and 'Hind Etin'. Love and seduction is a key motive in 'The Elf-Knight,' 'Lady Isabel and the Elfin-Knight,' 'Thomas Rymer,' 'Tam Lin' and 'Hind Etin.'[293] Payment of the teind to hell is exemplified best in 'Thomas Rymer' and 'Tam Lin'. 'The Queen of Elfan's Nourice' provides an excellent example of the

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290 Lewis Spence did not approve of this suggestion and said he "cannot recall any kidnapped hero in fairy legend whose name underwent a change once he became a denizen in the land of the fays." The Magic Arts in Celtic Britain (London: Rider, 1945) 65. But see above for a list of possible fairy names, chapter two, 78.

291 To name is to control in folk belief, however, this stanza is a formulaic commonplace of ballad so is not necessarily proof, in this instance, of a direct reflection of belief in naming magic. See 'The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter' (Child 110A: 6).

292 Motif F262.8.

293 ML 5095. AT 425 (variant). Motif F301; F301.2; F302.3.1

fairy need for human midwives and nurses.

The dangers of eating fairy contaminated food were known to Kirk who said men with second sight had seen fairies "eat at funerals, banqueetts: hence many of the Scotish-Irish will not tast meat at those meetings, least they have communion with, or be poysoned by them."[294]

Bessie Dunlop was forbidden by Thomas Reid to speak during a visit to a fairy tryst, even when asked direct questions. Likewise he warned her not to speak to him if ever she saw him in public unless he first addressed her.[295]

The infamous elf arrowheads or fairy darts seem to have been a favoured form of weaponry against humans and animals. Kirk said that they did not have any weapons made of iron but were "stone like to yellow soft flint shaped like a barbed arrow head, but flung as a dart with great force." The impact of these darts was "of the natur of thunder-bolt subtilly and mortally wounding the vitall parts without breaking the skin." Kirk himself claimed to have seen such wounds on animals and had held the offending weapons in his own hand.[296] Agnes Sampson (1590-1),[297] Bartie Paterson, and Isobel Gowdie, could identify elf-shot victims. Isobel even claimed she saw elf darts being made. First, the Devil would "shape them with his awin hand," then elf-boys would "whyttis and dightis" them, or shape and trim the arrows. She also went on forays with other "witches" to shoot them at unfortunate victims:

> We will flie lyk strawes quhan we pleas; wild-strawes and corne-strawes wilbe horses to us, an

294 Kirk 52. Motif C211.1; F378.7.
295 Motif C420.2.
296 Kirk 58-9.
297 See chapter four, 153.

> we put thaim betwixt our foot, and say, 'HORSE AND HATTOCK, IN THE DIVELLIS nam!' An quhan any sies thes strawes in a whirlewind, and doe not sanctifie them selves, we may shoot them dead at owr pleasour. Any that ar shot be us, their sowell will goe to Hevin, bot ther bodies remains with us, and will flie as horsis to us, als small as strawes.

Isobel said that no bow was used to shoot the elf arrowheads, they were flicked off the thumbnail. Isobel regretfully admitted to killing people by this method. "Som tymes we will misse; bot if thay twitch [touch], be it beast, or man, or woman, it will kill, tho' they haid an jack [armour] upon them."[298] She was remorseful over the deaths she believed she was responsible for, "Bot that quhich troubles my conscience most, is the killing of severall persones, with the arrowes quhich I gott from the divell."[299] Protective charms against elfshot are occasionally recorded, for example in the testimony of Bartie Paterson in 1607:

> And for useing of thir charmes following, for charmeling of cattell; 'I charme thé for arrow-schot, for dor-schot, for wondo-schot, for ey-schot, for tung-schote, for lever-schote, for lung-schote, for hert-schot, all the maist, in the name of the Father, the Sone and Haly Gaist. Amen.'[300]

Falling asleep on fairy territory was a dangerous business, as was discovered by Eurydice in the romance of Orpheus. She fell into a slumber under an "ympe" tree one May morning and soon found herself falling into

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298 Pitcairn vol. 3. 604, 607. Motif D2066.

299 Pitcairn vol. 3. 609.

300 Trial of Bartie Paterson, 18 Dec. 1607. Pitcairn vol. 2. 536. Motif D1516.

the hands of the King of Fairy.[301] Arthur Edmonston recorded in Shetland that a young woman, who had fallen asleep on a hill at midday and later died, was believed by her father to have been taken by the fairies and an image, or 'stock,' left in her place.[302]

As the ballad 'The Queen of Elfan's Nourice' shows, women are particularly susceptible to fairy enchantment when in childbirth. Bessie Dunlop was "new rissine out of gissane [child-bed]"[303] when first she met Thomas Reid. Janet Trall was likewise "lieing in child bed lair." She said "I was drawn forth from my bed to a dub near my house door in Dunning, and was there puddled and troubled."[304] Robert Kirk also told of women "taken away when in child-bed to nurse ffayrie children, a lingring voracious image of theirs being left in their place." According to Kirk, the fate of women abducted to serve as midwives or wet nurses to their captor's brood differed quite markedly:

> When the child is wained, the nurse dies, or is convey'd back, or gets it her choice to stay there. But if anie superterranean be soe subtile as to practise sleights for procuring a privacy to any of their misteries . . . they smit them without pain as with a puff of wind, and bereave them of both the naturall and acquired sights in the twinkling of ane eye . . . or they strick them dumb.[305]

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301 Child vol.1. 216. See also Dean R. Baldwin, "Fairy Lore and the Meaning of Sir Orfeo," Southern Folklore Quarterly 40 (1977): 129-42. An 'ympe' tree is one grown from a cutting and not from seed.

302 Arthur Edmonston, A View of the Ancient and Present State of the Zetland Islands (Edinburgh, 1809) vol.2. 76-8. Motif D1273.1.5; F363.

303 Pitcairn vol. 1. 51.

304 Extracts. . . Strathbogie xii. ML 5070.

305 Kirk 54. Mysteries such as "oyntments, which, as Gyges's ring, makes them invisible or nimble, or cast them in a trance, or alters their shape, or maks things appear at a vast distance, &c." Kirk is reporting on the abduction of women by fairies as "ethnographic information" what is also recognizable as migratory legend. ML 5070.

Kirk was told of another incident in which a woman was stolen out of child-bed, a stock in her likeness left in her place, that dwindled and eventually died, and was duly buried. Two years later she returned and was reunited with her husband. Of her time away she said she had seen very little that went on in her spacious lodgings until she anointed one eye with an unction she found. The unction allowed her to see a "place full of light without anie fountain or lamp from whenc it did spring." Her newly acquired vision was quickly uncovered by her hosts who promptly "fann'd her blind of that eye with a puff of their breath."[306]

A tradition has been noted that the fairies, existing in a state between heaven and hell, following neither God or the Devil, sought out contact with humans in an attempt to develop a soul.[307] The most dominant manifestation of this is seen with changelings. The belief in changelings, or human babies stolen by fairies and fairy children left in their place, is among the most commonly held and widespread fairy tradition, found not only throughout most of western Europe but all over the world.[308] The illustrious Martin Luther, the catalyst behind the Protestant Reformation (and a figure well known throughout the pulpits of Scotland), believed in changelings and claimed to have met one during a visit to Dessau, Germany.[309]

There are references to changelings in witch trials, generally regarding

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306 Kirk 69. Ability to see fairies after rubbing magical ointments on the eyes is a common motif. Motif D1244; F235.4.1; F322; F361.3; F361.3.3; F379.1.

307 MacDonald, The Fairy Tradition in the Highlands and Some Psychological Problems 11-2.

308 According to Briggs Dictionary the earliest account of a changeling is 'Malekin,' recorded by 13th c. chronicler Ralph of Coggeshall. See also Bruford and MacDonald 345-51. ML 5085. Motif F321; F321.1. Bruford index F62.

309 Martin Luther, 1541, qtd. in Margaret Bennett, Scottish Customs: From the Cradle to the Grave (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992) 27.

cures to be rid of the unfortunate creatures. A slightly different experience with one was spoken of in the 1616 Shetland trial of Barbara Thomasdochter from Delting. Among her alleged crimes was witnessing a visit from a changeling though it does not state if Barbara lost any of her own children in the process; "she saw ane litle creatour in hir awin hous amongis hir awin bairnes quhom she callit the bowmanes [fairy man's] bairne."[310]

Alexander Montgomery entertained the court of James VI with a gruesome, if not amusing, account of the birth of a changeling; "Vyld venymous viper, wanthreivinest [most stunted] of thingis, Half ane elph, half ane aip, of nature denyit." This poor ill-begotten creature is doomed from the very beginning:

> Into the hinderend of harvest, on ane alhallow evin,
> When our goode nichtbouris ryddis, if I reid richt,
> Sum buklit [mounted] on ane bunwyd [flax stalk] and sum on ane bene,
> Ay trippand in trowpis fra the twie-licht;
> Sum saidlit ane scho aip [she-ape] all grathit [clad] into grene,
> Sum hobling on hempstaikis, hovand on hicht [rising on high].
> The king of pharie, with the court of the elph quene
> With mony alrege [eldrich] incubus, ryddand that nicht.
> Thair ane elph, and ane aip ane unsell [wretch] begate,
> In ane peitpot [pot-hole in a peat bog] by Powmathorne;
> That brachart [brat] in ane buss wes borne;
> They fand ane monstour on the morne,

310 Trial of Barbara Thomasdochter or Scord, 2 Oct. 1616. Donaldson, Court Book of Shetland 40. See also chapter four, 155 on 'Bowman.'

War [worse] facit nor ane cat.[311]

The creation of this monstrous birth was seemingly abandoned but later found by the "wird sisteris" or Fates, sitting beside a rowan-root under attack by ravens. They are no kinder to it, take up the creature, put a curse upon it, and cast it into a ditch. However, the Fairy Queen spies it in the ditch and takes pity on it:

> Thair a cleir cumpany cum eftir close,
> Nickniven [Queen of Fairies] with hir nymphis in nomber anew,
> With chairmes from Cathnes and Chanrie of Ross,
> Whais cunning consistis in casting a clew [thread];
> Sein that sarrie [sorry] thing they said to thameself:
> 'This maikles [matchless] monstour is meit for us
> And for our craft commodious;
> And uglie aip and incubus,
> And gottin of Elf.'[312]

Though the manner in which Montgomery treats his story of a changeling is indeed humorous, it should not be forgotten that the courtly audience for whom it was performed were just as likely to believe in the power of witches and fairies as any other native of Scotland.[313] Humour can function as a way to combat ordinary human fears, to disguise our doubts and hide our unease about certain subjects.

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311 Montgomery verse 2. The editor, H. M. Shire, adds there was at Polwarth an old thorn associated with fertility rites.

312 Montgomery verse 12.

313 That is not to say elite supernatural beliefs were the same as folk traditions. Elite culture was heavily influenced by literary tradition, eg. Arthurian Romances.

First published in 1788 comes another tale of terror, also told with a hint of humour to quell the nightmares:

> Then wake (forwell thou canst) that wond'rous lay,
> How, while around the thoughtless matrons sleep,
> Soft o'er the floor the treach'rous fairies creep,
> And bear the smiling infant far away:
> How starts the nurse, when, for her lovely child,
> She sees at dawn a gaping idiot stare!
> O snatch the innocent from demons vilde,
> And save the parents fond from fell despair!
> In a deep cave the trusty menial wait,
> When from their hilly dens, at midnight's hour,
> Forth rush the fairy elves in mimic state,
> And o'er the moonlight heath with swiftness scour:
> In glittering arms the little horsemen shine;
> Last, on a milk-white steed, with targe of gold,
> A fay of might appears, whose arms entwine
> The lost, lamented child! the shepherds bold
> The unconscious infant tear from his unhallowed hold.[314]

To be laden with a changeling was a terrible thing and arguably the worst act attributed to the fairies. A close contender is the payment of a teind to hell. This is perhaps one of the most frightening prospects that a captured mortal could face. In some cases it was believed that the queen of fairies was pledged to the devil to submit the teind, but in order to save members of her own population from this fate human adults and children were stolen and proffered as the obligatory stipend instead. Alison Peirson said her uncle told her to sain herself so "that scho be nocht tane away with thame agane; for the

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314 Collins, Edinburgh Magazine April 1788, qtd. in Scott, Minstrelsy lxxiv.

teynd of thame gais ewerie yeir to hell."[315]

In almost every case, the time of day or year is specified in the ballads, with respect to the appearance of the fairies. In 'Lady Isobel and the Elf-Knight' (4A:1) the fairy appears on the "first morning in May," which is Beltane. The Queen of Fairies in 'Allison Gross' breaks the witch's spell on Halloween:[316]

> But as it fell out on last Hallow-even,
> When the seely court was ridin by,
> The queen lighted down on a gowany bank,
> Nae far frae the tree where I wont to lye. (35:12)

Tam Lin must also be rescued on Halloween:

> Just at the mirk and midnight hour
> The fairy folk will ride. (39A: 26)

The elf king arrives, heralded by a bugle, at midnight in 'Sir Cawline' (61:18): "Unto midnight (that) the moone did rise."

Accused witches frequently mention specific times and dates also. Bessie Dunlop's fairy contact usually appeared to her on the twelfth hour of the day.[317] Katherine Ross highlighted Halloween and Midsummer, while Ewfame Makcalzane pointed to Lammas as a fairy time.[318] Katherine Jonesdochter met a fairy man every year for forty years on Halloween and Holy Cross day (September 14) and mentioned that the trows would come to any house where there was "feasting, or great mirrines and speciallie at

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315 Pitcairn vol. 1. 163.

316 Motif G275.8.2; V70.1.1; V70.50.

317 Pitcairn vol. 1. 56. The last time Bessie saw Thomas it was the morning after Candlemas. Motif D1273.1.5.

318 Motif V70.3; V70.50.

Yule."[319] Katherine Caray, tried in 1616, said that when she went to the hills "at the doun going of the sun, ane great number of fairie men mett her."[320]

Rev. Patrick Graham stated the highlanders were at all times unwilling to speak to fairies "but especially on Friday, when their influence is supposed to be particularly extensive."[321]

The relationship of fairy activity with specific temporal and spatial locations has been noted.[322] It is no accident that particular times and places are denoted, or that fairies would appear to have a fondness for special occasions. Frequently the time and place specified is significant in a broader supernatural or customary context, and does not necessarily only pertain to fairies. Also, as the discussion about the landscape of the supernatural elucidated, place and periodicity operate conjointly with the concept of boundaries--"the magic points where worlds impinge."[323] Take, for instance, calendar customs such as Beltane and Halloween. Though repeatedly mentioned in connection with fairies these are important times for many other reasons.

Halloween (October 31) can be traced directly to the ancient Celtic day of Samhain, or Samhuinn. Samhain was one of two major festivals of the Celts. The other major festival was Beltane (May 1). Samhain marked an entry into winter and the beginning of a new year. Beltane celebrated the coming of summer and its attendant renewal of vegetation and fertility. Samhain

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319 Donaldson, Court Book of Shetland 38-9. Motif F263.
320 Trial of Katherine Caray, June 1616. In John Graham Dalyell, The Darker Superstitions of Scotland (Glasgow, 1835) 536.
321 Graham 52.
322 See above 52-61.
323 Kane 103.

solemnized the coming of winter, a time of decay and impotence. Beltane fires were kindled at dawn and hailed the return of the sun from its slumber. At Samhain the fires were lit at dusk in acknowledgement of the sun's retreat into dormancy. The duality of life and death were celebrated on these days.[324] On the evening of Samhain the normal order of the world was suspended, the barriers between the natural and supernatural were temporarily lifted, leaving the spirits of the dead free to wander into the realm of the living.[325]

Even the fairies themselves, according to Kirk, recognized special days, dates when they were compelled to renew their abodes, and times when their world collided with ours; "They remove to other lodgings at the begining of each quarter of the year . . . and at such revolution of time, seers or men of the second sight" have frightening experiences with them. Not surprisingly, Kirk commented that church attendance on Sundays closest to the four Quarter days went up as people came to sain "or hallow themselves, their corns and cattell, from the shots and stealth of these wandring tribes."[326]

The numbers three and seven[327] are repeatedly encountered in the ballads. The most frequent lapse of time in Elfland is seven years. Thomas Rymer is enchanted for seven years and Hind Etin lives with a mortal wife

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324 For more on this subject see F. Marian McNeill, The Silver Bough (Glasgow: MacLellan, 1959) vol. 3. 11-31.

325 Proinsias MacCana, Celtic Mythology (London: Newnes, 1987) 127-8.

326 Kirk 51.

327 As discussed by Axel Olrik, one of the principal laws of folk narrative, defined by Olrik as encompassing "myths, songs, heroic sagas, and local legends," is the 'law of three.' He found that repitition is almost always linked to the number three, and that three is the maximum number of characters and objects which occur in traditional narrative. "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," The Study of Folklore ed. Alan Dundes (N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 129-41. For more on significant or magic numbers see also A Dictionary of Superstitions ed. Iona Opie and Moira Tatem (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), and Lewis Spence, An Encyclopaedia of Occultism (1920; Secaucus, N. J.: Citadel P, 1960). Motif D1273.1.1; D1273.1.3.

for seven years during which time she manages to produce one son a year.[328] Tam Lin is the third rider in the Halloween procession. He also warns Janet that if she fails to rescue him he will be in Elfland seven more years, that is barring the fact that he might be used to pay the teind to hell. In 'Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight' (4A:9) the elfin assassin had murdered seven times, "Seven king's-daughters here hae I slain." In 'Allison Gross' the Queen of Fairy cured the metamorphosed man by stroking him three times over her knee.

Though repetition of particular numbers in the witch trials is not as standardized as in the ballads, it is not altogether absent. In 1598-9 Thomas Lorn from Overton of Dyce, was brought before the provost of Aberdeen on charges that could be surmised as communication with and repeated abductions by fairies. He was accused of "'hearing of spreits, and wavering ofttimes frae his wife, bairns, and family, by the space of seven weeks,' they not knowing 'where he has been during the said space.'"[329] Isobel Haldane's first visit inside a fairy hill lasted three days, from Thursday till Sunday at noon.[330] Janet Trall's cures specify three and nine[331] as operative numbers. James Knarston and Katherine Cragie, performed magical rituals, which were repeated three times, and involved the use of three stones.

Interludes or relationships with fairy folk could be, on occasion, of

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328 Motif F379.3.

329 Trial of Thomas Lorn, 19 Jan. 1598-9. Extracts From the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1570-1625 (Spalding Club, 1848). During his case he was warned that if he disappeared like that again he would suffer death "as ane guilty person, dealer with spreits."

330 Pitcairn vol. 2. 537. Motif D1273.1.5.

331 "The number nine figures so prominently in Celtic tradition that it has been described as the 'northern counterpart of the sacred seven' of Near Eastern cultures." Rees 192.

some benefit to a mortal.[332] Encounters might leave the human with special gifts or qualities. In the ballads Thomas Rymer (37C:17) was given a "tongue that can never lie," hence his reputation for prophecy. Gifts of second sight or an ability to heal[333] make a fairly regular appearance in witch trial testimonials. Isobel Sinclair, whose trial was in 1633, claimed that over seven years, six times at the "reathes of the year [Quarter days], shoe hath bein controlled with the Phairie; and that be thame, shoe hath the second sight: quhairby shoe will know giff thair be any fey [doomed to calamity or death] bodie in the hous."[334] Musical talents were often bestowed upon human visitors to Elfland. The Northern Isles, particularly Shetland, are saturated in traditions about people whose musical accomplishments are attributed to the teachings of the trows. It was believed that the trows liked to lure human fiddle players to their abode, generally for a space of one year and a day.[335] Of course, to the human involved, it seemed like only an evening in their company. Several Shetland fiddle tunes were accredited to the recollections of such captives.[336] Similarly, on the island of Skye, the gifted MacCrimmon family of pipers were said to have received their musical gifts courtesy of the fairies. The first MacCrimmon to inherit this gift, Iain Og, was playing his pipes when he was approached by a fairy woman who allegedly gave him a

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332 That fairies bestow kindness upon those who are kind or respectful of them is a common theme within the genre of folktale. AT 503. Motif F330; F332; F332.0.1; F333; F335; F338.

333 Bruford says gift of healing from fairies is a legend type found with most frequency in Shetland, e.g. the story of "Farquar's Pig." Bruford 129. Version qtd. in Black 30-1. AT 503. Motif F340. Bruford index F105.

334 Trial of Isobel Sinclair, Feb. 1633. Dalyell 470. Definitions from Chambers Scots Dictionary. AT 503; 930. Motif D1825.1.

335 Motif F377; Z72.1.

336 For examples, see Marwick, The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland, 34; Nicolson 76-7; Bruford and MacDonald 331-3. Bruford index F103.

magical silver chanter:

Thug do mhaise 's ceòl do phiòba
Leannan sìthe air do thòir,
Sineam dhuit an sionnsair airgid
A bhios binn gun chearb fo d' mheòir.[337]

Usually, however, there was a price to pay for these gifts and what initially may have seemed a profitable venture turned out to be a dangerous liaison. Before endowing Andrew Man with the knowledge to "knaw all thingis, and suld help and cuir all sort of seikness," the Queen of Elphen caused one of his cattle to die upon a hill called "the Elphillok, bot promeist to do him gude theireftir."[338] Two fairy men taught Elspeth Reoch a ritual so that she could gain the power of second sight. However, one of these fairy men arrived at her bedside in the night and would not let her sleep, relentlessly blackmailing her with threats until she slept with him. After three nights of this abuse she succumbed but when she awoke the next morning she had "no power of hir toung nor could nocht speik."[339]

Bessie Dunlop, the Ayrshire healer accused of witchcraft, though initially it appeared the fairies favoured her over "ane uthir bodye," underwent a reversal of fortune. For Bessie it all started when she received a visit from the Queen of Elfame whilst she lay in child-bed. The Queen asked for a drink and Bessie obliged. The fairy told her the child would die but that her husband, who was ill, would recover. In return for Bessie's kindness the

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337 Alexander Nicolson, History of Skye (1930; Portree: MacLean P, 1994) 130. "Your beauty and the music of your pipe Have attracted a fairy lover to you, Let me hand you the silver chanter That will be sweet and faultless in your fingers." AT 503. Motif F262.2; F343.21.
338 Miscellany of the Spalding Club 119.
339 Maitland Club Miscellany 112-3. Motif D1825.1; F360; F362.

Queen decided to send one of her minions, Thomas Reid, to wait upon her. Before long Bessie was acquiring a reputation for medical knowledge, solicited even by the elite,[340] though she claimed that "sche hirself had na kynd of art nor science" but rather she consulted about each case with her fairy contact, Thomas Reid. When asked if she could "tell of ony thing that was away, or ony thing that was to cum" Bessie said that she herself was not gifted with second sight, but when people asked for her help to find "geir stollin fra thame" she also consulted Thomas who would tell her where the stolen property was. Again, Bessie was able to boast some very distinguished customers including the Chamberlain of Kilwinning who approached her about "sum beir that was stollin forth of the barne of Cragance," and Lady Blair who, on numerous occasions, asked about the theft of clothes and other possessions taken from her.[341]

Though Bessie was in some ways treated well by the fairies, she was threatened by them in various ways for her refusal to join them. After her visit with the "gude wychtis" from Elfame, she said a "hiddeous uglie sowche of wind followit thame" and left her feeling sick. When Thomas arrived back from that visit he attempted to convince her to join them. He argued, "seis thow nocht me, baith meit-worth, claith-worth, and gude aneuch lyke in persoun; and (he?) suld make hir far better nor euer sche was?" All Thomas asked of her, in return for his offer, was that Bessie deny Christianity "and the faith sche tuke at the funt-stane." Bessie, however, was not persuaded by his

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340 Patients included Lady Johnstone, Lady Blackhalls, and Lady Kilbowie. Pitcairn vol. 1. 54.
341 Pitcairn vol. 1. 55. On 'wise women' or 'white witches' refer to Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic. Chapter 8, entitled 'Cunning Men and Popular Magic,' is a decent summary of this traditional role. AT 503; 930.

promise of a better life and was probably appalled at the suggestion of renouncing her baptism. She flatly told him "that sche duelt with hir awin husband and bairnis" and could not leave them. To this Thomas "began to be verrie crabit [angry] with hir" and cautioned "gif swa sche thocht, sche wald get lytill gude of him."[342] This threat was repeated once again when Bessie had dared to refuse meeting with Thomas. He shook his head and said that he "suld caus hir forthink it."

Like Bessie, Alison Peirson was given instructions on various manners of medicinal cures through an intermediary who was once a mortal man. William Simpson taught her "of everie seekness, and quhat herbis scho sould tak to haill thame, and how scho sould use thame." She claimed that she frequently went to St. Andrews to heal people over a sixteen year period and even claimed she was instructed by the fairies on how to cure the Bishop of St. Andrews, Patrick Adamson.[343] Unlike Bessie, Alison visited Fairyland and received more than simple threats to her well-being for refusing to cooperate or join the fairy covenant. For failing to remain silent about the things she witnessed in their world, thus breaking the taboo to secrecy, she received a "sair straik" from one of them that "tuke all the poistie of hir car syde fra hir, the mark quhairof wes blae and ewill faurrit."[344] Conditions were not to improve much for Alison who said that the fairies became

> feirfull sumtymes, and fleit [frighten] hir verry

342 Pitcairn vol. 1. 53, 54-5.

343 Pitcairn vol. 1. 164. Pitcairn is dubious, stating "that such a character as his grace should have stooped to take advice of a poor witch for the cure of his bodily infirmities, appears strange indeed." Whatever the truth of Alison's claim, it captured the imagination of poet Robert Sempill, "The Legend of the Bishop of St. Andrew's," which refers to the alleged nefarious relationship. See below chapter 4 ,150-1

344 Took the power of her left side from her and left a discoloured and ill-looking blue mark. Motif C420; F348.7; F360; F362.

> sair, and scho cryit quhene thay come . . . and quhene scho tauld last of it, thay come to hir and boistit [threatened] hir, saying, scho sould be war [worse] handlit nor ofbefoir [than formerly]; and that they tuke the haill poistie of hir syde, in sic soirt, that scho lay tuentie oulkis [weeks].

Throughout her ordeal they frequently came and sat by her bedside, promising that she should never want, if only she agreed to be "faithfull and keep promeis."[345]

Christiane Lewingston from Leith, tried in 1597, had some psychic ability and could cure a variety of ailments as a result of fairy intervention. However, she herself claimed not to have met with fairies and received her information through a second hand source, her daughter. Christiane affirmed:

> her dochter was tane away with the Farie-folk, and declarit to gothrayis wyff, than being with barne, that it was a man chyld scho was with; as it provit in deid: And that all the knawlege scho had was be hir dochter, wha met with the Fairie.[346]

Isobel Haldane's ability to predict future events was similarly explained as information proffered from a contact in the fairy world. The trial reported two instances of Isobel's accurate predictions of death that she said were told to her by a grey bearded man who met with her and took her to Fairyland. The first incident involved Isobel warning a man, whose wife was heavily pregnant, not to bother making a cradle for his child for his wife would not

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345 Pitcairn vol. 1. 163.

346 Trial of Christiane Lewingston, 12 Nov. 1597. Pitcairn vol. 2. 25-6. AT 503; 930.

give birth for another five weeks and then "the bairne suld never ly in the craidill, bot be borne, bapteist, and never souk, bot die and be tane away." The second incident sent Isobel to warn a seemingly healthy woman that she must prepare herself for death "ffor befoir Fastingis-ewin, quhilk wes within few dayis," she would be "taikin away." Both predictions are said to have been fulfilled.[347]

Janet Trail was tried alongside Isobel Haldane in 1623. In her confession, which is remarkably similar in detail to Isobel's, she claimed she learned her healing skills from the fairies; the "bonny white man" told

> me to speak of God, and do good to poor folks: and he shewed me the means how I might do this, which was by washing, bathing, speaking words, putting sick persons through hesps of yarn, and the like.

However, Janet found herself the victim of trickery and deception as the next time she was visited by the fairies their agenda was significantly different. Janet was terror struck, "they drave me down, and then I was beside myself, and would have eaten the very earth beside me," because "the principal of them" had told her "to do ill, by casting sickness upon people," and Janet had refused. For her impudent refusal of the fairy demands she was pestered by them for many years.[348]

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347 Pitcairn vol. 2. 537. AT 503; 930.

348 Extracts. . . Strathbogie xii. Motif F233.6; F360. Bruford index F105.

The Spell is Broken: The Modes of Disenchantment[349]

Though it was possible for the fairies to bestow good luck or help to mortals, the risks were often too high or the price too much to pay. For most people avoidance, or at least propitiation, was the best policy; various precautions and placatory measures were taken to avoid fairy enchantment.

Evoking the power of God, whether through prayer, using a cross, a Bible, or holy water, could be tried. In the ballad 'Sir Cawline' the mortal knight overcomes the Elf King because he disabled his supernatural powers at the outset of battle by calling on the name of Christ:

> Ffor because thou minged [named] not Christ
> before,
> Thee lesse me dreadeth thee. (61:21)

When Alison Peirson was visited by a large group of fairy folk, she attempted to ward them off by saining and praying for herself,[350] and it has already been mentioned how Robert Kirk gained a particularly healthy flock on quarter days.

Kirk also noted that the "Tramontaines," or Gaelic speakers, "to this day, put bread, the Bible, or a piece of iron, in womens bed when travelling [travailling]" to protect them from being stolen in child-bed. The protective power of iron was, of course, not limited to post-natal mothers. Kirk had spoken to a man with the second sight who had "cut the bodie of one of these people in two with his iron weapon" to avert fairy enchantment.[351] Kirk was told the explanation for why iron was so effective was because:

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349 Motif D700.

350 Pitcairn vol. 1. 163. Motif F382.3.

351 Kirk 54, 59. Motif F382.4.

> all uncouth unknown wights are terrified, by nothing earthly so much as by cold iron, they deliver the reason to be, that Hell lying betwixt the chill tempests, and the fire-brands of scalding metalls, and iron of the North . . . by an antipathy theirto, these odious far-senting creatures shrug and fright at all that comes thence, relating to so abhorred a place, whence their torment is either begun, or feared to come heirafter.[352]

J. F. Campbell was curious to know why iron was invested with magical powers over supernaturals in so many folktales of the Western Isles. His deductions suggest that he thought the fairies to be a dim remembrance of "savage times and savage people." He queries:

> Who were these powers of evil who cannot resist iron? These fairies who shoot *stone* arrows, and are of the foes of the human race? Is all this but a dim, hazy recollection of war between a people who had iron weapons and a race who had not? the race whose remains are found all over Europe?[353]

As suggested above the 'conquered race' thesis is not convincing, owing more, as it does, to learned rather than to popular tradition.[354]

The usage of elf arrows as amulets in Scotland and Ireland was recorded in the 1633 Kirk Session Records of Halyrudhous. These amulets, sometimes set in silver, were worn around the neck as protection from elf-shot.[355] The addition of silver clearly indicates such preservatives were worn

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352 Kirk 55. For more on 'wights' see 84, 150. Motif F384.3.

353 J. F. Campbell, Popular Tales of the West Highlands, vol. 1. 49.

354 See chapter one, 31-3.

355 Halyrudhous Kirk Session Records. 12 March, 1633. Dalyell 358. Dalyell also cites "Ane elf-arrow set with silver," in Camden's Britannia by Gough v.iv. 232.

by the wealthy. On Stroma elf arrowheads were kept because possession meant the fairies would not gain power over oneself or one's cattle.[356]

While some trees, such as apple and hawthorn, were known to be favoured haunts of the fairies, holly and rowan (or mountain ash) were a potent protection against fairies.[357] Similarly, holly and rowan offered protection from witchcraft and the evil eye and were thus particularly useful trees to plant near to the home. Sprigs with red berries were considered doubly potent due to the protective nature of the colour red.[358] J. F. Campbell recalled that in Argyllshire stories, as elsewhere, the fairies were unable to resist rowan tree crosses, nor were they capable of following over a running stream.[359]

For many, it would seem, the assuagement came too late or was forgotten altogether, with predictable results. Once people believed themselves or someone else to be under fairy power it was crucial to know what to do to break the enchantment or attempt a rescue. A story collected by Evans-Wentz from Murdoch MacLean of Barra, tells of a man named Lachlann who had fallen in love with a fairy woman. However, Lachlann grew afraid of the fairy and in an attempt to be rid of her emigrated to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. His first letter home stated that the same fairy woman was haunting him still.[360] This story imparts the importance of knowing the

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356 Low 17, qtd. in Black 37.

357 Motif D950.6; D1385.2.5.

358 See Roy Vickery, A Dictionary of Plant Lore (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 319-22; Thomas Davidson, Rowan Tree and Red Thread (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1949) 76-8; McNeill vol.1. 84. Once a prevalent saying in Scotland was "Rowan-tree and red thread, Put the witches to their speed." Chambers, Popular Rhymes 328.

359 J. F. Campbell, Popular Tales of the West Highlands vol. 1. 434. Motif F382.1; F383.2.

360 Evans-Wentz 112-3.

methods of disenchantment as distance is clearly no object to the fairies.

Trying to wound or kill a fairy through normal measures was not recommended either. Kirk said that fairies were invulnerable to human weapons and if struck by normal weaponry their bodies "as air, which when divided, unitts again." Even if, by some remote chance, any damage was incurred "they are better phisitians then wee, and quickly cure it."[361] Given this remarkable ability to withstand ordinary injury it was important to be aware of the not so ordinary ways to have an effect on fairies. The modes of disenchantment from fairy power are curiously similar to the modes of enchantment. In other words, what in one case may act as a spell may in another case act as a counter-spell. In 'King Orfeo' the music that the fairies love so much is used as a way to win back Lady Isabel. As is seen in 'Allison Gross' and 'Tam Lin' physical contact produces both enchantment and disenchantment. The fact that Janet, in 'Tam Lin,' wears a green dress, garb traditionally worn by fairies themselves, is probably no accident and has "countermagical significance."[362] The lady of 'Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight' (4A) lulls the elf-knight to sleep with a "sma charm" before stabbing and killing him with his own dagger. She thus has employed two countermagical methods, the charm and the dagger, to overcome the supernatural knight. Significant dates, such as the first of May in 'Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight', can be dangerous times for mortals to fall under the power of the fairies. Conversely, such times are often when one can escape from their Otherworld jail, as in 'Allison Gross' and 'Tam Lin', who managed to escape on

361 Kirk 57.
362 Wimberly 391.

Halloween.

If 'Thomas Rymer' can be said to be the best description of the journey to Elfland, then 'Tam Lin' is surely the most incredible description of a rescue from Elfland, which has no equivalent in the witch trials. Janet, the real protagonist in this story, decides to win the father of her child back from Fairyland.[363] In order to do this, she must observe a series of rites, leading to an incredible sequence of shape shifting, and eventual metamorphosis of Tam Lin into a mortal man once more. Firstly, Janet must know when and where the rescue can take place:

> The night it is good Halloween,
> When fairy folk will ride,
> And they that wad their true-love win,
> At Miles Cross they maun bide. (39I:34)

In some versions Janet is required to make special preparations:

> You may go into the Miles Moss,
> Between twelve hours and one;
> Take holy water in your hand,
> And cast a compass round. (39D:17)

Tam Lin tells Janet that when the procession arrives she will be able to identify him as he will be the third rider to pass and will be mounted on a milk-white steed. She must pull him down from his horse and hold on to him. A seemingly innocent request except for the fact that Tam Lin undergoes a hideous succession of frightening shape changes before the enchantment is broken:

> They shaped him in fair Janet's arms
> An esk but and an adder;

363 See J. R. Freeman, "With Child: Illegitimate Pregnancy in Scottish Traditional Ballads," Folklore Forum 24: 1 (1991): 3-18.

She held him fast in every shape,
To be her bairn's father. (39I:50)

Finally, Janet immerses him in water or milk then wraps him in her mantle.[364] The ritual that Janet performs on Tam Lin resembles a rite of purification, in this case the purifier being water or milk. Fire was another method. There was a belief that a fairy changeling should be passed through a fire to restore the human child.[365]

It has been mentioned that amulets were employed to protect against supernatural attacks. Pebbles and stones, specially chosen, could hold apotropaic qualities or be utilized as part of a larger ritual to ward off evil influences. The confession of Ewfame Makcalzane, tried in 1591, makes reference to a bored stone, used for relieving the pains of childbirth. Among her alleged crimes, Ewfame was charged with seeking help from "the said Anny Sampsoune, ane notorious Wich, for relief of your payne in the tyme of the birth of youre twa sonnes; and ressaving fra hir to that effect, ane boird-stane, to be layit under the bowster, putt under your heid."[366] Bored stones, naturally created by erosion, have been largely associated with second sight,[367] and have also been connected with fairies and witchcraft. Sometimes referred to as a 'fairystone,' a 'charmstone,' and in England, a 'witchstone,' evidence for their use in Scotland, according to J. Geoffrey Dent, is found mainly in the

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364 See J. D. Niles, "Tam Lin: Form and Meaning in a Traditional Ballad," Modern Language Quarterly 38 (1977): 336-47. ML 5086. Motif D562; D610; D757; D766; D1273.1.5; F380; F382.2; R112.3. AT 425 (variant).

365 John Simpkins, Strange Tales of Bygone Fife, 1912 (Midlothian: Lang Syne P, 1976) Motif F321.1.4.3.

366 Trial of Ewfame (Euphemia) Makcalzane, 9 June 1591. Pitcairn vol. 1. 252.

367 The legend of Coinneach Odhar, the Brahan Seer, says that he was given the gift of prophecy, by means of a bored stone, whilst sleeping on a fairy hill.

southern lowlands and, to a lesser extent, along the eastern coast.[368] However, F. Marian McNeill cites various examples of special magical stones associated with highland families, and provides illustrations of some of these amulets.[369] Looking through the hole sometimes produces visions or an ability to see fairies. Hung on a wall it served as an amulet against fairy attack. Is it possible that Anny Sampson was prescribing a form of counteractive magic to protect Ewfame and her newborn baby from the fairies?

In some cases a ritual or special medicine was required to disenchant the unfortunate mortal. A preliminary ritual, to determine precisely what nature of supernatural entity was being dealt with, was described in two Orkney trials: that of James Knarston (1633) and Katherine Cragie (1640). James Knarston collected a stone "for the Ebb, another for the Hill, and the thrid for the kirk-yaird," heated them in the fire then put them in water, then placed them above the door lintel for a night or more. After that the stones were put in a tub of cold water; he then recited words "knowen unto himselff," and the identity of the spirit was revealed to him.[370] Katherine Cragie carried out an almost identical rite. Her ritual involved placing three stones in the fire before sunrise, taking them out after sunset, and then putting them under the threshold of the door till the following morning but removing them before sunrise. The stones were then put in a vessel of water. At this point Katherine would know if it was a "hill-spirit, a kirk-spirit, or a

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368 J. Geoffrey Dent, "The Holed Stone Amulet and its Uses," Folk Life 3 (1965): 68-78; see also J. S. Udal, Dorsetshire Folk-Lore (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1922) 287: "sea rolled flints with a natural bore, [were] tied as charms inside the bows of Weymouth boats." Motif D931; D1381.

369 McNeill vol.1. 90-6.

370 Trial of James Knarston, 1633. Dalyell 508-9.

water-spirit." The person afflicted with the spirit was then washed with the water. The entire ritual was repeated three times. Katherine spoke of another ritual cure for those who had been gripped by trows. She wrapped the sufferer three times in a "Trowis glove" and after three days the person would be cured.[371]

Two tantalising extracts, from the Stirling Antiquary of 1628, record the ritualistic usage of and medicinal properties of elf arrow heads. As with the rituals carried out by James Knarston and Katherine Cragie, the first excerpt similarly hints at the significance of water as a component of the healing ritual; "He put one elff-arrow stone in the water, becaus it wes ane remedie against the fairies schott." The importance of bodily contact with the fairy weapon is seen in the second excerpt; "He rubbed his breist and his bak with ane elff arrow stone."[372]

Other implements, such as threads, cloth, or specific plants and herbs, were also used as part of the process to rid the afflicted of their unholy pests. Janet Trall explained how she cured Robert Soutar by putting him through a "hesp of yarn, and afterwards cut it in nine parts, and buried it in three lords lands." While the ritual took place she said that the house shook. Janet also received a visit from Isobel Haldane and Duncan Tawis, a man who believed his child had been taken away, "it being stiff as an aik tree, and unable to move." Janet agreed to see the child:

> And when she came she took the bairn upon her knee before the fire, drew every finger of its hands, and every toe of its feet, mumbling all the while some words that could not be heard,

371 Trial of Katherine Cragie, 1640. Abbotsford Club Miscellany vol. 1. 135-42. Motif D766.
372 W. B. Cook, ed., Stirling Antiquary, 4 vols. (Stirling, 1893-1908). Vol. 4. 187, 190.

> and immediately the bairn was cured.[373]

An attempt, unfortunately unsuccessful, to cure a changeling, or 'sharg,' with a potion is described in the trial of Isobel Haldane:

> David Moreise wyff com to hir [Isobel], and thryse for Goddis saik askit help to hir bairne that wes ane scharge: And scho send furth hir sone to gether sochsterrie leaweis, quhairof scho directit the bairnes mother to mak a drink.--Bot the bairneis mother deponit, that the said Issobell Haldane, on-requirit, cam to her house and saw the bairne; said, 'it wes ane scharge taikin away;' tuke on hand to cure it; and to that effect, gaiff the barne a drink; efter the ressait quhairof the bairne died.[374]

Martin Martin, whilst visiting Benbecula, was told of the "fire-round" ritual. This involved carrying fire around a woman and her baby shortly after childbirth to protect them from evil before their churching. The result of neglecting such precautions could be devastating as:

> evil spirits, who are ready at such times to do mischief, and sometimes carry away the infant; and when they get them once in their possession, return them poor meagre skeletons: and these infants are said to have voracious appetites, constantly craving for meat.

In the event that a child was taken away the parents had to "dig a grave in the fields upon Quarter-Day, and there lay the fairy skeleton till next

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373 Extracts. . . Strathbogie xii. Motif F321.1.3; F380.

374 Pitcairn vol. 2. 538. Pitcairn suggests "sochsterrie leaweis" are the leaves of a herb, perhaps star-grass, bog-star-grass. The SND gives Sharg as "a tiny mischievous creature; a puny, stunted or weakly creature, an ill-thriving child." Motif D1385.2; D1500.1.4; D1500.1.4.2; D1500.1.11; F363.

morning."[375] The parents would return hoping to find their own child in place of the skeleton.

Leaving suspected changelings out overnight as a means to cure them was a widespread belief, though it is impossible to gauge how frequently it was put into practice. At a well in Ross children and adults, of whom the fairies had "abstracted their substance," were left overnight.[376] Hugh Miller had heard of a stone trough called "the fairies' cradle" that was used, about eighty years before his account, for curing changelings. Parents would lay the suspected changeling inside the trough and wait for their own child to be restored to them. It had been situated very near to a chapel in Cromarty dedicated to St. Bennet but was apparently destroyed shortly before the 1745 Jacobite uprising by the minister and two of his elders. Interestingly the chapel, or at least the site of the chapel, was significant in other ways as Miller said that it was not yet "twenty years since a thorn-bush, over the spring of St. Bennet, used to be covered every season with rags, as offerings to the saint, by sick people who came to drink the water."[377]

Janet Trall diagnosed to a child's mother that the "bairn had gotten a dint of evil wind."[378] Could this be the fairy blast? Jonet Morrison of Bute, tried in 1662, claimed she healed three people who had been blasted by the fairies:

> And being questioned anent her heiling of Mcfersone in Keretoule his dochter who lay sick

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375 Martin 117-8. Motif F321.1.4; F321.2.

376 Grant, Parish of Suddie, 1732, qtd. in Dalyell 539.

377 Hugh Miller, Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland, 1835 (Edinburgh: B and W, 1994) 101. Robert Kirk mentions the order of St. Bennet with regard to a spell to "expel the unbeast." See Kirk 110-1. Motif D1500.1.1.2.

378 Extracts. . . Strathbogie xi.

> of a very unnaturall disease without power of hand or foot both speichles and kenured. She answered The disease quhilk ailed her was blasting with the faryes and that she healed her with herbes. Item being questioned about her heileing of Alester Bannatyne who was sick of the lyk disease answred that he was blasted with the fairyes also and that she heiled him thereof with herbs and being questioned anent her heileing of Patrick Glas dochter Barbra Glas answred that she was blasted with the faryes also.

Jonet Morrison made a clear distinction between elf-shot and the blast:

> quhen they are shott ther is no recoverie for it and if the shott be in the heart they died presently bot if it be not at the heart they will die in a while with it yet will at last die with it and that blasting is a whirlwinde that the fayries raises about that persone quhich they intend to wrong and that tho ther were tuentie present yet it will harme none bot him quhom they were set for.

A victim of the blast, Jonet confided, could be healed using herbs or by charming and "that all that whirlwind gathers in the body till one place if it be taken in time it is the easier healed and if they gett not means they will shirpe [shrivel] away."[379] Robert Kirk was told that to cure elf-shot a man simply had to find the point of entry with his finger "as if the spirits flowing from a mans warme hand were antidote sufficient against their poyson'd darts."[380]

In the first three chapters I have tried to establish the nature of fairy

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379 Trial of Jonet Morison, 18 January 1662. Highland Papers 23-4, 27. Motif D1500.1.4.2.
380 Kirk 60. Motif D2066.

belief in early modern Scotland. In the next chapter I will ask to what extent such beliefs came under attack by the authorities, and whether this assault on fairy belief succeeded.

Chapter Four

The Assault on Fairy Belief

> . . . the witches demaunded of the Divel why he did beare such hatred to the King, who answered, by reason the King is the greatest enemy he hath in the worlde.[381]

That the people of early modern Scotland believed in the existence of fairies should by now be evident. At every level of Scottish society to not believe in fairies, in one form or another, was the anomaly and sceptics were in the minority. However, in the period between 1500 and 1800, beliefs as to what fairies actually were and how detrimental, even dangerous to society, they could be came under the scrutiny of the political and religious elite and an ever increasing gulf began to grow between learned and folk opinion. In essence, the fairies came to be presented as agents of the Devil and all those who had traffic with them co-conspirators in the Devil's grand plan to wreak havoc on good and godly citizens. As the fear of witches increased, spreading like an epidemic across most of Europe, the fairies gradually became so enmeshed with witchcraft that it is often difficult to distinguish them from Satan's unholy regiments. Of course, fairy belief was by no means paramount on the list of evils thought to be infesting the country and leading to the downfall of society. Many areas of popular belief, pastimes, activities and

381 Newes From Scotland, 1591 (London: Bodley Head, 1924) 15.

lifestyle fell under the hammer of the judges and the proselytizing of religious reformers. Simplistically put, there was a movement, instigated mainly by the elite and aided by the pious, to suppress the practice of the 'little tradition' of the majority and give predominance to the 'great tradition' of the elite minority. King James VI of Scotland (1566-1625) was very much a part of these events and the role he played, with particular emphasis on the publication of his tract Daemonologie (1597), will be discussed below.

Of course, dichotomies such as the 'elite and the folk, the people or the masses,' 'literate and illiterate,' 'official and unofficial,' and other such 'them and us' situations are easier to understand in theory, but in practice it is a much more complex issue. Robert Redfield, the social anthropologist who put forth this model of the 'little tradition' and the 'great tradition' in the 1950s, recognized that popular or folk culture is not a closed system. His contention that the "great tradition and little tradition have long affected each other and continue to do so"[382] acknowledges the two-way flow between the two traditions. Historian Peter Burke furthered this point by adding, "the elite participated in the little tradition, but the common people did not participate in the great tradition."[383] However, it is not the intention of this chapter to deal in adversarial polarities but rather to recognise a holistic and synthetic model, composed of many interlocking and overlapping spheres of belief and activity, one influencing the other. Anthropological concepts of 'official culture,' maintained through formal documents and laws, and 'real culture,' or culture as it is actually practised, fails to encapsulate that exchange and

382 Robert Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture (Chicago: n.p., 1956) 41-2.
383 Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (N.Y.: Harper, 1978) 23-8, 58.

rapport between the two; "official culture stands in relation to real culture as the elite value system stands in relation to that of the folk."[384]

The Suppression of Folk Culture in Reformation Scotland

Some have blamed the repressiveness of the age on the Reformation, which for Scotland, a latecomer to conversion, came in August 1560 when the country broke its ties with the Holy Roman Church and adopted a reformed Protestant Church of Scotland. Protestant sympathies had been brewing within Scotland for many decades prior to 1560. For example, Patrick Hamilton was burned at the stake in 1528 for preaching Lutheran doctrine. What supporters of reform seemed to be waiting for was a revolutionary. Such a leader was found in the fiery persona of a Calvinist by the name of John Knox (c.1512-72). A sermon preached by Knox on May 11, 1559 at St. John's Church, Perth is regarded as the start of the fight for legal recognition of a reformed church. Knox's Book of Discipline (1560) provided the first chart for the reformed kirk. The years that followed were steeped in religious turmoil and conflict; and not only between Protestants and Catholics. In 1574, Andrew Melville (1545-1622) left Geneva and returned to Scottish soil with a new Presbyterian doctrine. Melville prepared the second Book of Discipline (1578). Thus began the feud between advocates of Presbyterianism and the Episcopalians. Religious upheaval and bitter dispute were continuous throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was not until the

384 Carl Lindahl, Earnest Games: Folkloric Patterns in the Canterbury Tales (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989) 74.

Revolution Settlement of 1689-90 that some level of compromise was met and the "classic presbyterian" church of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emerged.[385]

While it is safe to say the Scottish Reformation of 1560 took its toll on the popular culture of the people, contrary to modern perception it did not eradicate it completely. Feast days and festivals, music, plays and dancing were all potential targets for zealous reformers. So were the belief systems of the people. Bishop Carswell's preface to a Gaelic Prayer Book for the reformed Church of Scotland (1567) criticized the Gaels for finding more pleasure in tales of the fairies than in the holy word of God:

> Great is the blindness and darkness of sin and ignorance and understanding among composers and writers and supporters of the Gaelic, in that they prefer and practice the framing of vain, hurtful, lying earthly stories, about the Tuath de Danand, . . . with a view to obtaining for themselves passing worldly gain, rather than to write and compose and to support the faithful words and the perfect way of truth.[386]

Why does this period witness such an increased attack on folk beliefs and practises? For an answer to this question it is necessary to ask another question; what had happened or changed within elite and learned circles? In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries the elite, including the clergy, underwent a redefinition of their own traditions and beliefs. They withdrew from any involvement they did have with folk culture and, for the first time, began to draw clear distinctions between the sacred and the secular worlds.

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385 Smout 62.

386 Stern, Die Ossianischen Heldenlieder, trans. J. L. Robertson, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol. 22, 1897-8, 293.

The Reformation unquestionably played a huge part in this process, attempting as it did to make a clean break between the sacred and the profane, eliminating any middle ground that existed. The more radical Protestants attacked not only folk magic but ecclesiastical magic as well.[387] However, shattering an entire worldview is no easy task so we should not be surprised to discover its success was limited. Robert Scribner's work on Germany has led him to suggest that the lessening of the sacramentals or 'superstitious' beliefs may not have been due to the Reformation at all but rather the people found other ways to create order in their daily lives. He argues there was no sudden shift from one set of beliefs to another, nor was there a loss of belief in the sacred and 'superstitious,' only a restructuring and restrainment of their field of activity.[388] Keith Thomas reached similar conclusions regarding England, questioning whether the official campaign against magic by the church had much of an effect on its popular appeal. He points out that such a campaign could only be successful if people were offered a more attractive alternative.[389]

The medieval church was "soteriological" in that it offered a chance for human salvation. It was "functional" in marking out key events in the human life cycle and the seasons, thus providing "cosmic order for human existence."[390] It had also attempted to counter folk magic by providing a rival system of ecclesiastical magic. Protestantism taught that all sacred action was a

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387 Thomas 304.

388 Robert Scribner, Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany (London: Hambledon, 1987) 15.

389 Thomas 331.

390 Robert Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the 'Disenchantment of the World," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 23 (Winter, 1993) 477.

one-way system, from God to human. The idea of salvation, notably in Scotland, was replaced with predestination. This was a system based upon self-help and prayer to an omnipotent God. Keith Thomas's view that Protestants, rather than offer a rival panacea, disparaged magic of any kind is, in the main, correct.[391] However, the consequence of this was not a "desacralization of the world." Martin Luther firmly believed the hand of the Devil was present in the world, and that his era was witnessing the last confrontation between Christ and the Antichrist. In this he was apocalyptic and eschatological, rather than desacralizing. The second wave of Protestantism, associated with Calvin, whose influence upon Scotland was profound, intensified the belief in a cosmic struggle between God and the Devil to an even higher degree.[392] Protestantism did not argue that the sacred could not enter the secular world, only that it did not do so at human command. The Reformation can be said to have drawn a more resolute line between magic and religion through a "changed understanding of the sacraments, and its repudiation of Catholic sacramentals."[393]

The reformers also repudiated a number of popular customs and pastimes. They did so for a variety of reasons. They feared that folk belief acted as a repository for 'popish superstition.' Frivolity was to be discouraged in favour of biblical contemplation. Reformation of religion was to proceed hand in hand with reformation of society and manners. Such disapproval, however, did not begin at the Reformation, though this was the time when

391 Thomas 331.

392 Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the 'Disenchantment of the World'" 482-3.

393 Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the 'Disenchantment of the World'" 484.

intolerance was at a high point.

According to The Complaynt of Scotland (1549) pre-Reformation Scotland was a rich tapestry of "sueit melodius sangis of natural music of antiquite."[394] Thirty-eight songs and ballads, including 'Thomas Rymer,' are recorded in this account. The degradation of the position and value of the music-makers, particularly in the lowlands, began as early as 1449 when Parliament legislated against bards and other wanderers. A few years later an inquisition was ordered into the activities of "bards and masterful beggars."[395] The bard had become a beggar and a vagabond in the eyes of the law.[396] In 1549 the Provincial Council of the Church denounced "all the books of rhymes and popular songs" which, when found would be "confiscated and burned." In 1551 Parliament censored many ballads, songs, blasphemies, and rhymes.[397]

The legislation continued to pour like rain. In 1548 Dumfries town authorities forbade minstrels, unless Council elected them. In 1574 Glasgow attempted to banish "all pyparis, fidleris, menstrales, or any other vagabondis."[398] In the same year an Act of Parliament was enacted against all those who were idle, "menstrallis, sangstaris, and taill tellaris."[399] Obviously such Acts were not directed toward those employed by the court or municipalities, but to the unattached bards and minstrels of the folk, since

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394 J. H. Murray, ed., The Complaynt of Scotland, 1549 (Early English Text Society, 1872) 64.
395 Acts of Parliament of Scotland, ed., T. Thompson and C. Innes, 12 vols. (London, 1814-75) vol. II. 36. Cited hereafter APS.
396 Edward J. Cowan, "Calvinism and the Survival of Folk or 'Deil stick da minister,'" The People's Past (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1980) 32.
397 W. Dickinson, ed., John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland (London: n.p., 1949) xxi; Cowan, "Calvinism and the Survival of Folk or 'Deil stick da minister'" 33.
398 Anna Mill, Medieval Plays in Scotland (London: n. p., 1969) 41.
399 APS vol. 3.

burgh records show that many towns employed entertainers throughout pre and post-Reformation times.[400]

Complete annihilation was seldom the aim of the reformers. They made strenous efforts to change the meaning or the context of many folk customs and beliefs, refurbishing them with a veneer of morality and edification. They did not object to plays as such, or music as music, but rather sought to exchange the meaning or content for their own.[401] The propaganda value of such media could not be dismissed.

The adaptation of profane songs into sacred songs was a widespread convention. Rather than seek to obliterate the songs and ballads, they were used as a convenient vehicle for propaganda. John Wedderburne's The Good and Godlie Ballads (1542) "turned manie bawdie songs and rymes in godlie rymes,"[402] at least thirty of which derived from traditional ballads and songs. The popular folk message was supplanted by a religious message. Nevertheless, many words from the original ballads survived, proving that such methods actually "reinforced, rather than threatened, that tradition,"[403] the point being, that people never actually forgot the original words.

It is characteristic of new regimes, in order to legitimize themselves, to demand tighter social controls.[404] The Calvinistic regime that swept across

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400 Cowan, "Calvinism and the Survival of Folk or 'Deil stick da minister'" 35.

401 See also Don Yoder, "Official Religion versus Folk Religion," Pennsylvania Folklife 15 (1965-66): 36-52. In the context of 19th century American Protestant evangelism, he discusses the process of attempted replacement of folk culture by a proselytizing religion; and Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, "The Fairy Belief and Official Religion in Ireland," The Good People ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland P, 1991) 199-214.

402 David Calderwood, History of the Kirk of Scotland, ed., T. Thompson (Edinburgh, 1842-9) vol. 1. 142.

403 Cowan, "Calvinism and the Survival of Folk or 'Deil stick da minister'" 39.

404 Larner, Enemies of God 195.

Scotland, seen in this light, was not a catalyst in the suppression of folk culture, since such disdain had already appeared, but rather it was a period of heightened social control. This in turn led the Church and State to demand a higher level of conformity in folk belief and culture.

Redefining the Supernatural

Whether we are discussing the second century or the twentieth century, it is at times impossible to make a distinction between non-Christian or Christian 'supernatural' visitants. Consider the ballad 'Thomas Rymer,' in which Thomas is given the gift of prophecy after meeting the fairy queen, though he initially mistook her for the "Queen of Heaven." Then consider the English saint, Thomas à Becket (1118-70), who claimed he was visited by the Virgin Mary who bestowed upon him prophetic abilities. It was precisely this kind of ambiguity that distracted the minds of religious reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no longer able, or willing, to reconcile the fine dividing line between magic and religion: a line that was almost imperceptible to the medieval church.

High on the agenda of Reformation proselytisers was the desire to root out and destroy all vestiges of perceived 'Pagan' superstitions and supernatural creations. This process is frequently referred to, thanks to Max Weber's inspired coinage, as the 'disenchantment of the world.' One of the most insidious repercussions of this purpose was the discovery that it was not practical, or even possible, to eradicate 'superstitions' by simply telling the

people what they believed in was wrong. Rather, a more cunning solution was enacted based on the principle of replacing the said 'Pagan superstition' with a new Christian signification, a redefinition of the world and its many unexplained wonders on purely Christian terms. An example of this might be that whereas it had once been acceptable to explain the birth of a deformed child as the intervention of fairies, the Protestant church would explain it as God's punishment for human sin.

The objectives of the reformers may not initially strike one as being detrimental to society as a whole. After all, the intention was presumably the opposite--to save souls and enlighten the mind. However, by reinventing a world where there could only be the forces of good, upheld by God, and the forces of evil, controlled by the Devil, they destroyed the grey area once inhabited by fairies, ghosts, and witches, and relegated them all under the dominion of Satan. The power of the Devil must have seemed to be growing ever stronger. The effect, of what Robert Scribner called a "moralized universe,"[405] was the placing of more and more responsibility on the shoulders of the individual. War, famine, plague, or death would result if God's laws failed to be observed. The Protestant doctrine of providence could not have held much comfort under such conditions, nor could it have allayed the growing sense of fear and anxiety. Scribner remarks:

> The traffic between the supernatural and the natural worlds had perhaps become one-way, but the boundaries between sacred and secular remained highly porous and the seepage of the one into the other was highly unpredictable, incalculable, and even dangerous. It was for this reason that Protestants were tempted to turn to

405 Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the 'Disenchantment of the World'" 485.

> Catholic means of protection and also forms of popular magic.[406]

Of course religious revolution cannot be held accountable for all of the changes taking place. Another revolution, that of science and philosophy, must also be considered. The new science of the seventeenth century, from Galileo to Newton, revolted against the medieval worldview and called for the "despiritualization of nature."[407] The invention of the printed word in the 1450s facilitated the dissemination of the new and diverse systems of thought that characterize this period. These developments forced supernatural beliefs to do one of two things: go underground or change with the times.

The problems that arose from redefining supernatural agencies is discussed by Gillian Bennett, in her work on ghost traditions in England. She found that ghosts (as, indeed, all other supernatural effects and entities) were used as a key issue in theological debates in the years following the Reformation. Ghosts were used initially to prove the existence of purgatory, (later, of God), and subsequently as proof of witchcraft and the supernatural. The Protestants argued that there could be no such things as ghosts as the soul ascended straight to heaven or hell. Due to the belief in purgatory, the Catholics maintained that ghosts existed. Therefore, the Protestants were forced to eradicate any possibility that ghosts did or could exist. The difficulties of this task become apparent when one considers that not only were ghosts deeply rooted in the oral tradition of the folk, but the Bible had its

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406 Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the 'Disenchantment of the World'" 486-7.

407 Harry Girvetz, George Geiger, Harold Hantz and Bertram Morris, Science, Folklore, and Philosophy (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1966) 163.

fair share of them too. A redefinition of what ghosts were was a more practical approach.[408] Translated into English in 1572, Ludowig Lavater's Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyghte encapsulates the mood as he sought to prove that ghosts were not the souls of dead people but an angel sent by God or demon sent by the Devil:

> I pray you what are they? If it be not a vayne persuasion proceeding through weakness of the senses through feare, or such like cause, or if it be not a deceyte of man, or some naturall thing . . . it is either a good or evill angell, or some other forewarning sent by God.[409]

The issue of what supernatural entities such as ghosts, spirits, or fairies, actually were was widely debated by church officials, demonologists, educated men, and even monarchs. James VI took a very hard line approach, insisting that "since the comming of Christ in the flesh . . . all miracles, visions, prophecies, and appearances of angels or good spirites are ceased. Which served only for the first sowing of faith, and planting of the Church."[410] Any such supernatural visitation could only be, in his view, from the Devil. At least for James, the age of Christian miracles was over.

Fairies and ghosts were not the only creatures subjected to the redefinitional process. For instance, Carlo Ginzburg found that in medieval texts werewolves were portrayed as innocent victims of fate, if not indeed as beneficent figures. It is not until the mid-fifteenth century that the ambiguous nature of the werewolf is obliterated and replaced with an evil and ferocious

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408 Bennett, Traditions of Belief 157-62.
409 Ludowig Lavater, Of Ghosts and Spirites Walking by Nyghte 1572 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1929) qtd. in Bennett, Traditions of Belief 92.
410 James VI 66.

stereotype–that of devourer of sheep and children. Ginzburg points out that at approximately the same time the hostile image of the witch crystallized.[411]

The extent to which belief traditions, from witches, ghosts, werewolves, or fairies, were redefined or reinvented is immense but also immeasurable, at least with any degree of accuracy. What can be said with confidence is that, if nothing else, popular or folk culture in pre-industrial, Reformation Scotland was far from static.

The Scottish Witch Hunt

Attempts to explain the roots of and the reasons behind the European witch hunt, which consisted of an estimated 100,000 trials between 1450 and 1750,[412] is a topic that has attracted the attentions of a varied spectrum of interests and produced a vast quantity of books and publications. Although it is not the intention of this thesis to delve into the hows and whys of the witch hunt (refer to the bibliography for suggested readings on this topic), some discussion on this sordid event cannot be avoided. It is an unhappy fact, and a cruel twist of fate, that so much of our best evidence on the nature of fairy belief in this period has come down to us through judicial records of testimonies taken from savagely tortured women and men accused of witchcraft. Also, that belief in fairies became hopelessly entangled with the crime of witchcraft is reason enough to warrant consideration. Within the trial evidence it is possible to recognise, as Carlo Ginzburg has said, "a more

411 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 154; Ginzburg, The Night Battles 28-32.
412 Robin Briggs, Witches and Neighbours (London: Harper Collins, 1996) 8.

complex stratification," in which the words of the accused are covered by a "thin diabolical crust."[413]

As already stated, much has been written on the witch hunts. Unfortunately, precious little has been done on the Scottish trials, though what exists is, on the whole, very good. Scotland is a particularly interesting place to study the witch hunts, representing as it does a 'middle ground' between the extremes of continental persecutions and the relatively tame hunts of England. The fullest study, and to date the definitive work on Scotland's witch hunt, is that of Christina Larner, Enemies of God (1981), though her lack of interest in the fairy material is lamentable. When she does come across it in the records she is content simply to offer it up as "incidents which can only relate to dreams, nightmares, and collective fantasies,"[414] inadequate assessments to say the least.

Witch hunting was not a spontaneous movement that arose from the peasantry, forcing the ruling classes to intervene and respond to the problem.[415] Rather, the inception of the hunts came from a growing consciousness of evil and the destructive threat of deviance within the minds of the elite. There were high levels of anxiety about non-conformity within Scotland and the Continent, and a purposeful suppression was begun of any unofficial source of power that might be acknowledged by the people. Panic-mongering about the threat witchcraft posed, such as James VI's treatise, was rampant: "I pray God to purge this cuntrie of these divellishe practises: for

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413 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 97.
414 Larner, Enemies of God 152.
415 Larner, Enemies of God 1.

they were never so rife in these partes, as they are now."[416] This is not to say that the peasantry had no influence on the development of the witch hunts. On the contrary, witch hunting drew on the fears and hostilities within the peasant community. Accusations frequently reflect the conflicts felt within rural life. The opinion of Robin Briggs, who recently argued in his book Witches and Neighbours, is that all explanations for the witch hunt must start with the lives and beliefs of ordinary people who were simultaneously victims and the principal instigators of witch accusations.[417]

There was not one continuous witch-hunt in Scotland. As on the continent, persecutions underwent considerable fluctuations. Larner isolated five peaks of intensive witch-hunting: 1590-1; 1597; 1629-30; 1649; and 1661-2.[418] Before the passing of the Scottish Witchcraft Act in June 1563, the crime of witchcraft is scarce in the Scottish records. Within two weeks of the passing of Queen Mary's new law, two witches were burned, though executions *en masse* did not ensue from the Witchcraft Act.[419] What did significantly change as a result of the 1563 law was that consulters of witches were deemed equally guilty as practitioners of witchcraft.[420] The gap between black and white magic was hastily filled, and healer and harmer caught up in the same judicial snare. Of equal significance was that the crime remained defined as malefice, with little intonation or suggestion of the Devil or the demonic pact.

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416 James VI 81.
417 Briggs, Witches and Neighbours 7.
418 Larner, Enemies of God 60.
419 George F. Black, A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland 1510-1727 (1938; New York: Arno P, 1971) 9-12.
420 Larner, Enemies of God 9.

The first mass trial to strike Scotland, of the infamous North Berwick coven, is identifiably the handiwork of James VI; the man Christina Larner contends is responsible for importing educated continental witch beliefs to his homeland in 1590. The document that would ensure prosecutions would continue appeared in October 1591 when a special commission was appointed by the Privy Council to specifically investigate witches. This commission gave six people the power to examine all witchcraft cases, to report them directly to the King and Council, and send the accused to trial. Most importantly, the commission encouraged torture to be used.[421] In the same year as the publication of King James's treatise Daemonologie, another major witch-hunt took place. It came to the attention of the King and the Privy Council that 'innocent' people were being caught up in the panic. This forced them to revoke all standing commissions and inaugurate a new policy of granting individual commissions upon application to the Privy Council.[422]

After James left for England in 1603 he made no attempt to interfere in Scottish witch prosecutions. For the remainder of James's reign, the Privy Council continued to grant commissions on its own initiative.[423] Throughout the seventeenth century the Privy Council maintained an interest, not only in witchcraft, but in crime generally. For example, in 1628, they ordered all "witches, sorcerers, necromancers and seekers of answers" and such as consulted with them be prosecuted. Such a declaration was unquestionably a measure taken to tighten control over law and order.[424]

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421 Larner, Enemies of God 70.
422 Brian P. Levack, The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe (London: Longman, 1987) 167.
423 Larner, Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief, ed., Alan MacFarlane (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) 18.
424 Larner, Enemies of God 72

The worst episode of witch persecutions followed shortly on the heels of the Restoration (1660). Between April 1661 and the autumn of 1662, over 600 cases and approximately 300 executions took place in Scotland.[425] One of the most insidious revelations to come out of this period of hysteria was that several 'witch-prickers' were found to be frauds. Faith in the system had been shaken--unfortunately not enough to put an end to witch-hunting altogether--but the number of cases did radically decline. Robert Chambers noted that after 1678 witch trials brought before the high court were rare, possibly due to the publication of John Webster's treatise The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft (1677).[426] Larner also observed that although executions for witchcraft still occurred, cases coming into the High Court of Justiciary from 1678 to 1680 were more likely to end in an acquittal than a burning. She suggests that the increased number of acquittals must have had the effect of reducing the amount of cases brought to court.[427] The last person executed for witchcraft in Scotland was Janet Horne from Dornoch in 1727.[428] Eight years later the Witchcraft Act of 1563 was at long last repealed.

Between 40,000 and 50,000 people were burned at the stake for alleged witchcraft throughout Europe.[429] Sadly, it is impossible to know with any precision how many people were tried and executed for witchcraft in Scotland. A systematic study of the Scottish criminal records still awaits investigation let alone specific areas of prosecution. Christina Larner's approximation is probably the most reliable at present. She estimated no

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425 Larner, Enemies of God 76.
426 Chambers, Domestic Annals vol. 2. 395.
427 Larner, Enemies of God 77.
428 Incidentally, Robert Kirk's son, also Robert, was minister at Dornoch from 1713 to 1758.
429 Briggs, Witches and Neighbours 8.

more than 2,000 people were executed for witchcraft, allowing for all areas of doubt, but that a figure around 1,500 or under was more likely.[430]

The beliefs of the folk were manipulated and changed to incorporate new elite beliefs. Popular conceptions of witches, the Devil, and fairies, before the Reformation were a lot less terrifying. Traditionally Scottish witches had been regarded as members of the community,[431] as had the fairies their respected neighbours. Though believed to be capable of harm the witch and the fairy provided a bridge between this world and the supernatural world. The witch was a consultant on all matters supernatural as well as a healer, dispensing medicines and charms.[432] As the worldview of the learned minority and the peasant majority became increasingly polarized, large areas of what had once been shared belief was stigmatized under the catch-all phrase of 'superstition.' The important role of the witch and the fairy was undermined and contaminated.

Witch panics were fewer in the highland regions, though the precise reasons for this are not known. It is possible that the highlanders managed to retain a certain level of acceptance or, perhaps the fewer number of Kirk Sessions in the highlands decreased the chances for major outbreaks of panic. The activities of the Kirk Session do indeed seem inextricably linked to witch hunting and the changing attitudes to folk culture generally.

The Kirk Session, which consisted of the minister and his elders, met to decide upon disciplinary procedures and methods of public worship. By the

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430 Larner, Witchcraft and Religion 27-8.

431 Davidson 1.

432 This does not imply that I accept all the theories on this topic advanced by certain recent feminist writers. See for example Anne Llewellyn Barstow, Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts (San Francisco: Pandora, 1994).

mid seventeenth century it had spread over most of lowland Scotland and had ventured into Argyll and Invernessshire.[433] The Kirk Session monitored the lives of their parish and were endowed with powers to punish any wrong doing as they saw fit. Anything from sabbath-breaking, fighting, drunkenness, or adultery would be handled by the session. The punishment given to the guilty person could range from being made to perform various "degradation rituals," such as wearing a sackcloth in the presence of the congregation, to a fine.[434]

The emergence of this new system of social control, combined with the changes taking place within central administration, was a precondition which led to a full scale attack on folk beliefs and customs. The use of judicial torture, which was not abolished in Scotland until 1709,[435] must also be considered. However, the most significant causal factor of all lies with the rise and fall of official interest in abolishing ballads and songs, legislating against feast days and plays, prosecuting practitioners of witchcraft, or persecuting believers in fairies. In the years between 1590 and 1662, the time when witch persecutions peaked, witchcraft was seen as the ultimate in social deviance, representing disorder, chaos and evil. The witch was not only a danger to the individual, but a threat to society, the State, and an enemy of God.[436]

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433 Larner, Enemies of God 55.

434 Larner, Enemies of God 56. For more on the Kirk Session see Anne Gordon, Candie for the Foundling (Edinburgh: Pentland P, 1992).

435 Levack 216.

436 Larner, Enemies of God 60, 98.

Satan's Greatest Enemy: King James VI

On the 19th of June 1566, the son of Mary Queen of Scots, James Stewart, was born. Many historians have had a tendency to view James's interest in witchcraft as anomalous and therefore to downplay or ignore his involvement with it. James, contrary to much twentieth century scholarship, thought that Daemonologie was one of his most important works. Stuart Clark has argued that this tract was integral, not only to James's political career, but to his mental world as well.[437]

There is convincing evidence to suggest that James was responsible for bringing continental witch beliefs to Scotland. Christina Larner argues that James acquired these ideas during a six month stay at the Danish court in the winter of 1589. James was there to meet and bring back his bride, Princess Anne of Denmark. Here he met Niels Hemmingsen, a Scandinavian antiquarian, and an authority cited in Daemonologie. Though there was a witchcraft act passed in 1563 under the reign of his mother Mary, there was very little recognition of the need to persecute witches. Before James's return domestic cases were of either a political nature or concerned maleficium. The North Berwick trial would alter that considerably. The first phase of intensive persecution had begun and was given official sanction.

James returned from Denmark with Anne in 1590. During the voyage the ship met with violent storms. The admiral of the Danish fleet carrying them to Scotland blamed the weather on witchcraft. On arrival in Scotland James became convinced that the stormy voyage had indeed been the work of

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437 Stuart Clark, "King James's *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and kingship," The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) 157.

witchcraft, but he was doubtful that only Danish witches were to blame. It did not take James long to find Scottish suspects. A great coven, over three hundred in number, had allegedly met at North Berwick kirk to plot the demise of the king. The trial was held in Edinburgh in 1590-1 and among those accused of principal involvement was Agnes Sampson, John Fian, Euphemia Makcalzane, and the king's own cousin, Francis Stewart Earl of Bothwell.[438] In cooperation, the Danes held parallel witch trials, a development that is unique in the history of European witch-hunting.[439]

The events of 1590-1 reflect the changing attitudes taking place among the educated classes towards witches. The North Berwick trial was the first mass trial since witchcraft had been formally introduced into the criminal law system. It was also the last of the old type of political witch trial. Whether or not the North Berwick 'coven' had been involved in a genuine conspiracy against King James VI or a government plot to incriminate the Earl of Bothwell, will never be known.[440] James took charge of the hunt himself, determined to stamp out this threat of treasonable sorcery. The level of his involvement in the trials allowed him, as Stuart Clark has suggested, to play the part of a Solomon or David, caring for the welfare of his people and defending the Protestant faith against the legions of hell. If his actions were to be seen as a political ploy, then it was quite successful. It definitely gained him some publicity. An English broadside entitled Newes From Scotland, printed

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438 On this topic see Edward J. Cowan, "The Darker Version of the Scottish Renaissance: the Devil and Francis Stewart," The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland, eds., Ian B. Cowan and Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: Scottish AP, 1983) 125-40. Motif G283.1.2.3.

439 E. William Monter, "Scandinavian Witchcraft in Anglo-American Perspective," Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries, eds., Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1993) 431.

440 Larner, Witchcraft and Religion 9.

in 1591, had the effect of furthering James's growing reputation as witchfinder extraordinaire by heralding him as Satan's worst enemy. Furthermore, the broadside upheld James's claim to be a Godly King on the grounds that his Christian righteousness guarded him from the machinations of the Devil although he was the Devil's prime target. This broadside purported to be written "according to the Scottish Coppie,"[441] though no such copy has as yet been found. In all likelihood it was composed with the English reading public in mind. Not only was it highly flattering to James, but included a good dose of titillation and gruesome detail to make it newsworthy.[442]

Set out as a conversation between Epistemon, the demonologist, and Philomathes, the doubting sceptic, Daemonologie was first published in Edinburgh in 1597. It went through two London editions in 1603, and was later translated into Latin, French and Dutch. Originality is by no means the captivating feature of this treatise. Though it is much shorter than most demonological works of the period, containing less examples and citations than is customary, it is in most other ways typical of the genre, for example in taking the form of a Socratic dialogue. So what is the primary significance of Daemonologie? Its most interesting facets are its defence of continental witchcraft beliefs, its use as a political tool, and the basic fact that it was written by a monarch.[443] James claimed that his motives for writing the book were primarily to refute the ideas of Reginald Scot and Johann Weyer, in his view the two major sceptics of the witch-hunt. His concerns derived from his awareness of "the fearefull aboundinge at this time in this countrie, of these

441 Newes from Scotland frontispiece.
442 Larner, Witchcraft and Religion 15.
443 Clark 156-7.

detestable slaves of the Deuill, the Witches or enchaunters." It was his intention to prove "that such divelish artes have bene and are" and to outline "what exact trial and punishment they merite."[444] James must have also wished Daemonologie to be seen as proof of his intellectual and religious capabilities. Clark maintains that this treatise, "in genesis and in content" can be read as an attestation about ideal monarchy.[445]

After the Union of the Crowns in 1603 James moved to England. The book was reprinted in London with anglicized spelling shortly after his move. Daemonologie continued to have some influence in Scotland throughout the seventeenth century, and was frequently referred to at trials for witchcraft. However, though James's reputation as a demonologist lived on, his interest in the subject waned once in England.[446] He became sceptical of witchcraft after some English cases, such as the Lancashire trials of 1612, were proven to be fraudulent. The atmosphere toward witch hunting in England had never been so fever-pitched as it was in Scotland. The use of torture was much rarer, the courts more lenient, and charges generally restricted to maleficium. There was also a sizable group of demonologists, such as Reginald Scot, George Gifford and William Perkins, proclaiming their scepticism in the existence of witches and deploring the barbarity of the witch trials.[447] The different climate James encountered in England may well have played a part in his change of attitudes, but there may be a more sinister explanation. Stuart Clark insists that James became involved in the witch hunt, and built up his

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444 James VI xi-xii.
445 Clark 156.
446 Larner, Enemies of God 31.
447 Clark 161-3.

reputation as a demonologist, as a vehicle to promote his ideals of kingship.[448]

The Rise of the Demonic

The aftermath of the North Berwick trials left James VI of the opinion that he was living in the midst of a diabolical crisis. He cavalierly put himself in charge of this 'war' against the forces of evil, supposing himself incorruptible by anything the Devil might throw his way. As to why this 'crisis' had erupted in the first place, he laid full blame squarely on the heads of his subjects:

> the greate wickednesse of the people . . . procures this horrible defection, whereby God justlie punisheth sinne, by a greater iniquitie . . . the consummation of the worlde, and our deliverance drawing neare, makes Sathan to rage the more in his instruments, knowing his kingdome to be so neare an ende.[449]

Daemonologie clearly had a pernicious impact on fairy belief. Writing from a strongly Protestant bias, James conceived that spirits, such as fairies and brownies, "appeared in the time of Papistrie and blindnesse."[450] As to who saw fairies, James did concede that one did not have to be a witch to be troubled by them. Fairies appeared "to the innocent sort," either to frighten them, or "to seeme to be a better sorte of folkes nor uncleane spirites are." He

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448 Clark 164.
449 James VI 81.
450 James VI 65.

thought that people in these circumstances, "for being perforce troubled with them ought to be pittied." However, James showed no leniency towards witches who made such claims. He presumed that witches attempted to manipulate their experiences with the fairies "to be a cullour of safetie for them, that ignorant Magistrates may not punish them for it." A considerably sterner judgment emerges upon the latter category of person, whom he would ensure were "punished as any other witches."[451]

The tract takes the form of a Socratic dialogue, set out in question and answer form. Philomathes, the sceptic, asks Epistemon, the demonologist, how it can be that witches have gone to their deaths confessing to such events as,

> they have ben transported with the Phairie to such a hill, which opening, they went in, and there saw a faire Queene, who being now lighter, gave them a stone that had sundrie vertues, which at sundrie times hath bene produced in judgment?

Epistemon's response is to view the entire alleged experience as nothing more than a trick of the Devil:

> their senses being dulled, and as it were a sleepe, such hilles & houses within them, such glistering courts and traines, and whatsoever such like wherewith he [Devil] pleaseth to delude them. And in the meane time their bodies being senselesse, to convey in their hande any stone or such like thing, which he makes them to imagine to have received in such a place.[452]

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451 James VI 75.

452 James VI 74-5.

Walter Scott opined that because Christianity would accept only two categories of spirits, angels and devils, and as fairies belonged to neither, "the fulminations of the church were, therefore, early directed against those who consulted or consorted with the Fairies."[453] The ecclesiastical orthodoxy of medieval Europe had regarded all spirits as either angelic or demonic.[454] However, somewhere in the fourteenth century, the time when the crystallization of the witches' sabbat began to take shape,[455] toleration of a belief in creatures which seemed to fit into neither category lessened, and they were increasingly viewed by officialdom with fear and suspicion. For example, among the charges laid upon Joan of Arc, burned for heresy and sorcery in 1431, was familiarity with the fairy folk.[456]

The reformers, faced with the task of eradicating all vestiges of competing Pagan beliefs, were confronted with a daunting task. The persecution of witchcraft was the most odious form of rooting out such a perceived competing belief system. Once fairy belief became identified as demonically inspired, it too was a target for reformers. What must have caused intolerable headaches for the persecutors of fairy belief were the many inherent contradictions this belief had already accumulated. Traditions about fairies had effectively blended Christian elements, leaving the fairies in a morally ambiguous position. The rise of the demonic, and the subsequent demonization of the fairies, can be traced in Scotland through the witch trials.

Christina Larner argues that large scale witch persecutions in Scotland

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453 Scott, Minstrelsy 205-6

454 MacCulloch 230-1.

455 See Ginzburg, Ecstasies on this topic.

456 Scott, Minstrelsy 206.

were less a consequence of the Reformation, or the 1563 Witchcraft Act, than they were of the novel current of continental witchcraft beliefs introduced by James VI.[457] Her conjecture that the image of the Devil was introduced to Scottish trials only after the events of 1590 is partly true. However, the association between fairies and the Devil was stirring among some of the authorities long before this date, and was probably a precondition which allowed for the full crystallization of this demonic connection so rapidly upon James's return.

The first trial for which a detailed indictment has been found is of Jonet Boyman of Cannongate, Edinburgh in 1572. The demonic force she allegedly conjured up to perform cures and malefices was described as being like a whirlwind, "and thairafter came the shape of ane man and stood on the other side of the wall."[458] It is not clear from the context that this human figure was Satan. After 1590 the identity of the Devil became, as Larner has shown, less ambiguous. By the early seventeenth century the image of the Devil was as stereotyped as he was ever to become.[459] Yet even in these later trials, despite the fully formed figure of the Devil in some confessions, others were not so certain. Take for example the trials of three women from Dalkeith, held in 1661, of Janet Paxton who spoke of a man "clad in grein as was the Comon habit as ever she saw him in,"[460] Helen Casse, who described the Devil "in the likness of a tall man in green cloaths,"[461] and Jonet Watson,

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457 Larner, Enemies of God 66-7.

458 Trial of Jonet Boyman, 1572. Larner, Enemies of God 147. This description is remarkably close to those of fairy whirlwinds. Perhaps this is indeed what Jonet is referring to.

459 Larner, Enemies of God 147.

460 Trial of Janet Paxton or Paiston, July 1661. Larner, Enemies of God 147.

461 Trial of Helen Casse, 20 Aug. 1661. Larner, Enemies of God 147. Motif G303.3.1.

accused of meeting with the Devil whom she said appeared to her "in the liknes of ane prettie boy, in grein clothes . . . and ane blak hatt upone his head."[462]

Evidence that fairy belief had become entangled with the demonic, before the assimilation of continental witchcraft beliefs, is recorded, for the first time, in the fascinating trial of an Ayrshire healer by the name of Bessie Dunlop, strangled and burned in 1576. The sentence given to Bessie was harsh considering that she protested to her judges that she refused any offer to go to Fairyland. No doubt to the dismay of the ministers, she was readily sought after by members of the elite for her medications and second sight. She was not found guilty of practising maleficium. Her crime lay in the "using of sorcerie, Witchcraft, and Incantatioune, with Invocatioun of spretis of the devill; continewand in familiaritie with thame, at all sic tymes as sche thought expedient."[463] In other words, the mere fact that Bessie claimed to have anything to do with fairies, not to mention the ghost world, was considered criminal, regardless of her refusal to join with them in any ungodly pact.

There are several instances in Bessie's confession where statements made about fairies and witches overlap. Her contact to the Otherworld was made through her acquaintance with Thomas Reid, a dead man who now resided with the fairies. She claimed all of her skills of second-sight and of healing were purely attributable to advice and medicinal knowledge told to her by Thomas. Over the four years of her communication with Thomas, on

462 Trial of Jonet Watson, 16 June 1661. Pitcairn vol. 3. 601. Motif F236.1.
463 Pitcairn vol. 1. 51.

one occasion he took her, on the twelfth hour of the day, to meet twelve of his friends from Fairyland. She was told that the eight women and four men she was introduced to were "gude wychtis that wynnit in the Court of Elfame."[464] These fairies, since 'wychtis' in this context are supernatural beings rather than specifically witches,[465] wanted Bessie to "go with thame," presumably to join their society in Elfame.

Athol Gow points to an interesting passage in Bessie's confession which may suggest there were general feelings of discontent with the new reformed faith and its aversion to folk belief. Her interrogators asked for her opinion on the "new law" and Bessie told them she had spoken to her fairy contact, Thomas Reid, about it. Thomas, who seems to have been a Catholic and would greet her with "Sancta Marie" when they met, said that the new law was not good and the old faith should come home again but not as it was before.[466] Gow concludes that Bessie must have been looking back affectionately to the period before the Reformation when the articulation of such beliefs was not so hazardous.[467]

In 1588, another woman was burned for "hanting and repairing with the gude nychtbouris and Quene of Elfame,"[468] and other charges of familiarity with the increasingly indistinguishable witches, ghosts, and fairies. Alison Peirson, whose fame as a healer was widespread, was immortalised as a witch, thanks to Robert Sempill, in the satirical poem "The Legend of the Bishop of St. Andrew's." Patrick Adamson, the Archbishop of St. Andrew's,

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464 Pitcairn vol. 1. 53. AT 503.
465 For more on 'wichts' see above 84.
466 Pitcairn vol. 1. 51-2, 56. ML 5055.
467 Gow 186.
468 Pitcairn vol. 1. 162.

was the most prominent person said to have sought Alison's counsel. The poem describes Alison riding through the Breadalbane countryside with both fairies and men supposed dead for company:

> Ane carling of the Quene of Phareis,
> That ewill win geir to elphyne careis.
> Through all Braid Abane scho hes bene
> On horsback, on Hallow ewin;
> And ay in seiking, certayne nyghtis,
> As scho sayis, with our sillie wychtis;
> And names out nytboris sex or sewin,
> That we belevit had bene in heawin.[469]

Like Bessie Dunlop, Alison's supernatural contact had been a mortal man before living with the fairies. William Simpson, who in life had been Alison's uncle, was the source of Alison's medicinal knowledge. It was William who told Alison that the Bishop of St. Andrew's "had many seiknessis" and prescribed the appropriate salves and medicines to cure him.[470]

Another instance of skills being attributed to the instruction of the fairies is found in the confession of John Stewart, tried in Irvine in 1618. He was described by his interrogators as a vagabond, professing skills in palmistry and jugglery, and arrested on suspicion of having used sorcery to assist Margaret Barclay in sinking her brother's ship. When asked by what means he claimed to have knowledge of things to come, he divulged that twenty-six years ago, whilst travelling through "Galway" (Ireland) on the night of Halloween, he met the King of Fairies and his court. The king touched his

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469 Robert Sempill, "Heir Followis the Legend of the Bischop of St Androis Lyfe, Callit Mr Patrik Adamsone, alias Cousteane," Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation, ed., James Cranstoun Scottish Text Society vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1891) 365.
470 Pitcairn vol.1. 163. AT 503.

forehead with a white rod, which had the effect of taking away his ability to speak and the sight in one eye. Three years later, John once again met the fairy king in Dublin, on Halloween night. On this occasion the king restored John's speech and vision. From that time onward, John avowed he met with the fairies every Saturday at seven o'clock. He also saw them every Halloween, sometimes on "Lanark Hill" and other times on "Kilmaurs Hill." John asserted that it was during his time with the fairy court that he was taught his skills by them. John also claimed that he saw "many persons" in the company of the fairies, and declared that all people who had been "taken away by sudden death" went to the Elfland.

A demonic interpretation was imposed upon John Stewart's explanation for his abilities. After showing the place where he had been touched by the fairy king's wand, the spot was pricked, no differently than if they had been looking for the Devil's mark. When the area was indeed found to be insensible, suspicions were confirmed. John committed suicide before any of his interrogators were given the opportunity to make a pronouncement on his case.[471]

There are many good examples of the similarity in language that emerged between accusations of Devil worship or consulting with fairies. The trial of Alexander Drummond of Auchterarder, held in 1629, does not refer to any fairy involvement but is noteworthy nonetheless. Alexander was accused of being "ane manifest sorcerar and abusar" over a period of fifty years. His crime was curing "all sort of diseases be sorcerie and witchcraft, and ane consulter with the devill and seiker of responses frome him." Possibly akin to

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[471] Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft 134-5. AT 503. Motif F361.3.3; F363.

the explanations given by Bessie Dunlop and Alison Peirson, Alexander admitted to "having also ane familiar spreit attending him to give him instructions in the practeis of all his diabolical and unlauchfull cures."[472]

Though inquisitors would repeatedly warp or change the words of their victims, or torture them till they said what the inquisitors wanted to hear, many people tenaciously held on to the conviction that what they had experienced were encounters with the fairies and not the Devil and his monstrous retinue. Walter Scott relates a story of "a rustic, . . . taxed with magical practices, about 1620, obstinately denied that the good King of the Fairies had any connection with the devil."[473]

The witch trials are full of such stubborn denial or general confusion between fairies and demons. Agnes Sampson of Nether Keythe, tried in 1590-1 for her alleged membership to the North Berwick coven, confessed that she had been called upon, on more than one occasion, to give her prognosis on various illnesses, including elf-shot.[474] Agnes was asked to determine the fate of a woman by the name of "Lady Edmestoune." Agnes's confession tells:

> sche tauld to the gentilwemene, that sche sould tell thame that nycht quhidder the Lady wald haill or nocht; . . . Sche passit to the gairdene, to devyise upoun hir prayer, one quhat tyme sche chargeit the Dewill, calling him 'Elva,' to cum and speik to hir, qua come in ower the dyke, in liknes of ane dog.[475]

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472 Trial of Alexander Drummond, 1629. From Books of Adjournal and extracted in A. G. Reid The Annals of Auchterarder and Memorials of Strathearn (Perth: Perth and Kinross District Libraries, 1989) 70. Motif G225.

473 Scott, Minstrelsy 212.

474 Trial of Agnes Sampson, 27 Jan. 1590-1. Pitcairn vol.1 230-41. "Williame Blakeis sone sark being send to hir, scho be hir Wichcraft declarit, that the seiknes that he had was ane elf-schot."

475 Pitcairn vol.1 230-41.

While most of this passage seems to reflect the type of questions and forced response demanded by Agnes's persecutors, her naming of the Devil as "Elva" would strongly suggest that she is in fact describing a fairy encounter, or is at least drawing upon a knowledge of fairy traditions that were familiar to her whereas the demonic traditions recently adopted by her jurors were not. Euphemia Makcalzane, another alleged member of the North Berwick coven, was indicted "for being att the conventioun haldin at the New-heavin [NewHaven] callit the Fayrie-hoillis, att Lambmes lastwes."[476] It is interesting that a witches' 'convention' or sabbat should be held atop a fairy hill at Lammas.

It is unclear, in the 1597-8 confession of Andrew Man, to what extent the extraordinary mingling of fairy and witch beliefs are a product of Andrew's amalgamated beliefs or those of his jurors. Andrew had been in a lengthy relationship with the Fairy Queen for some thirty years. He claimed that he could summon her by saying the word "Benedicite." He was also in communication with an angel by the name of Christsonday of whom Andrew affirmed that although "the Quene of Elphen hes a grip of all the craft, bot Christsonday is the gudeman, and hes all power under God."[477] Carlo Ginzburg cites this as an example of how the Fairy Queen has been relegated to a subordinate position to that of the Devil.[478] The angel spoken of by Andrew, described by Andrew's inquisitors as "the Devill, thy maister," could shape-shift, appearing on one occasion in the likeness of a stag. Andrew's experience with the fairies was on the whole a good one. They

476 Pitcairn vol. 1 254. Motif G243.
477 Miscellany of the Spalding Club 120-1.
478 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 97.

danced and sang and banqueted together. Andrew even fathered children with their queen. The description of the fairy revels that Andrew attended on Halloween are strikingly similar to a witches' sabbat; "thay com to the Binhill, and Binlocht, quhair thay use commonlie to convene, and that all thay quha convenis with thame kissis Christsonday and the Quene of Elphenis airss."[479]

Beigis Tod of Long Niddry, though there is no mention of fairies in her confession of 1608, claimed to have met the Devil at "Seaton-thorne."[480] Thorns were also popularly known as meeting places for fairies. Further afield in Shetland, Katherine Jonesdochter was accused in 1616 of "converversing [sic], lying, keiping companie and societie with the devill quhom she callit the bowman of Hildiswick and Eschenes." In Norn language 'bo' can mean "a bug-bear or bogey" and 'boki' a "man; bogey; ghost."[481] Katherine claimed her first encounter with the 'bowman' took place in her mother's house some forty years ago (c. 1576) and had continued to see him every year since. Also in 1616 Elspeth Reoch, tried in Orkney, confessed "on yule day . . . the devell quhilk she callis the farie man lay with hir."[482] Jonet Morison of Bute, tried in 1662, gave evidence that seems to suggest the devil could work in opposition to the fairy folk by disclosing their secret activities to the witch: "the devill told her that it was the fayries that took John Glas child's lyfe."[483]

Isobel Gowdie interspersed fairy belief and belief in the Devil in her

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479 Miscellany of the Spalding Club 121. Motif G243.

480 Trial of Beigis Tod, 27 May 1608. Pitcairn vol.2 542-4.

481 Jakob Jakobsen, An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland, 1928. 2 vols (Lerwick: Shetland Folk Society, 1985).

482 Maitland Club Miscellany 114. In Orkney and Shetland it was believed the trows were most dangerous at Yule. See Saxby; Marwick.

483 Trial of Jonet Morison of Bute, 18 January 1662. Highland Papers 23.

confessions of 1662 to a degree that is unrivalled in any other known witch trial. Though Isobel came from Auldearn in the north of Scotland, an area which did not experience the full force of the reforming presbyterian system till mid seventeenth century, her confession can surely be seen as indicative of the level by which such phenomena had become assimilated into folk culture.[484] It can certainly be taken as evidence of the tenacity of fairy traditions within Scotland, still clinging on despite almost a century of intensive persecution. Isobel affirmed she was a member of a coven consisting of thirteen people. Each member had a spirit to wait upon them, the names of which were recorded in part, and everyone was given a special name by the Devil.[485] She spoke of riding "wild-strawes" and "corn-strawes" through the air with this coterie of witches, shooting elf-arrowheads at those the Devil had instructed them to harm. The production of these missiles seems to have been a combined effort between the Devil, who shaped them in his hand, and the elf-boys, who trimmed them with a sharp object "lyk a paking neidle."[486] Isobel's descriptions of coven meetings allude to a feeling of festivity. She told her inquisitors that a woman in her coven, Jean Martin, named "Maiden" by the Devil, was so called because the "Divill (always takis the) Maiden in his hand nixhim, quhan we daunce Gillatrypes, . . . he and she will say, 'Ower the dyk with it!'"[487] When she met the Queen and King of Fairy inside the "Downie-hillis" they treated her to a feast of meat.

Descriptions of Scottish sabbats and encounters with the fairies

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484 Gow, 190-1.
485 See above chapter two, 78.
486 Pitcairn vol. 3. 607.
487 Pitcairn vol. 3. 606.

frequently portray an image of revelry and general 'disorder.' Whereas continental descriptions of sabbat gatherings are often filled with horrific details of infant sacrifice, cannibalism, wild sexual orgies, and formal worship of the Devil, the Scottish meetings are more like a social gathering for eating, drinking and dancing. Ironically, they reflect the pleasures in life that the Scottish peasantry were being deprived of through government legislation.[488]

The intermingling of fairies and witches is also found in belief traditions about the goddess. Returning to Daemonologie, James VI was of the opinion that the court of the goddess Diana was composed of fairies:

> That fourth kinde of spirites, which by the Gentiles was called Diana, and her wandring court, and amongst us was called the Phairie . . . or our good neighboures, was one of the sortes of illusiones that was rifest in the time of Papistrie.[489]

Another sixteenth century source, William Hay, who was actually writing his advice on marriage, counselled:

> for there are certain women who do say that they have dealings with Diana the queen of the fairies. There are others who say that the fairies are demons, and deny having any dealings with them, and say that they hold meetings with a countless multitude of simple women whom they call in our tongue celly vichtys.[490]

Three centuries later, Walter Scott similarly made the connection between the goddess of the witches and the queen of fairies:

> Like Diana, who in one capacity was

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488 Larner, Enemies of God 200.

489 James VI 73-4.

490 William Hay's Lectures on Marriage, 16th c. ed., and trans. John C. Barry (Edinburgh: Stair, 1967) 127.

> denominated Hecate, the Fairy Queen is identified in popular tradition with the Gyre-Carline, Gay Carline, or mother witch, of the Scottish peasantry . . . She is sometimes termed Nicneven.[491]

Here Scott has added another dimension, the gyre carline. Ernest Marwick refers to the "gyrekarling" as an Orkney term for a female giant, derived from Old Norse *gygr* (ogress) and *kerling* (old woman).[492] It is possible that Scott got the name gyre-carling from Jamieson's Dictionary in which it was said was the name given to the queen of fairies in Fife.

Carlo Ginzburg comments that the Scottish fairy queen corresponds with the European nocturnal goddess. Many of the key motifs, recovered from persons claiming to have followed a goddess figure, are unequivocally comparable: women (and at least in Scotland, men) who believed they went out at night, following the goddess, and travelled great distances through the air and/or on the backs of animals. They obeyed the orders of the goddess and generally met her on particular nights.[493] She appears under various names according to region. Diana, Herodias, Oriente, Richella, the 'good mistress,' Habonde, Matres, are but a few examples. Titles given to the supernatural or mortal followers of the goddess are equally numerous. 'Women of the good game,' 'the game of the good society,' the *bonae res* (good things),[494] *bonnes dames* (good women), *bona gens* (good people), 'women from outside,' and so on.[495] Ginzburg demonstrates how the folkloric figure of the goddess became

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491 Scott, Minstrelsy 199.
492 Marwick, The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland 32.
493 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 93, 102.
494 MacCulloch 230.
495 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 89-121.

interconnected with witchcraft and was demonized alongside those who believed in her. Ginzburg is not the only scholar to show how such a process was directed towards goddess, witch, and fairy beliefs. Gustav Henningsen has found a strong case for the attempted demonization of the Sicilian fairy cult, the *donas de fuera*, in the Inquisitorial records.[496]

Motifs in common

In the 1659-60 diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan, Lanarkshire, a conversation over dinner with a minister in Stirling is recorded. This entry, written on 10 October, reads:

> we were also informed that Jon Cleghorn, Kirklawhill, did one dark nyt see a good many men and women dancing, and with a great lyt wt them, which imeditlie disappeared, and which he sayes were witches.[497]

This description, had we not been informed of Mr. Cleghorn's interpretation of what he had seen, is remarkably close to accounts of interludes with the fairies. What such descriptions have in common are shared motifs.

There are several motifs familiar to both the fairy and the witch.[498] The power to shape-shift or render oneself invisible; travelling through the air in a whirlwind or on strawes or stalks; stealing food or taking the substance from food-stuffs; turning milk or butter bad and destroying crops; abducting

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496 Gustav Henningsen, "'The Ladies from Outside': An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath," Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries 191-215.

497 A. G. Reid, ed., The Diary of Andrew Hay of Craignethan, 1659-1660 (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, n.d.) 158. Possibly 'Skirling.'

498 The following examples are drawn in part from MacCulloch 229.

children, sometimes replacing them with one of their own, or leaving a stock; injuring horses and cattle by shooting them with elf-shot and witch-shot. The time of day or year, such as noon or midnight, May-eve, Midsummer-eve, Halloween, are when they are at their most active. Particular locations are associated with them. Hills, wells, and hawthorn trees are all common haunts. The circular impressions found in grass, often called fairy rings, are also associated with marks left by dancing witches. Both enjoy making music, dancing and feasting. Special skills, such as medicinal, musical, and second-sight are attributed to fairies and witches, though often it is the fairy who is thought to bestow these gifts on the witch. Paralysis, problems in childbirth, or sudden death, are frequently blamed on their intervention.

Fairies and the dead share an equally close relationship, but a major difference between them is that the dead are thought to be the souls of humans once living. A strong distinction between witches and fairies is that the former are believed to be mortals whose power derived from a connection with a supernatural agency. The witch was generally a known member of a community, whilst the fairy was often a stranger existing outside of the community. Women like Bessie Dunlop or Alison Peirson explicitly state that they themselves had no unique gifts, but obtained their knowledge, via a human ghost, through contact with the fairies.

Gillian Bennett discovered that it is possible to see how "folklore was picked over, elaborated, polished up and used for specific purposes in theological politics." The result, she argued, was the polarization and secularization of supernatural traditions.[499] The Scottish experience has

[499] Bennett, Traditions of Belief 167.

revealed that political manipulation of folklore came not only from the Church but also from the State. James VI contributed to the international debate on the subject of witchcraft with the publication of Daemonologie. He also left an indelible mark on the way in which the witch-hunts would unfold in Scotland. There was no doubt in the mind of the King that the phenomenon of fairies was little more than an illusion created by Satan; "the devil illuded the senses of sundry simple creatures, in making them beleeve that they saw and harde such thinges as were nothing so indeed."[500] The redefinition of fairies as demonically inspired hallucinations, if not actual agents of the Devil's work, ensured that all who believed in them were potentially in danger of their lives.

The impact of the assault on folk culture is less striking than it first appears. The gap between elite and folk concepts of the nature of reality widened in this period. The repercussions of this on everyday life and activity were felt at all levels of society. However, folk culture is the product of collective *mentalité*. Though attitudes might change mindsets remain. The reformers may have tried to depreciate fairy belief and suppress folk culture, but they could not destroy it. Beneath the "thin diabolical crust" that covers the tortured voices of accused witches, is confirmation of the tenacity and endurance of fairy belief.

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500 James VI 74.

Chapter Five

The Reinstatement of Fairy Belief: Robert Kirk and The Secret Common-Wealth (1691)

> It may be supposed not repugnant to reason or religion to affect ane invisible polity, or a people to us invisible, having a commonwealth laws and oeconomy, made known to us but by some obscure hints of a few admitted to their converse . . . And if this be thought only a fancy and forgery becaus obscure and unknown to the most of mankind for so long a time, I answer the antipodes and inhabitants of America, the bone of our bone, yet their first discovery was lookt on as a fayrie tale, and the reporters hooted at as inventers of ridiculous Utopia's.[501]

Throughout most of the early modern era, the whole of Scottish society shared a providential cosmology--a perception of the universe in which God had absolute control over his creation. Since God's power was thought to supersede the natural laws of the universe (a measure by which the possible and impossible is distinguished), in theory, nothing was truly impossible.[502] As the seventeenth century progressed, the omnipotent conception of God was recast by the great philosophical minds of the age to the role of initial creator behind the construction of the universe, but one who no longer

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501 From a notebook of Robert Kirk, Edinburgh University Library MS. La.III.545., qtd. by Sanderson 15.

502 Gow 232.

intervened in the world's affairs. The supreme power of God was supplanted with a growing intellectual acceptance of the immutability of natural laws.[503] A clash between these systems of belief was inevitable and is seen in a number of Scottish writings of the period. One book in particular, The Secret Common-Wealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies by Robert Kirk, written in defence of the providential view of the universe, will be the focus of this fifth and final chapter. Kirk's text will be examined in contradistinction to the assault on fairy belief (as discussed in chapter four) in that he argues, to disbelieve in fairies would be to doubt the very existence of God. For Kirk, the universe was approximated to an almost neo-platonic formulation, of "orders and degrees of angels" between humans and God, with fairies occupying one of the lowest orders.[504] Belief in the existence of fairies was, in Kirk's opinion, not inconsistent with Christian belief. In fact, he set out, with near scientific precision, to collect and record 'evidence' of fairy belief (and other related phenomena such as second sight) in part to uphold and strengthen belief in the existence of angels, the Devil, and the Holy Spirit.[505] By calling for the reinstatement of fairy beliefs, Kirk intended to "supress the impudent and growing atheisme of this age."[506]

'The Fairy Minister': Robert Kirk

Our knowledge of fairy belief in the seventeenth century would be

503 Gow 233.
504 Kirk 83.
505 Sanderson 38-9.
506 Kirk 1.

much slighter had not Robert Kirk, an episcopalian minister successively in the parishes of Balquhidder and Aberfoyle, not pursued his interests in the *sluagh sith,* the people of peace. This man has not only provided us with one of the best sources of folk belief in Scotland in the early modern era, but he also became personally entwined with the very traditions that he dedicated the latter part of his life to studying, a paradoxical situation in which the historical figure becomes part of the folk tradition. Kirk would perhaps not be displeased to know of his adoption into these traditions. It was thought unwise to speak of one's knowledge of the fairy folk, for revelation of their secrets would incur their displeasure and subsequent infliction of punishment. Donald McIlmichall, convicted in 1677 for consulting with evil spirits, was made to swear an oath of secrecy by his fairy contacts. He broke his oath by confiding in a friend and was duly punished: "He was engadgeit to conceall them [the fairies] and no to tell other. Bot that he told it to . . . Robert Buchanan once for which he was reproved and stricken be them in the cheik and other pairts."[507] Furthermore, it was commonly held that those who had been in some way close to fairies would end up in the fairy realm at the termination of their earthly existence: "those who had an intimate communication with these spirits, while they were yet inhabitants of middle earth, were most apt to be seized upon and carried off to Elfland before their death."[508] Such was the view of Thomas Rhymer's fate which, as Sir Walter Scott said, was still believed by "the vulgar" down to his own time.[509]

On the evening of Robert Kirk's death, he had taken a stroll on the hill

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[507] Highland Papers 38. Motif C420; F360.
[508] Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft 108-9.
[509] Scott, Minstrelsy 485.

nearby his manse, locally known to be a fairy hill. He collapsed and was later found and taken back to be buried in the Kirkton graveyard, near Aberfoyle. Sometime later, Kirk was seen by a relative to whom he related a message to be passed on to his cousin, Graham of Duchray. Kirk explained that he was not dead, but held hostage in Fairyland. He said he would appear again, at the baptism of his posthumous child, only this time Graham was to throw a dagger above the apparition of himself, thus releasing him from the fairies. When the day arrived, Kirk did indeed appear, but his cousin was so startled that he forgot to throw the dagger. Kirk's spectre vanished and "it is firmly believed . . . that he is, at this day, in Fairyland."[510] This account was given by Patrick Graham more than a century after Kirk died. Sir Walter Scott includes the details of this story in his Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft.[511] Over two centuries after Kirk's death W. Y. Evans-Wentz was in Aberfoyle asking locals for information on Kirk.[512] Most of them were familiar with Patrick Graham's account. Wentz asked questions specifically about Kirk's grave and was told by some that Kirk's coffin was filled only with stones. Others shared Mrs. Margaret MacGregor's opinion that the "good people took Kirk's spirit only,"[513] leaving his body. Mrs. J. MacGregor, who kept the keys to the Kirkton churchyard, was able to point to a hill where she said the fairies lived

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510 Graham 253-5; Sanderson 18. ML 4077. Motif F320; F361.4; F375; F384.2 (a). An unusual explantion for the disappearance of Kirk is given by Archie McKerracher. He claims that the fairy hill at Aberfoyle is situated on one of many lines which follow the faults in the rock structure of the earth. Pressure on these faults has created an electro-magnetic field.He speculates that Kirk was caught in one of these fields. An iron knife, passed over his head, would short circuit this field. Archie McKerracher, "The Minister of Fairyland," Fate 43 (1990): 59-64.

511 Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft 138.

512 Evans-Wentz 89-90.

513 Evans-Wentz 90.

and to which Kirk had been taken. Wentz also spoke with Rev. William M. Taylor who reported that at the time of Kirk's death the people believed that he had been taken by the fairies because he had been prying too deeply into their secrets.[514] Taylor related that he had searched the presbytery records but found nothing to indicate how Kirk had actually died, though his theory was that he had suffered some sudden illness, such as apoplexy, while he had been walking on the hill. In 1943 Katharine Briggs heard another version from a woman she met who had rented the Old Manse at Aberfoyle. The woman was expecting a baby and was keen to return to the Manse before the child was born. She had heard a local tradition that

> if the baby was born in the Manse and christened there, Kirk could be freed from fairyland if a dirk was thrust into the seat of his chair. The chair was still there--or the chair supposed locally to have been his--so that it would have been still possible to disenchant him.

Katharine Briggs was of the opinion that "this was, I think, only a whimsical belief on her part, but she had learnt it from the local people, for she was a stranger in the place."[515] More recently Margaret Bennett did fieldwork in Balquhidder, Kirk's first parish, in 1990 to see if the locals still believed in fairies. She discovered that while the general belief in fairies or knowledge of Robert Kirk was scanty amongst the adults, a fair number of the children believed in fairies and were familiar with Kirk.[516]

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514 Motif C420; F361.4.

515 Communicated to Stewart Sanderson from Katharine Briggs in a letter dated 10 March 1964, qtd. in Sanderson 19.

516 Margaret Bennett, "Balquhidder Revisited: Fairylore in the Scottish Highlands, 1690-1990," The Good People, ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland, 1991) 94-115. The children had very precise ideas as to what fairies were, blending Kirk's descriptions with contemporary notions.

Although the details of Robert Kirk's life are unfortunately scanty and at times imprecise it is possible to piece together some sort of biography.[517] Robert Kirk was the youngest, and significantly, the seventh son of Rev. James Kirk, minister of Aberfoyle. A seventh child was believed to be endowed with the powers of second sight. The exact date of Robert's birth is unknown but he was probably born in Aberfoyle in 1644.[518] He was a student of theology and graduated with an M. A. at Edinburgh University in 1661, and afterwards studied at St. Andrews. On 9 November 1664 he became minister of Balquhidder.[519] The visitor to Balquhidder today can see the ruins of the church in which he served for twenty years, and the old church bell that bears his name. Having said this, most tourists are directed toward Rob Roy's grave, rather than to the remnants of this extraordinary minister's life. He married Isobel Campbell, daughter of Sir Colin Campbell of Mochaster, in 1678. Isobel gave birth to a son, whom they named Colin. After her untimely death on Christmas Day 1680,[520] he remarried a cousin of his first wife, Margaret, daughter of Campbell of Fordie.[521] She too had a son, called Robert. On 9 June 1685 Kirk was appointed to his father's old charge at Aberfoyle. He remained at Aberfoyle until his death, or his abduction, on 14 May 1692.[522] There is a grave marker at the east end of Kirkton church bearing an inscription to

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517 On Kirk's ecclesiastical career see D. MacLean, "The Life and Literary Labours of the Rev. Robert Kirk of Aberfoyle," Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness vol. 31. 1922-4 (1927) 328-66.

518 Mario Rossi suggests 6 August, 1644 as Kirk's probable birth date, "Text-Criticism of Robert Kirk's Secret Commonwealth," Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions vol. 3. part 4. Sessions 1953-4, 1954-5, (1957) 253-68.

519 Sanderson 5.

520 Isobel's grave stone can be seen in Balquhidder churchyard. Tradition has it that Kirk carved the inscription on her grave marker.

521 Sanderson 6; Lewis Spence, The Mysteries of Britain (London: Senate, 1994) 132.

522 This would make him about 47 years and 5 months old when he died. Sanderson 3.

'Robertus Kirk,' though it is unlikely that this is his authentic grave stone.[523] The lettering style indicates that the stone was carved at the end of the eighteenth century, if not later.

Kirk was a distinguished Gaelic scholar. He worked toward the evangelization of the highlands through Gaelic translations of holy works. Among his achievements, he was the author of the first complete translation into Gaelic of the Scottish Metrical Psalms, "*Psalma Dhaibhidh An Meadrachd,*" published in Edinburgh in 1684, and, on the instruction of Sir Robert Sibbald, collected specimens of Perthshire Gaelic for inclusion in John Ray's *Dictionariolum Trilingue.*[524] In 1689 he went to London to oversee the printing of the Irish Bible, in roman type, prepared under Bishop Bedell. The costs of this publication were initially met by Robert Boyle, though others would eventually follow Boyle's lead and contribute to the printing expenses. He finished printing three thousand copies of the Bible in the spring of 1690.[525] Kirk's growing reputation as a Gaelic scholar, and his time spent working on the distribution of the Gaelic Bible, gave him the opportunity to

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523 The inscription reads:

HIC SEPULTUS
ILLE EVANGELII
PROMULGATOR
ACCURATUS
ET
LINGUAE HIBERNIAE
LUMEN
M. ROBERTUS KIRK
ABERFOILE PASTOR
OBIIT 14 MAII 1692
AETAT 48.

524 Kirk's Gaelic glossary was published posthumously, under the title "A Vocabulary of the Irish Dialect, spoken by the Highlanders of Scotland; collected by Mr Kirk, publisher of their Bible," in W. Nicolson, The Scottish Historical Library (London, 1702). Sanderson 7-8.

525 Sanderson 10-12, 17.

make new acquaintances. Fortunately, Kirk was in the habit of keeping a notebook so we have some record of the speeches he heard, the people he met, and the conversations he had. Soon after his arrival in London he was introduced to Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699), the Bishop of Worcester. Kirk's notes indicate that he conversed often with Stillingfleet, and not uncommonly, on the subject of the supernatural. On 6 October 1689 Stillingfleet gave his last service in St. Andrew's, Holborn, before taking the post at Worcester. Kirk attended and was invited to dine with Stillingfleet and his wife after the service. The topic of conversation, at one point in the evening, was on the supernatural. Stillingfleet declared himself a non believer in such things as apparitions and second sight, though he was interested to hear about Kirk's research on the subject from an antiquarian point of view. Stillingfleet's wife was very interested in Kirk's work, maybe, as has been suggested by Mario Rossi, because she had recently given birth to her seventh child.[526] A copy of the finished manuscript of The Secret Common-Wealth was later sent to her. Stillingfleet may well have been unswayed by Kirk's defence of the supernatural but he was not unimpressed with Kirk. He donated the sum of ten guineas toward the printing of the Gaelic Bible.[527]

It is unclear when Kirk actually started to write The Secret Common-Wealth though he must have completed it some time between 1691 and 1692. Much of the material was lifted, with little alteration, straight out of the notebooks he so studiously kept. Though an unknown number of

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526 Rossi 257. Rossi speculates that Kirk wrote The Secret Common-Wealth "to send to Lady Stillingfleet," a conjecture which Sanderson rejects. Sanderson 16, 28.
527 Sanderson 16.

handwritten copies of this text were made, it actually remained in manuscript form until 1815 when Walter Scott published an edition of one hundred copies. This edition was based upon an incomplete manuscript in the Advocate's Library. It is likely that Scott had someone else transcribe the document for him. The ballad collector Robert Jamieson has been suggested. Unfortunately, the original MS. used by Scott, and possibly Jamieson, is missing from the library, if indeed it was ever returned after copying.[528]

In 1893, Kirk's text was reprinted, with a lengthy commentary by Andrew Lang, and A Study in Folk-Lore and Psychical Research appended to the title. This edition was based on the 1815 printing, with minor emendations by the editor, though all changes must have been guess work on Lang's part considering the original manuscript was lost.[529] Lang, who looked upon Kirk as an early "student in folk-lore and in psychical research,"[530] was particularly interested in the second sight material The Secret Common-Wealth provided. He was, among other things, a collector of psychic phenomena and paranormal experience, and embraced Kirk's findings to further his own scientific approach to such investigations.[531] Eneas MacKay of Stirling gave it a third reprinting in 1933, with an introduction by R. B. Cunninghame Graham. Regrettably, the latter took no part in the preparation of the text, and Lang's errors were retained while further mistakes were

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528 Sanderson 21-2.

529 Sanderson 23.

530 Robert Kirk, The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies. A Study in Folk-Lore and Psychical Research 1691, ed. and commentary Andrew Lang (London, 1893) xv.

531 For more on Andrew Lang see Richard M. Dorson, The British Folklorists: A History (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) 206-20; Roger Lancelyn Green, Andrew Lang: A Critical Biography (Leicester: Ward, 1946).

added.[532]

While the quality of Kirk's treatise degenerated over progressive printings another manuscript languished in Edinburgh University Library; written in the hand of Robert Campbell at Inshalladine in 1691,[533] it consisted of a complete text, the appended letter from Lord Tarbat to Robert Boyle with Kirk's response thereto in full, and A Short Treatise of the Scotish-Irish Charms and Spels. It was upon this manuscript that the first, and best, complete edition was published by the Folklore Society in 1976, edited with a commentary by Stewart Sanderson.[534] The most recent contribution, Robert Kirk. Walker Between Worlds by R. J. Stewart in 1990, translates the text into modern English and is furnished with a detailed commentary. Sanderson's edition remains, in my opinion, the best and most reliable.

The importance of The Secret Common-Wealth, to folklorists and historians alike, cannot be stressed enough. This treatise provides us with a first-hand account of the belief in fairies and second sight in the area of Perthshire where Kirk lived and worked. He was, of course, not alone in his desire to record, for posterity or any other reason, the beliefs and traditions of his countrymen and women. Such of his contemporaries as George Sinclair Satan's Invisible World Discovered (1685), Martin Martin Description of the Western Isles of Scotland (1703), and Lord Tarbat, first earl of Cromarty, shared his interests.

The Secret Common-Wealth is of particular note in that it not only

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532 Sanderson 23.

533 Inshalladine was the name of the manse or of a house in Aberfoyle where Robert Kirk lived. Sanderson 25.

534 I have used Sanderson's edition throughout the thesis.

describes these beliefs but argues, from a metaphysical standpoint, for the existence of fairies. Kirk did not perceive a dichotomous relationship between Christian doctrine and folk belief, a polarization that had been so rigorously asserted by the reformed church little over a century before. He maintained that fairy belief was not inconsistent with Christianity.[535] His arguments in support of the interchange and co-existence of the two worlds or spheres are carefully reasoned, using first hand eye witness accounts, and supported by Biblical and classical evidence. His main objective was not solely to record for posterity the beliefs of his parishioners, but rather to present an argument that unified spirituality, supported religious tolerance, and would further the strength of the church.

The War Against Atheism and the Sadducees

Stewart Sanderson remarked, "one hardly expects to find a minister of the Kirk advocating, as a counterblast to godlessness, such Pagan superstitions as belief in fairies."[536] Initially, Robert Kirk's beliefs may indeed appear incongruous but, when seen in the context of a man determined "to suppress the impudent and growing atheisme"[537] of his era, he was not so unusual. Such pursuits were not wholly uncommon at this time. There was a small, but not insignificant, number of learned men in Scotland and England who, like Kirk, attempted to conquer the rise of atheism and materialism by upholding and defending witchcraft, ghosts, and the entire world of spirits.

535 Sanderson 39.
536 Sanderson 1.
537 Sanderson 1.

Incredulity of the supra-natural world, for these men, meant disbelief in God. They sought to authenticate and offer proof of the existence of supernatural phenomena, and thus combat the tide of scepticism among educated men and women. Case histories of alleged metaphysical experiences were compiled and offered as empirical evidence. In order to establish the intellectual atmosphere in which Robert Kirk lived and wrote it is helpful to explore the writings of some of these men of letters.

Richard Baxter, Richard Bovet, Robert Boyle, Meric Casaubon,[538] Joseph Glanvill, Henry More, and George Sinclair, are but a few examples of those who engaged in the battle against Sadducism and unbelief. The term Sadducism is derived from the ancient Jewish sect, the Sadduccees, who denied the resurrection of the dead, immortality, and the existence of angels and spirits.[539] Joseph Glanvill was distressed that "there is no one, that is not very much a stranger to the world but knows how *Atheism* and *Infidelity* have advanced in our days, and how openly they now dare to show themselves in asserting and disputing their vile cause."[540] The great danger to Christian belief, which so disquieted Glanvill and like-minded others, came in part from the new 'mechanical philosophy' of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. Sometimes called the 'father of modern philosophy' René Descartes' (1596-1650) notion of a separation of matter from spirit--thus excluding the possibility of mysterious entities, powers, or demons--was at the heart of the controversy. Cartesian philosophy reduced living creatures and the natural

538 Meric Casaubon (1599-1671) Of Credulity and Incredulity Against the Sadducism of the Times in Denying Spirits, Witches, etc. (1668).
539 O E D 'Sadducee.'
540 Glanvill, qtd. in Kors and Peters 300.

world to mechanistically driven automatons. Steering dangerously close to atheism, Descartes, and some of his followers, did not openly dispute the reality of God but rather cast him in the role of the great clockmaker and initial creator of the universe.

Debunkers and sceptics of the witch hunt were also criticized as promoters of atheism and Sadducism, men such as Reginald Scot (1538-99) Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584), who denied the reality of spirits and witches;[541] George Gifford (1548-) A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers (1587) and A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes (1593),[542] who though he was a believer in the existence of witches had reservations about the validity of the witch hunt; and John Webster (1610-82) The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft (1677) who argued "there is nothing but couzenage [deceit] and melancholy [mental illness] in the whole business of the feats of witches."[543]

The driving force behind much of this enquiry, for both supporters and sceptics of paranormal phenomena, was the Royal Society. The Royal Society was originated in a meeting that took place at Gresham College, London, 28 November 1660.[544] The Society could boast among its members, John Aubrey, Isaac Newton, and Samuel Pepys.[545]

In Scotland, fulminations against Sadducism can be found as early as

541 Sidney Anglo, "Reginald Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft: Scepticism and Sadduceeism." The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft, ed. Sidney Anglo (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) 129.

542 Alan MacFarlane, "A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford's Discourse and Dialogue," The Damned Art 140-55.

543 John Webster, The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft 1677, qtd. in Hall 140.

544 On 10 May 1663, the Royal Society was formally incorporated by a charter granted by Charles II. Hall 169.

545 Edward J. Cowan, "Martin Martin and Second Sight," article forthcoming 1997-8.

the sixteenth century. King James VI had used the scriptures to prove the existence of spirits in his treatise Daemonologie (1597).[546] James framed his discourse "only to prove that such things are and may be,"[547] but also as a rebuttal to the arch-sceptic of witchcraft in Britain, Reginald Scot. Written before Scotland's witch hunt truly got underway, James was clearly incensed by the Discoverie: "Scot an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that ther can be such a thing as Witch-craft: and so mainteines the old error of the Sadducees, in denying of spirits."[548]

By the mid to late seventeenth century the debate was in full swing. In a letter written in 1659 by the Duke of Lauderdale to Richard Baxter (1615-91), Lauderdale begins with a statement of the problem:

> It is sad that the Sadducean, or rather atheistical denying of spirits, or their apparitions, should so far prevail; and sadder, that the clear testimonies of so many ancient and modern authors should not convince them. But why should I wonder, if those who believe not Moses and the prophets, will not believe though one should rise from the dead?

Lauderdale's religious bias becomes evident. He continues:

> One great cause of the hardening of these infidels is, the frequent impostures which the Romanists obtrude on the world in their exorcisms and pretended miracles. Another is the too great credulity of some who make everything witchcraft which they do not understand; and a third may be the ignorance of some judges and juries, who condemn silly melancholy people upon their own confession, and perhaps slender proofs. None of these three

546 James VI 58.
547 James VI 76.
548 James VI xi.

> can be denied, but it is impertinent arguing to conclude, that because there have been cheats in the world, because there are some too credulous, and some have been put to death for witches, and were not, therefore all men are deceived.[549]

In 1676 Joseph Glanvill (1636-80), the English philosopher and active member of the Royal Society, and clearly concerned about the decline of belief in witches, opined, "those that deny the being of witches, do it not out of ignorance of those Heads of Argument of which they have probably heard a thousand times; But from an Apprehension that such a belief is absurd, and the thing impossible."[550] The 'Heads of Argument' to which Glanvill referred were furnished by such men as his friend Henry More. A letter from More to Glanvill, which was included in the highly influential book Saducismus Triumphatus (1681), reveals that More regarded as providential the unremitting supply of examples of apparitions and witchcraft "as may rub up and awaken their [sceptics] benumbed and lethargic minds into a suspicion at least, if not assurance that there are other intelligent beings besides those that are clad in heavy earth or clay."[551] It is "'the common consent and agreement of mankind' that these things exist or happen; to deny them is 'contrary to experience.'" Emphatically he argued, "that there are bad spirits, which will necessarily open a door to the belief that there are good ones, and lastly that there is a God."[552]

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549 Duke of Lauderdale, (letter) March 12, 1659, qtd. in Sharpe 219-20. Lauderdale visited the infamous Loudun convent in 1637 and was convinced that it was a fraud.

550 Joseph Glanvill, Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion (London, 1676) 3., qtd. in Bennett, Traditions of Belief 118.

551 Henry More in a letter to Joseph Glanvill, Saducismus Triumphatus (London, 1681) 16, qtd. in Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700: A Documentary History eds. Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters (1972; Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1986) 298.

552 More, qtd. in Bennett, Traditions of Belief 118, 164.

Henry More (1614-87), the philosopher known as the 'Cambridge Platonist,' collected many of the stories which appeared in Saducismus Triumphatus. Glanvill originally wrote Saducismus in 1666 under a different title, Philosophical Considerations Touching Witchcraft. After his death it was reissued twice (1681, 1688), co-authored and with additional material added by More.[553] In essence the book purported to prove firstly, that active, immaterial spirits exist and are known to humankind; secondly, that witchcraft and other forms of demonic activity are genuine occurrences providing indisputable evidence of the existence of spirits[554] and, naturally, of God.[555] The Saducismus was very popular in Scotland and may have been the inspiration for Robert Kirk, George Sinclair, John Frazer, and Martin Martin.[556]

More had been protesting against what he saw as the growing incredulity of his age long before his involvement with Glanvill's compelling tome. Initially a supporter of Descartes' mechanical philosophy, More soon came to think that though this theorization was valid within certain limits, the sphere where it was invalid was too great. In An Antidote against Atheism (1653) he asserts the primacy of spirit over matter.[557] A chapter heading in this, his first major book, reads:

> That the evasions of atheists against apparitions are so weak and silly, that it is an evident argument that they are convinced in their own judgment of the truth of these kinds of

553 'Saducismus Triumphatus' is literally 'Agnosticism Overcome.' A. Rupert Hall, Henry More: Magic, Religion and Experiment (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 137.
554 Hall 138.
555 Cowan, "Martin Martin and Second Sight."
556 Cowan, "Martin Martin and Second Sight."
557 Hall 129.

> phenomena, which forces them to answer as well as they can, though they be so ill provided.[558]

Use of the Bible as supporting evidence of a spirit world is frequent throughout many of these demonological and philosophical tracts, More being no exception. In 1681, he wrote of his great indignation of "the men of these times, that are so sunk into the dull sense of their bodies, that they have lost all belief or conceit that there are any such things as spirits in the world."[559] Yet, as More saw it, "if there were any modesty left in mankind, the histories of the Bible might abundantly assure men of the existence of angels and spirits."[560]

Richard Bovet (1641-), a great admirer of Glanvill and More, produced Pandaemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster (1684), which unfortunately for Bovet did not sell well. Using a combination of Biblical authority and his own acquaintance with popular attitudes towards witchcraft, he upheld his firm belief that the "Prince of Darkness hath a very large dominion among the sons of men," having "their familiars of the dark region, that assist them in the execution of their hellish purposes."[561]

George Sinclair (1630-), professor of natural philosophy at Glasgow,[562] and author of Satan's Invisible World Discovered (1685), included in the title page a "Choice Collection of Modern Relations, proving evidently *against the*

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558 Henry More, Antidote Against Atheism, 1655, qtd. in Chambers, Domestic Annals vol. 2: 475-6. More reissued an expanded edition in 1662.

559 Henry More, preface to Saducismus Triumphatus (1681), qtd. in Hall 138.

560 More, qtd. in Kors and Peters 298.

561 Richard Bovet, Pandaemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster (1684), qtd. in Kors and Peters 290.

562 Sinclair was appointed to the chair in 1654, but was removed from office in 1662 for non-compliance with episcopacy.

Atheists of this present age, that there are Devils, Spirits, Witches, and Apparitions, from authentic records and attestations of witnesses of undoubted veracity." Sinclair outlined the threat as thus:

> there are a monstrous rabble of men who, following the Hobbesian and Spinozian principles, slight religion and undervalue the Scripture, because there is such an express mention of Spirits and Angels in it, which their thick and plumbeous capacities cannot conceive. Whereupon they think, that all contained in the Universe comes under the nature of things material, and bodies only, and consequently no God, no Devil, no Spirit, no witch.[563]

This tract was popular in Scotland, and extracts of Sinclair's work was readily transferred to the flourishing Scottish industry for the superstitious chapbook.[564]

In the same year that Kirk was writing his study on fairies and second sight, Richard Baxter produced a digest of supernatural encounters, The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced (1691). For Baxter, nearly every one of the experiences he collected for this compilation he explained as either the providence of God or the work of the Devil.[565]

Three years after Kirk's death Alexander Telfair, minister of the parish of Rerrick, Kirkcudbright, felt a similar compulsion to fight this perceived threat to Christianity. He wrote a small pamphlet about a family in his parish

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563 George Sinclair, Satan's Invisible World Discovered 1685 (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1969) xxii.

564 William Harvey, Scottish Chapbook Literature (Paisley: Gardner, 1903) 107.

565 Bennett, Traditions of Belief 166.

who were haunted by an evil spirit.[566] Telfair modestly admitted that he had little desire to appear in print had not certain motives compelled him to publish. One of these motives he clearly stated as:

> the conviction and confutation of that prevailing spirit of atheism and infidelity in our time, denying, both in opinion and practice, the existence of spirits, either of God or Devils; and consequently a Heaven and Hell; and imputing the voices, apparitions, and actings of good or evil spirits to the melancholick disturbance or distemper of the brains and fancies of those who pretend to hear, see, or feel them.[567]

Though the bulk of material written against Sadducism appears in the seventeenth century, the debate continued into the eighteenth century. Two relatively late Scottish tracts defending witchcraft are the anonymous Witch-Craft Proven (1697), the author's name given only as a 'lover of truth,' and John Bell of Gladsmuir's The Tryal of Witchcraft (1705).[568]

As late as 1768, John Wesley bemoaned the sceptical climate in England:

> the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions, as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it; . . . the giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible.[569]

What is, without a doubt, of particular interest to the folklorist in these

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566 Alexander Telfair, A True Relation of an Apparition, Expressions, and Actings, of a Spirit, which infested the House of Andrew Mackie, in Ring-Croft of Stocking, in the Paroch of Rerrick, in the Stewardy of Kirkcudbright, in Scotland (Edinburgh, 1696) qtd. in Sharpe 232.

567 Telfair (letter) Edinburgh, December 21, 1695, qtd. in Sharpe 232.

568 Christina Larner, "Two Late Scottish Witchcraft Tracts: Witch-Craft Proven and The Tryal of Witchcraft," The Damned Art 227-45.

569 John Wesley, The Wesley Journal 25 May 1768, qtd. in Bennett, Traditions of Belief 164.

examples is the way in which folk beliefs have been utilized and defended as essential to Christian orthodoxy.[570] Though many of these books were written with the intention of providing propaganda in the fight against atheism, they are also reservoirs of folk belief and custom.

Robert Kirk was writing at a time when the Scottish elite were losing their convictions as to the reality of witchcraft, the number of persecutions had been in decline since the 1660s. He was battling against the tide of 'rationalism,' but he was clearly not fighting alone.

Seers, Second Sight, and the Subterranean People

It has been seen that, in the early modern period, there was a great surge of elite interest in the supernatural belief traditions of the subordinate classes, so much so that these beliefs were being used as propaganda in the polemics of the day. An aspect of popular (and elite) belief that received particular attention was second sight and prophecy.[571] Athol Gow found that the demonization of fairies, and the prosecution of witches upon this basis, had a concomitant impact upon popular seers and prophets, for this gift had similarly been associated with the fairies.[572] In 1574 and again in 1579, parliamentary legislation decreed that persons claiming "knowlege of prophecie, charming or utheris abusit sciences quhairby they persuaid the

570 Chambers, Domestic Annals vol. 2: 475.

571 The scholarly study of Scottish second sight and prophetic belief is a relatively overlooked phenomenon. The best modern study is an unpublished dissertation by Athol Gow, "Prophetic Belief in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1700," M. A. (U of Guelph, 1989). See also Elizabeth Sutherland, Ravens and Black Rain: The Story of Highland Second-Sight (London: Corgi, 1987). Motif D1825.1.

572 Gow 191.

people that they can tell thair weirdis, deathes and fortunes and sic uther fantasticall Imaginationes" would, on a first offence, lose an ear, but if repeated would be hanged.[573]

It was James VI's opinion in Daemonologie that second sight was not a genuine human capability but, like encounters with fairies and spirits, was a trick of the Devil. The curious Philomathes asks, "But what say ye to their fore-telling the death of sundrie persones, whome they alleage to have seene in these places?" The learned Epistemon responds, "I thinke it likewise as possible that the Devill may prophesie to them when he deceives their imaginationes in that sorte." Those who claimed an ability to foresee the future through the agency of fairies, were by no means spared James's cruel pronouncement to be "punished as any other witches."[574] By the King's interpretation, even Thomas the Rhymer was no more than the Devil's stooge.[575] Ironically, after James's claim to the English throne was recognized, the elite were quick to identify the Union of the Crowns as a fulfilment of Arthurian prophecy. James wholeheartedly embraced this identification and indeed promoted this prophetic speculation.[576]

The double standard of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is revealed; that while associations between reigning monarchs and fashionable courtly prophecy were encouraged, and indeed received with great interest and enthusiasm by the elite, ordinary women and men were being persecuted on grounds of possessing demonically inspired, and in some cases, fairy

573 The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland vol. 3. 140, qtd. in Gow 193. This is the first and only parliamentary legislation in Scotland regarding prophecy.
574 James VI 75.
575 Gow 78.
576 Gow 119-27.

related second sight. Accused witches, such as Bessie Dunlop (1576), Alison Peirson (1588), Christiane Lewingston (1597), Andrew Man (1598-9), Elspeth Reoch (1616), John Stewart (1618), Isobell Haldane (1623), and Isobel Sinclair (1633) all claimed that their foreknowledge of future events was derived from their fairy contacts.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth the debate among the literate classes as to the reality of such phenomena as witchcraft, ghosts, fairies, and second sight was well underway. Enlightenment rationalism and scepticism were beginning to impact upon the belief systems of the elite. Yet interest in the supernatural was substantial in this period. Coming mainly from both lowland Scotland and in England, scholarly inquisitiveness about highland culture, and especially second sight, was on an increase. Among the many who collected stories and examples of this phenomenon were George Sinclair, Lord Reay of Durness, Lord Tarbat, Martin Martin, John Frazer author of Deuteroscopia (1707), and Theophilus Insulanus, who in 1763, published A Treatise on the Second Sight.

Robert Kirk was similarly interested in this subject and devoted a great deal of attention to it in The Secret Common-Wealth. So that he would "not be thought singular in this disposition," Kirk appended a letter written by Lord Tarbat to Robert Boyle.[577] In the letter Tarbat recorded the stories he heard while he was "confined to abid in the North of Scotland" during the Cromwellian occupation (1651-60). Initially a sceptic--"I heard verie much but beleived verie litle of the second sight,"--Tarbat was to change his mind, relating occurrences of second sight told to him by Sir James MacDonald, Sir

577 Kirk 73.

Norman MacLeod, and Daniel Morison, and also incidents which he himself eyewitnessed.[578]

What is particularly unique about Kirk's inquiry into second sight is his insistence that only those persons who have this gift are able to see and communicate with the fairy folk. There had been, long before Kirk's investigations, associations between fairies and the second sight, but never before had anyone suggested such a co-dependent relationship as he did. Furthermore, Kirk insisted that, in virtually all cases, men alone were gifted with this faculty, "females being but seldom so qualified."[579] These observations are not consistent with other commentators on the subject. There are plenty of documented examples of alleged interludes with fairies by people who did not claim to have 'the sight,' just as there are several women who profess an ability to prophesy and foretell future events.

That fairies, who were usually only seen by "Seers or men of the second sight," did not, according to Kirk, necessarily preclude others from spying fairies. Those not invested with this particular skill could, if they so wished, see the subterranean dwellers only if they touched the second sighted person, thus channelling some of the seeing power, as it were. The "curious person" must "put his foot on the Seers foot, and the Seers hand is put on the inquirers head, who is to look over the wizards right shoulder."[580] The commingling or sharing of this special, ocular ability through physical contact is a relatively common theme found in myth, folktale and legend. For instance, there is a Shetland legend about a woman from Papa Stour who

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578 Kirk 73-80.

579 Kirk 51. He cites one woman from Colonsay as an exception to the rule, 68.

580 Kirk 64.

watched the trowies dance every Yule from the Brig-stanes, or stepping stones, in front of her house. Her husband would join her on occasion but could not see the dancing spectacle until he held his wife's hand or placed his foot on hers.[581]

The fairies have had strong ties with both witch belief and the dead. The phenomenon of second sight has similarly shared a long and close alliance with fairy belief. One of Scotland's most illustrious prophets, Thomas of Erceldoune, commonly known as Thomas the Rhymer, is a figure who, as J. A. H. Murray has claimed, "occupies a more important place in the legendary history of Scotland than in the authentic annals."[582] In both medieval romance and popular ballad, Thomas is given the gift of a "tongue that can never lie" by the Queen of Fairies.[583] For the many who believed that fairies could endow humans with special gifts, they needed only to look at Thomas Rhymer for confirmation. Walter Scott thought the bestowal of the "gift of prescience," as exemplified by Thomas Rhymer, or the obtaining of any kind of supernatural power from fairies became:

> the common apology of those who attempted to cure diseases, to tell fortunes, to revenge injuries, or to engage in traffic with the invisible world, for the purpose of satisfying their own wishes, curiosity, or revenge, or those of others. Those who practised the petty arts of deception in such mystic cases, being naturally desirous to screen their own impostures, were willing to be supposed to derive from the fairies, or from mortals transported to fairyland, the power necessary to effect the displays of art which they

581 John Nicholson, Folk-Tales and Legends of Shetland (N.p.: n.p., 1920) 10.
582 James A. H. Murray, ed. The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune 1875 (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1991) ix. Motif F329.1.
583 Child (37C:17).

pretended to exhibit.[584]

Scott was unimpressed, it would seem, with both seers and their alleged fraternity with the fairy folk: "and some of the Highland seers, even in our day, have boasted of their intimacy with the elves, as an innocent and advantageous connection." He continues, "one Macoan, in Appin, the last person eminently gifted with the second sight, professed to my learned and excellent friend, Mr. Ramsay, of Ochtertyre, that he owed his prophetic visions to their intervention."[585]

That the ability to see into the future was called a 'gift' can at times be misleading. There are comments made by Kirk that seers "have verie terrifying encounters with them [fairies]," [586] and by Martin Martin who observed that "seers are generally illiterate and well meaning people, and altogether void of design, nor could I ever learn that any of them make the least gain by it, neither is it reputable among' em to have that faculty."[587]

Robert Kirk and Fairy Belief

Christina Larner described The Secret Common-Wealth as "a remarkable mixture of neo-Platonic science, Highland mythology and fantasy which focused on fairyland and bore only a slight relationship to the material coming up in the criminal courts."[588] It would be true to say that Robert

584 Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft 120.
585 Scott, Minstrelsy 212. Motif D1825.1; F340.
586 Kirk 51.
587 Martin 309.
588 Larner, Enemies of God 33.

Kirk's treatise appears to have its own distinct ideas about fairy belief and second sight. Nevertheless, I would argue, contrary to Larner's opinion, that on the whole Kirk's material shares a strong relationship with the witch trial evidence and, for that matter, other primary source material from the period. Without a doubt, the sheer magnitude of the information that The Secret Common-Wealth imparts about seventeenth century fairy belief is unparalleled in any other source in terms of scale and detail. With an air of scientific precision, Kirk outlined "their nature, constitutions, actions, apparel, language, armour, and religion, with the quality of those amphibious Seers, that corresponds with them."[589]

The area in which Robert Kirk lived and worked was, in Walter Scott's view, "the most romantic district of Perthshire." Scott's proclivity to poetic flourishes and romanticized notions of landscape is well known, and is garnered to full effect in the description he gave of Kirk's native region:

> These beautiful and wild regions, comprehending so many lakes, rocks, sequestered valleys, and dim copsewoods, are not even yet quite abandoned by the fairies, who have resolutely maintained secure footing in a region so well suited for their residence.[590]

The feeling that particular areas and places are host to more supernatural creatures than others is not uncommon.[591] Kirk would have probably thought Scott's remark, or any others like it, somewhat absurd. He certainly would not have denied that the fairies lived within his parish, but neither

589 Kirk 102. Cowan, "Martin Martin and Second Sight" suggests that Kirk's scientific approach derives from his association with members of the Royal Society.
590 Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft 136.
591 See Conclusion for more on this aspect.

would he have thought them somehow unique to his area. Kirk believed that fairies were around us everywhere, above ground, under the ground, moving unseen amongst us, "as thick as atomes in the air."[592]

Kirk believed that fairies usually only appeared to men of the second sight. Why they should have revealed themselves to any 'superterranean' at all he assumed was:

> the courteous endeavours of our fellow creaturs in the invisible world to convince us (in opposition to Sadducees, Socinians and Atheists) of a Dietie, of Spirits; of a possible and harmless method of correspondence betwixt men and them, even in this lyfe.[593]

It was Kirk's contention that the fairies were a race of beings, living unseen by most mortal eyes only because they lived in another region or sphere of the world. This division between worlds was, for him, no different than the separation between humans and the undersea world. The fairies lived in another state "as some of us men do to fishes which are in another element." In the course of time, Kirk envisaged an open correspondence between humans and these "nimble and agil clans,"[594] once they were uncovered like any other of the world's many mysteries:

> Every age hath som secret left for it's discoverie, and who knows, but this entercourse betwixt the two kinds of rational inhabitants of the same Earth may be not only beleived shortly, but as freely intertain'd, and as well known, as now the art of navigation, printing, gunning, riding on sadles with stirrops, and the discoveries of the microscopes, which were sometimes as great a

592 Kirk 64. Motif F235.1.
593 Kirk 82.
594 Kirk 95.

wonder, and as hard to be beleiv'd.[595]

The details and observations that Kirk provided about what fairies are, and what they do, has been scattered throughout this thesis and integrated with various other source material. Much of what he wrote tells us something about the general conception people living in the seventeenth century had of the fairies. His comments also reveal something deeper, more personal. Kirk expressed, not just his belief in the concrete reality of fairies and second sight, but how such phenomena fitted into his own worldview. Glimpses of an even wider cosmology are frequently displayed, and an almost philosophical stance taken. His approach to the life and death of fairies, incorporates reincarnation, and projects the notion of the great circle of life:

> they live much longer than wee, yet die at last, or least vanish from that state: For 'tis one of their tenets, that nothing perisheth, but (as the Sun and Year) everie thing goes in a circle, lesser or greater, and is renewed and refreshed in it's revolutiones, as 'tis another, that every body in the creatione, moves, (which is a sort of life:) and that nothing moves but what has another animall moving on it, and so on, to the utmost minutest corpuscle that's capable to be a receptacle of lyfe.[596]

Kirk held an almost neo-platonic conception of the universe, divided into regions. In descending order, he describes seven major spheres: Heaven exists in the circumference of the earth; living in the highest region of the air is the "Manucodiata" or Bird of Paradise; followed by common birds; then flies and insects at the lowest region of the air. On the earth's surface there are

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595 Kirk 90.

596 Kirk 55-6.

humans and beasts; under the surface of the earth and water are worms, otters, badgers, and fishes. At the centre of the earth is Hell.[597] He believed that there was "no such thing as a pure wilderness in the whol Universe."[598] Not even the middle caveties of the earth remained empty in his view, pointing to the underground caves of Wemyss in Fife, as his proof.[599]

The fairies were, in Kirk's view, part of God's creation yet had an ambiguous relationship to Christianity. They "have nothing of the Bible" but used "collected parcels," or portions of the Bible, for charms and counter-charms. These charms could not be used to protect themselves, probably because they were not Christian, but were used "to operat on other animals."[600] He seems to have thought that the fairies were aware that they would probably suffer for this lack of Christianity when judgment day came, "Some men say their continuall sadness is because of their pendulous state . . . uncertain what at the last revolution will becom of them."[601] Whatever their precise relationship to Christianity was, the fairies were still subject to God's command. Kirk states, "our verie subterraneans are expresly said to bow to the nam of Jesus,"[602] an interpretation he made based on a line from Philippians 2:10, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

Overall, Kirk portrays the fairies in a kinder, and more sympathetic role than is typical of other descriptions from the early modern era. He states

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597 Kirk 87-8. See Table 4 for a possible interpretation of Kirk's description.
598 Kirk 51.
599 Kirk 88. He also refers to the caves in Malta. Motif F92.
600 Kirk 57.
601 Kirk 57. ML 5050; ML5055.
602 Kirk 92.

that although "one of them is stronger than manie men, yet do not inclyne to hurt mankind, except by commission for a gross misdemeanor."[603] However, he was very aware of the potential danger fairies posed to humans. Kirk personally examined a woman by the name of "NcIntyr," in the presence of another clergyman.[604] Reminiscent of the experience of people such as Alison Peirson or Elspeth Reoch, this woman of forty never recovered from years of fairy abductions and abuses. Based on her own accounts and those of her family, Kirk outlined her condition:

> she took verie litle, or no food for several years past, that she tarry'd in the fields over night, saw, and convers'd with a people she knew not, having wandred in seeking of her sheep, and sleept upon a hillock, and finding hirselfe transported to another place befor day, The woman had a child sinc that time, and is still prettie melanchollious and silent, hardly ever seen to laugh.[605]

There are several themes, motifs, and concepts which emerge from Kirk's Secret Common-Wealth. Fundamentally, he argued that the fairies are a distinct species, possessing intelligence, endowed with supernatural powers, and having "light changable bodies . . . best seen in twilight." They are liminal creatures *par excellence*, living in a state "betwixt man and angell."[606] Using Biblical authority to back him up, he defended the existence of fairies in order to prove the reality of spirits, angels, demons, and the Devil. To disbelieve in fairies, was in Kirk's reasoning, the first step to atheism and a threat to God.

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603 Kirk 95. Motif F253.1.1.

604 Kirk 70. 'Nic' is the feminine patronym of 'Mac.'

605 Kirk 70. Motif D2120; F360; F361.4.

606 Kirk 49-51.

His treatise was, in part, intended to save Christianity from what he saw as the impending mood of scepticism and Sadducism.

Fairyland itself existed in the 'other' space. Kirk believed that this enchanted zone was located underground, and usually inside particular fairy hills. The fairies frequently moved around and amongst us, unseen by most human eyes. Typically only men with the second sight, who shared a special relationship with them, were capable of seeing into this parallel world and could communicate with them. It was possible for humans to physically pass over the boundary demarcating this world from the Otherworld, though generally this occurred accidentally or involuntarily. The spirits of the dead were also connected to this underworld, yet they were distinct from the fairy race. Impressionistically, the fairies are not Christian but, as part of God's creation, are still answerable to God.

The Secret Common-Wealth is an incomparable legacy of the fairy and second sight belief traditions of early modern Scotland. As Stewart Sanderson said of Kirk, "he was, in the truest sense, a scholar, a gentleman, and a Christian, who strove in all humility to discharge his duties and exercise his talents in the cause of his faith."[607]

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607 Sanderson 20.

Conclusion

Farewell LychnobiousPeople

> 'What are ye, little mannie? and where are ye going?' inquired the boy, his curiosity getting the better of his fears and his prudence. 'Not of the race of Adam,' said the creature, turning for a moment in his saddle: 'the People of Peace shall never more be seen in Scotland.'[608]

One Sunday morning, in the small hamlet of Burn of Eathie, while all the inhabitants were in church, two children, a boy and girl, stayed behind. Just as the shadow on the sundial fell on noon hour, the brother and sister observed a number of figures on horseback riding by:

> The horses were shaggy, diminutive things, speckled dun and grey; the riders, stunted, misgrown, ugly creatures, attired in antique jerkins of plaid, long grey cloaks, and little red caps, from under which their wild uncombed locks shot out over their cheeks and foreheads.[609]

As the last in the procession of "uncouth and dwarfish" riders went by, the boy plucked up the courage to ask who the riders were. It was revealed that what the children had witnessed was the departure of the last fairies from Scotland. This story was recorded, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by Hugh Miller. The final farewell of the fairies is a theme that has always

608 Hugh Miller, The Old Red Sandstone (1841; London: Dent, 1922) 215. Motif F251.10.
609 Miller, The Old Red Sandstone 215.

been a part of the fairy tradition, even as new encounters are alleged in every generation.[610] Only time will tell if our own generation will create a similar tradition of a last parting gesture on behalf of the fairy folk.

Belief in fairies has been remarkably tenacious throughout most of history. Gillian Bennett comments on the fact that although the intellectual fashion since the Reformation has been strongly set against supernatural beliefs, casting them out as absurdities or impossibilities, supernatural traditions have survived the onslaught and continued unabated, "like elastic, stretching and thinning out rather than letting itself be severed completely."[611] One reason fairy belief has endured for so long is, in the words of Lauri Honko, that "belief in the existence of spirits is founded not upon loose speculation, but upon concrete, personal experiences, the reality of which is reinforced by sensory perception."[612] A possible explanation for its relative decline in the twentieth century is not, perhaps, that people are no longer experiencing the fairy phenomenon, but that the language used to express that same experience has changed. A theory that has been gaining ground in recent years is that fairy belief has never really left us, it has simply adapted to the modern, technological age and transposed into UFO sightings and abduction narratives. Jacques Vallee, the first person to consider together fairy belief and UFO lore, argues that UFOs are: "nothing but a resurgence of a deep stream in human culture known in older times under various names. . .

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610 There is a similar tradition in England where the fairies were said to have taken their leave at the Rollright Stones, Oxfordshire. This was witnessed by an old man called Will Hughes who saw the fairies dancing around the King Stone. See A. J. Evans, Folk-Lore Journal 6 (1895) 6. Refer also to chapter one, 36-45.

611 Bennett, Traditions of Belief 118-9.

612 Honko 10.

the modern, global belief in flying saucers and their occupants is identical to an earlier belief in the fairy faith."[613] Peter Rojcewicz brings together a convincing number of analogies between the two traditions, though he is wise to note that we should be wary of ignoring the important phenomenological differences.[614]

Every folklorist has been told that some places have, and some people know, more 'folklore' than anywhere or anyone else. In Canada I have heard it said that rural Ontario has more 'folklore' than urban Ontario; Newfoundland has more 'folklore' than Ontario; the outports have more 'folklore' than St. John's; the older person knows more 'folklore' than the younger person, and usually that person is the last one in the community to remember or believe in a particular piece of 'folklore.'

The word 'folklore,' is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied terms in the English language. Like the word 'superstition,' which originally meant any non-Roman belief,[615] folklore is often used to denote someone else's beliefs and traditions. It is something which happens somewhere else. This sentiment is by no means new. In 1584 Reginald Scot remarked "as among faint-hearted people; namely women, children and sick-folk [supernatural beliefs and traditions] usually swarmed: so among strong bodies and good stomachs they never used to appear."[616] James VI's explanation is

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613 Jacques Vallee, Passport to Magonia, From Folklore to Flying Saucers (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1969) qtd. in Peter M. Rojcewicz, "Fairies, UFOs, and Problems of Knowledge," The Good People ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland P, 1991) 480-1.

614 Rojcewicz 508, note 12.

615 Edward James Cowan, "Burns and Superstition," Love and Liberty. Robert Burns: A Bicentenary Celebration ed. Kenneth Simpson (East Linton: Tuckwell P, 1997) 231.

616 Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584), qtd. in Bennett, Traditions of Belief 100.

not far off Scot's, though given James's disdain for Scot, he would probably be mortified to hear that: "But what is the cause that this kinde of abuse is thought to be more common in such wild partes of the worlde, as *Lap-land,* and *Fin-land,* or in our North Iles of *Orknay* and *Schet-land.*" It is "because where the Devill findes greatest ignorance and barbaritie, there assayles he grosseliest, as I gave you the reason wherefore there was moe witches of women kinde nor men."[617]

An eighteenth century chapbook entitled History of the Haverel Wives reflects the prejudice, not only of 'superstition' being a foreign problem but also as a statement of anti-Catholicism: "most of the priests, . . . are 'dead and rotten, and the rest o' them gade awa to Italy, where the auld Pape their faither, the deil, the witches, brownies, and fairies dwal.'" William Harvey, commenting on this passage, noted that it was a "prevalent opinion among the common people . . . that witches, brownies, and other 'unco bodies,' were inhabitants of foreign countries." In The History of John Cheap the Chapman, there is a reference to London as being home to supernatural creatures. Cheap explains to a woman at Tweedside that he had been at Temple-bar, in London, when she answered "Yea, yea, lad, an ye cum'd frae London ye're no muckle worth, for the folks there awa' is a' witches and warlocks, deils, brownies, and fairies."[618]

Walter Scott established the part of Scotland most dear to his heart as the centre of supernatural activity, "but though the church, in the border counties, attracted little veneration, no part of Scotland teemed with

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617 James VI 69.

618 William Harvey, Scottish Chapbook Literature (Paisley: Gardner, 1903) 53.

superstitious fears and observances more than they did."[619] Furthermore, "in no part of Scotland, indeed, has the belief in Fairies maintained its ground with more pertinacity than in Selkirkshire."[620] J. A. MacCulloch said of supernatural entities, "Scotland has, in fact, always been a peculiar haunt of such beings."[621] He was evidently a subscriber to the notion encapsulated by Scott that "fairy superstition in England . . . was of a more playful and gentle, less wild and necromantic character, than that received among the sister people."[622]

The sentiment that there is "a natural connexion . . . between wild scenes and wild legends"[623] is, by no means only the judgement of past commentators. In the 1990s fairy belief, and indeed 'folklore' generally, is still sometimes pushed out to geographically remote areas. Patrick Harpur comments that "old Celtic strongholds" remain the favoured haunts of the fairies: the Scottish highlands, the Welsh mountains, the West of Ireland, and the West Country in England.[624] Jennifer Westwood states that while fairy traditions "remained current in England, Wales and Lowland Scotland down to the nineteenth century, actual belief in fairies and the related Second Sight survived latest among the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders of Scotland because they lived in the most inaccessible part of Britain, further out of the reach of authority and more remote from the 'civilizing' influences--

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619 Scott, Minstrelsy xliii.
620 Scott, Minstrelsy 224.
621 MacCulloch 231-2.
622 Scott, Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft 150.
623 Miller, Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland 442.
624 Patrick Harpur, "Away with the Fairies," Country Living May 1996.

including the English language--than the rest of the population."[625]

It is hard to know why the fairies are consistently relegated to a supposedly dim and distant place or past. In some cases, the reason appears to be pejorative; a particular locale or age is deemed 'superstitious' in the sense that it is somehow 'backward' or 'uncivilized.' Frequently, though not necessarily intentionally, a patronizing image of a quaint, rural, untarnished and 'simple' time or place is constructed. In other instances, it is a hearkening back for something that appears to have been lost in one's own lifetime or immediate surroundings. Barbara Rieti found that by pushing fairies back in time, the Newfoundlander's narratives about fairies became "emblematic" of a "vanished happy past."[626]

The fairies have been, in the main, connected with the concept of 'wildness' or 'wilderness.' However, like foxes and squirrels, some fairies are moving into the cities and towns. In March of 1966 Ogilvie Crombie, while sitting on a bench in Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Gardens, met a faun called Kurmos. He was a boy, about three feet tall, wore no clothing but had shaggy legs and cloven hooves, pointed chin and ears, and little horns on his head. Ogilvie conversed with the faun, who confided that he lived in the garden and helped the trees to grow. Nature spirits, said the faun, had lost interest in humans "since they have been made to feel that they are neither believed in

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625 Jennifer Westwood, foreword Robert Kirk. Walker Between Worlds, ed. R. J. Stewart (Longmead, Dorset: Element, 1990) ix.

626 Rieti, Strange Terrain 99. See also Linda-May Ballard who notes that on Rathlin Island, situated off the coast of Northern Ireland, fairies are probably "less part of the actual belief system of the islanders than they were a generation ago." However, she wonders if an increasing reluctance to admit to belief in fairies is a part of the complex of the "idea that fairy belief is fading and belongs to the past." "Fairies and the Supernatural on Reachrai," The Good People ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland P, 1991) 48, 91.

nor wanted." Ogilvie invited Kurmos back to his flat and the faun accepted. On a later occasion, near the National Gallery, Ogilvie met another creature of the same description as Kurmos, but this one was taller than himself. They walked together through the streets of Edinburgh and the being asked Ogilvie many questions, wanting to know if he was afraid of him. It played the pipes for him, and then left. Ogilvie continued to meet a variety of Otherworldly creatures including the Elf King at Rosemarkie, and, on the island of Iona, Pan, whom he maintained was the god of all nature spirits.[627] Janet Bord mentions a few twentieth century urban experiences with the fairies. In England, for instance, Mrs. Claire Cantlon, a past secretary of the Faery Investigation Society, claimed her "house and garden in Putney" was overrun with fairies and gnomes, and in September 1979, four children reported seeing around sixty little men, with long white beards and Noddy-style caps on their heads, in Wollaton Park, Nottingham.[628]

The need to explain, from a 'scientific' or 'rational' perspective, what fairies are and why people believe in them is something that this thesis has avoided. What is important is that they are real to those who believe in their existence or have experienced this phenomenon first-hand. Nonetheless, some comment on the various 'roles' or 'functions' that have been ascribed to fairy belief is in order.

The fairies have offered explanations for the unexplainable. Stewart Sanderson remarked, "there is a human need to come to terms in some way with eternal mysteries . . . the unpredictable intervention of the unknown in

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627 Paul Hawken, The Magic of Findhorn (1975; Glasgow: Collins, 1983) 134-69.
628 Janet Bord, Fairies: Real Encounters with the Little People (London: O'Mara, 1997) 55, 131.

our daily life." In folk belief, the fairies "constitute a threat to humankind: they represent hidden and inimical powers, ever ready to disturb the tenor of daily life."[629] Barbara Rieti found that the fairies make "excellent scapegoats for human failings and problems, and have taken the blame for illness, violence, disability and death."[630] Fairy legends, tales, poems, ballads, lullabies, charms, and so on, can be seen as conveyors of useful cultural knowledge, a suggestion also made by David Buchan about ballads which take the Otherworld as their theme.[631] William Bascom, who outlined education as one of the four functions attributable to folklore, argued that "folklore operates within a society to insure conformity to the accepted cultural norms."[632] In this way, it is possible to see how the fairies could be used "as a pedagogic device."[633] Keith Thomas is convinced that fairy belief had a strong social function, that of enforcing a code of conduct. For instance, the belief that one would have no trouble with fairies if the house was kept clean and tidy, encouraged women to be diligent housewives or servants. An example of what Thomas had in mind is to be found in Robert Herrick's seventeenth century poem which reinforces the gender stereotype:

> If ye will with Mab find grace,
> Set each platter in his place:
> Rake the fire up, and get
> Water in, ere sun be set.
> Wash your pails, and cleanse your dairies;
> Sluts are loathsome to the fairies:
> Sweep your house; who doth not so,

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629 Sanderson 45.

630 Rieti, Strange Terrain 212. See also Narváez, "Newfoundland Berry Pickers 'In the Fairies'" 354-8.

631 Buchan, "Taleroles and the Otherworld Ballads" 254.

632 Bascom 297.

633 Bascom 293.

Mab will pinch her by the toe.[634]

As was surmised by Rieti, there are many possible reasons for putting a fairy interpretation on an event; "to have a good story, to make things exciting, to make one's self interesting," as an excuse for getting lost, "showing up where one should not be, or not showing up where one should."[635] Walter Scott relates the tale of a man, employed to pull heather from Peatlaw hill, near Carterhaugh, who fell asleep on a fairy ring and when he awoke found himself in Glasgow. "That he had been carried off by the Fairies, was implicitly believed by all, who did not reflect, that a man may have private reasons for leaving his own country, and for disguising his having intentionally done so."[636] The fairies could also act as a cover for "violence, abductions, or other deviant behaviour."[637] Evidence of fairies being used as a cover for human crimes is almost impossible to confirm. J. G. Dalyell recorded the 1624 Orkney trial of James Houston, who may have murdered his own grandson, but told the boy's mother "the fairie had tane him away."[638]

Sudden illness or death was often thought to be the handiwork of supernatural agents. Thomas Cors, tried in Orkney in 1643, said that to be struck dumb or suffer paralysis was called "the phairie."[639] Changelings have been the subject of much theorizing and 'logical' explanations. W. Y. Evans-

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634 Thomas 730; Robert Herrick, "The Fairies," Hesperides: Poems by Robert Herrick, 1648, ed. Herbert P. Horne (London: Walter Scott, n.d.) 142. ML 7012.

635 Rieti, Strange Terrain 120.

636 Scott, Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border 224.

637 Rieti, Strange Terrain 120. See also Narváez, "Newfoundland Berry Pickers 'In the Fairies'" 354-8.

638 Trial of James Houston, 22 Jan. 1624. Records of Orkney 57, qtd. in Dalyell 539.

639 Trial of Thomas Cors, 6 April 1643. Records of Orkney 261, qtd. in Dalyell 539.

Wentz outlines four possible, though improbable, theories: Firstly, the children were kidnapped by pre-Celtic peoples (Picts), or Druids, as recruits for their diminished force. Secondly, specially chosen, healthy children were used in sacrificial rituals, while sick children were rejected for this purpose. Thirdly, the soul of the human had been abstracted by disembodied spirits or magicians. Fourthly, that a demon had possessed a human being, either by entering the body while the soul was out of it during sleep, or by expelling the soul and occupying the vacant place.[640]

The desire to explain what changelings 'really' are has often led to medical or physical assumptions. In 1891 Edwin Sidney Hartland surmised that children who were called changelings "were invariably deformed or diseased."[641] That changelings are a "folk explanation" for disabled children with "identifiable congenital disorders" is the contention of Susan Schoon Eberly.[642] The medical idea of an infant's "failure to thrive" is compared with changeling accounts by Joyce Underwood Munro.[643] Barbara Rieti cautions against relying exclusively on scientific or medical interpretations of changelings. She states:

> while there can be little doubt that such 'fairy' afflictions have their origin in physical and mental disturbances, to say that their main role is etiology, that is, to 'explain' the disturbances to tradition-bearers, is a limited view which

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640 Evans-Wentz 245-51.

641 Edwin Sidney Hartland, The Science of Fairy Tales 1891 (Detroit: Singing Tree P, 1986) 110.

642 Susan Schoon Eberly, "Fairies and the Folklore of Disability: Changelings, Hybrids, and the Solitary Fairy," The Good People ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland P, 1991) 227.

643 Joyce Underwood Munro, "The Invisible Made Visible: The Fairy Changeling as a Folk Articulation of Failure to Thrive in Infants and Children," The Good People ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland P, 1991) 251-83.

> ignores the important contextual fact that the stories are told long after the original event, by people with no particular need to explain anything.

That changeling narratives only "explain" mental and physical conditions is inadequate, in her view. The "narrative value" must, therefore, derive from another, or additional, source. One possibility, she suggests, is the "tension between nature [fairies] and culture" which she argues is one of the "underlying dynamics of Newfoundland fairy tradition as a whole."[644] Furthermore,

> as applied to 'normal' children--cranky, crying, wakeful, tiresome--changeling tales could express normal, but personally and socially unacceptable, parental feelings of anger and rejection. As a sublimating device, they are a model of structural economy: the 'real' child (beautiful, happy, lovable) is safely removed, and abuse heaped upon the ugly, cantankerous substitute.[645]

But perhaps there is a fifth possibility--the legitimation of infanticide. It may be that unwanted or sickly children were given fairy origins and subsequently left out, or exposed, to be taken by their own kind. The death of the child thus provided a socially acceptable method, of ridding the community, and the parents, of potential burdens upon themselves.

The fairy world is an inversion of the human world. The unpredictability of daily existence is reflected in fairy belief. Nearly everything

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[644] Barbara Rieti, "'The Blast' in Newfoundland Fairy Tradition," The Good People ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland P, 1991) 287.
[645] Rieti, Strange Terrain 43-4.

in Elfland--time, topography, even the fairies themselves--can change, alter, or metamorphose. Those who found themselves in situations of enchantment were often also in a process of transition, specifically alienation from their communities--a familiar theme in fairy narratives. To be separated or distinguished in some way, or to break with conformity, was to be endangered. Yet even here the inversion principle can be distinguished. Removal from the community, or to be marked out in some way from its members, could sometimes attract increased power or status. To be alone in fairy places, and to have communication with fairy folk, often left the individual with special gifts, such as second sight, prophecy, an ability to heal, or musical talent.

Fairies were firmly connected to the landscape and deeply rooted to the soil. The importance of respecting the land frequented by the fairies was widely recognized. It was bad luck to interfere with or try to remove trees, bushes, stones, ancient buildings, or anything else believed to have fairy associations. Misfortune, illness, or even death might result from tampering with fairy property. Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, for example, noted that in Ireland a number of Iron Age ring forts, which came to be known as "fairy forts," were preserved from demolition due to their Otherworld associations.[646] That some Scots shared similar sentiments is indicated by the tale of Sir Godfrey MacCulloch of Galloway. One evening, near his home, he was accosted by a "little old man, in green and mounted upon a white palfrey." He told MacCulloch that he lived underneath his house and that he had "great reason to complain of the direction of the drain, or common sewer," which

646 Ó Giolláin 199.

emptied itself directly into his best room. A concerned MacCulloch assured the old man that he would redirect the offending drain, which he promptly did. Several years later, MacCulloch was brought to trial for the murder of a neighbour and condemned to be beheaded on the Castle-hill, Edinburgh. As he approached the scaffold, his "good neighbour" suddenly appeared on a white horse, Sir Godfrey jumped up behind him, and they sped off "and neither he nor the criminal were ever again seen."[647] In actual fact, Sir Godfrey MacCulloch was found guilty of murdering William Gordon on 2 October, 1690. He escaped abroad, thus averting justice for some years. He later returned to Scotland where he was apprehended and brought to trial in Edinburgh. On the 25 March, 1697 he was executed.[648]

Other sites were associated with more mundane matters:

> He wha gaes by the fairy ring,
> Nae dule nor pine shall see;
> And he wha cleans the fairy ring,
> An easy death shall dee.

The same dire warning is conveyed in a Berwickshire rhyme recorded by George Henderson:

> He who tills the fairies' green,
> Nae luck again shall hae;
> And he who spoils the fairies' ring,
> Betide him want and woe;
> For weirdless days and weary nights
> Are his till his dying day.[649]

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647 Scott, Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border 217. ML 5075. Motif F221; F361.4 (c).

648 Chambers, Domestic Annals of Scotland 174-6.

649 George Henderson, The Popular Rhymes, Sayings, and Proverbs of the County of Berwick (Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1856) 111-2. Motif C523.2; C532; F361.

Likewise:

> Where the scythe cuts, and the sock rives,
> Hae done wi' fairies and bee-bykes!

In other words, mowing or ploughing leads to the eradication of bee-hives and fairies alike, for, as Robert Chambers remarked, in various places fairies were said to have been seen, gathered together, to "take a formal farewell of the district, when it had become, from agricultural changes, unfitted for their residence."[650]

The Christian elements that emerge in the witch confessions, such as those of Bessie Dunlop and Andrew Man, have been blamed on the circulation of treatises on demonology, but it was more likely an unconscious reaction which "spread a christian veil over a more ancient stratum of beliefs" distorting its meaning in a "diabolistic direction."[651] It should also be said that belief in Christianity and belief in the fairies were not necessarily incompatible. People were, as they still are, quite capable of adhering to more than one belief system, no matter how incongruous such beliefs may seem. Martin Martin's account of his summer visit to St. Kilda in 1697 revealed that though the people were staunch Christians, they believed that the rocks and hills were places where "spirits are embodied," and that these spirits could appear wherever they chose in an instant.[652] Rieti's statement that there is individual choice involved in "which aspects of a body of tradition are accepted for 'belief'" can be applied here. She observed that "people do not unthinkingly accept a whole 'set' of traditions, but evaluate them according to

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650 Chambers, Popular Rhymes of Scotland 324.
651 Ginzburg, Ecstasies 97.
652 Martin Martin, A Voyage to St. Kilda, 1697, 1753 (Edinburgh: Mercat P, 1986) 43.

experience, authenticity, and other criteria; they are selective in what they take from the reservoir of available ideas and how they use it."[653]

This thesis has attempted to investigate fairy belief, mainly in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scotland. The connection of the fairies with the landscape has been explored, as has the journey to Fairyland, fairy society, and the association between fairies and the dead, with witches, and with second sight. The process of enchantment, and its corollary disenchantment, has also been discussed, as have the 'marvellous gifts' thought to have been conferred upon humans by the fairies. The assault on fairy belief, mainly in the post-Reformation era, took place at the same time as the attack upon folk culture in general, but despite the best efforts of church and state fairy belief survived. Perhaps what is even more remarkable were the efforts of Robert Kirk, and others, to assert the reality of fairies in commencing a rearguard action against the forces of the Enlightenment. The nature of fairy belief from the eighteenth century to the present remains to be investigated; it offers a rich field for future research.

Eve Blantyre Simpson has remarked that "as we have grown in civilization we have lost many instincts once granted to mortals."[654] Simpson's implication is that the fairies have not left us but we no longer have the ability to recognize them. Such an observation was apparently not shared by an old lady from Quarff, Shetland who when told that people in the twentieth century no longer saw fairies she answered, "Yea, dat dø dey, bit dir

653 Rieti, Strange Terrain 98.
654 Simpson 89.

faird ta tell onybody."[655]

[655] Reid Tait vol. 2 (1951) 24-5. "Yes, that they do, but they're afraid to tell anyone."

Table 1 Folk Motifs

Migratory Legend
ML 4075 Visits to fairy dwellings.
ML 4077 Caught in Fairyland.
ML5006 The ride with the fairies.
ML 5050 The fairies' prospect of salvation.
ML 5055 The fairies' attitude to the Christian faith.
ML 5070 Midwife to the fairies.
ML 5075 Removing a building over a Fairy's house.
ML 5080 Food from the Fairies.
ML 5081 Fairies steal food.
ML 5082 Fairies borrow food.
ML 5085 The Changeling.
ML 5086 Release from Fairyland.
ML 5095 Fairy woman pursues man.
ML 6045 Drinking-cup stolen from the fairies.
ML 6050 The Fairy Hat.
ML 6055 The fairy cows.
ML 7012 The Fairy revenge for negligence.
ML 8010 Hidden Treasures.

Motif
A1135 Origin of winter weather.
A1535.5 Beltane.
B120.0.1 Animals have second sight.
B733 Animals can see spirits and scent danger.
C46 Taboo: offending fairy.
C51.4.3 Taboo: spying on fairies.
C211.1 Taboo: eating in Fairyland.
C311.1.2 Taboo: looking at fairies.
C420 Taboo: uttering secrets.
C420.2 Taboo: not to speak about a certain happening.
C433 Taboo: uttering name of malevolent creature.
C515 Taboo: plucking flowers.
C523.2 Taboo: disturbing fairy ring.
C532 Taboo: digging in fairy haunts.
D562 Transformation through bathing.
D610 Repeated transformations from one form into another.
D631 Fairy changes size at will.
D661 Transformation as punishment.

D700 Disenchantment.
D757 Disenchantment by holding enchanted person during successive transformations.
D766 Disenchantment by liquid.
D926 Magic well.
D931 Magic stone.
D950 Magic tree.
D950.6 Magic ash tree.
D950.10 Magic apple tree.
D950.13 Magic hawthorn.
D965 Magic plant.
D978 Magic herbs.
D1030 Magic banquet.
D1162 Magic light.
D1184 Magic thread.
D1222 Magic horn (musical).
D1242 Magic fluid.
D1244 Magic salve (ointment).
D1273.1.1 Three as a magic number.
D1273.1.3 Seven as a magic number.
D1273.1.5 Twelve as a magic number.
D1381 Magic object protects from attack.
D1385 Magic object protects against evil spirits.
D1385.2 Plant as antidote to spells and enchantments.
D1385.2.5 Ash (quicken rowan) protects against spells and enchantments.
D1500.1.1.2 Well with curative powers.
D1500.1.3 Magic trees heal.
D1500.1.4 Magic healing plant.
D1500.1.4.2. Magic healing leaves.
D1500.1.11 Magic healing drink.
D1516 Charms against elf-shot.
D1786 Magic power at crossroads.
D1825.1 Second sight.
D1896 Magic aging after years in Fairyland; person crumbles to dust.
D1960.2 King asleep in mountain.
D2011 Years thought days.
D2031 Magic illusion.
D2031.0.2 Fairies cause illusions.
D2066 Elf-shot.
D2083.3 Milk transferred from another's cow by magic.
D2087.6 Food stolen by magic.
D2098 Ships magically sunk.

D2120 Magic transportation.
D2125 Magic journey over water.
D2161 Magic healing power.
F81 Descent to lower world of dead (Hell, Hades).
F81.1 Orpheus.
F92 Entrance to lower world through spring, hole, or cave.
F103.1 (Baughman) 'Green children' visit world of mortals; continue to live with them.
F141 Water barrier to the Otherworld.
F162.1 Garden in Otherworld.
F162.2 Rivers in Otherworld.
F211 Fairyland under hollow knoll.
F211.0.1 Fairies live in prehistoric mounds.
F211.3 Fairies live under the earth.
F212 Fairyland under water.
F213 Fairyland on island.
F221 House of fairy.
F221.1 Fairy house disappears at dawn.
F222 Fairy castle.
F230 Appearance of fairies.
F233.1 Green fairy.
F233.6 Fairies fair (fine, white).
F234.0.2 Fairy as shape-shifter.
F234.1 Fairy in form of an animal.
F235.1 Fairies invisible.
F235.4.1 Fairies made visible through use of ointment.
F236.1 Colour of fairies' clothes.
F236.1.3 Fairies in white clothes.
F236.1.6 Fairies in green clothes.
F236.3.2 Fairies with red caps.
F236.6 Fairies wear gay clothes.
F239.4.1 Fairies are the same size as mortals.
F239.4.2 Fairies are the size of small children.
F239.4.3 Fairy is tiny.
F241 Fairies' animals.
F241.1 Fairies' horses.
F241.1.0.1 Fairy cavalcade.
F241.1.1.1 Fairies ride white horses.
F241.1.7 Fairies turn sticks and straws into horses.
F241.2 Fairies' cows.
F243 Fairies' food.
F244 Fairies' treasure.

F251.2 Fairies as souls of the departed.
F251.3 Unbaptised children as fairies.
F251.4 Fairies are children Eve hid from God.
F251.6 Fairies are fallen angels.
F251.10 Fairies are not children of Adam.
F251.11 Fairies are people not good enough for Heaven and not bad enough for Hell.
F252.1 Fairy King.
F252.2 Fairy Queen.
F253.1.1 Fairy with extraordinary physical strength.
F254.1 Fairies have Physical disabilities.
F257 Tribute taken from fairies by fiend at stated periods.
F261 Fairies dance.
F261.1.1 Fairies dance in fairy rings.
F262 Fairies make music.
F262.1 Fairies sing.
F262.2 Fairies teach bagpipe-playing.
F262.8 Fairy horns heard by mortals.
F263 Fairies feast.
F271.0.1 Fairies as craftsmen.
F271.4 Fairies work on cloth.
F271.4.3 Fairies spin.
F271.10 Fairies bake bread.
F282 Fairies travel through air.
F282.2 Formulas for fairies' travel through air.
F282.4(a) Mortal travels with fairies: feasts with them in various spots.
F301 Fairy lover.
F301.1.1.2 Girl summons fairy lover by plucking flowers.
F301.2 Fairy lover entices mortal girl.
F302.3.1 Fairy entices man into Fairyland.
F305 Offspring of fairy and mortal.
F320 Fairies carry people away to Fairyland.
F321 Fairies steal child from cradle.
F321.1 Changeling. Fairy steals child from cradle and leaves fairy substitute.
F321.1.2.2 Changeling is always hungry.
F321.1.2.3 Changeling is sickly.
F321.1.3 Exorcizing a changeling.
F321.1.4 Disposing of a changeling.
F321.1.4.3 Changeling thrown on fire, and thus banished.
F321.2 Charms against theft of children by fairies.
F322 Fairies steal man's wife.
F322.2 Man rescues his wife from Fairyland.

F328 Fairies entice people to their domains.
F329.1 Fairies carry off youth; he has gift of prophecy when he returns.
F330 Grateful fairies.
F332 Fairies grateful for hospitality.
F332.0.1 Fairy grateful to mortal for daily food.
F333 Fairy grateful to human midwife.
F335 Fairy grateful for loan.
F338 Fairies grateful to man who repairs their utensil or implements.
F340 Gifts from fairies.
F342.1 Fairy gold.
F343.21 Fairies give mortal skill in music.
F344 Fairies heal mortals.
F346 Mortals helped by fairies.
F347 Fairy as guardian spirit.
F348.7 Taboo: telling of fairy gifts: gifts cease.
F352 Theft of cup from fairies.
F352.1 Theft of cup from fairies when they offer mortal drink.
F360 Malevolent or destructive fairies.
F361 Fairy's revenge.
F361.3 Fairies take revenge on person who spies on them.
F361.3.3 Fairies blind person who watches them.
F361.4 Fairies take revenge on person who trespasses on their land.
F361.4 (c) Fairy complains of drain; man changes it; fairy later saves his life.
F362 Fairies cause diseases.
F363 Fairies cause death.
F365 Fairies steal.
F369.7 Fairies lead travellers astray.
F370 Visit to Fairyland.
F372 Fairies take human nurse to wait on fairy child.
F372.1 Fairies take human midwife to attend fairy woman.
F375 Mortals as captives in Fairyland.
F377 Supernatural lapse of time in Fairyland.
F377 (c) Person is in Fairyland for duration of one dance; months or years have passed.
F377 (d) Person returns from Fairyland; crumbles to dust.
F378.1 Taboo: touching ground on return from Fairyland.
F378.7 Taboo: eating fairy food while with fairies.
F379.1 Return from Fairyland.
F379.1.1 No return from Fairyland.
F379.3 Man lives with fairies seven years.
F380 Defeating or ridding oneself of fairies.
F382.1 Fairies fear the cross.

F382.2 Holy water breaks fairy spell.
F382.3 Use of God's name breaks fairy spell.
F382.4 Bible breaks fairy spell.
F383.2 Fairy unable to cross running stream.
F383.4 Fairy power ceases at cockcrow.
F384.2 (a) Knife powerful against fairies.
F384.3 Iron powerful against fairies.
F388 Fairies depart.
F391 Fairies borrow from mortals.
F399.4 Playful or troublesome fairies.
F451 Dwarfs.
F451.2 Appearance of dwarfs.
F460 Mountain spirits.
F480 House spirits.
F621 Strong man: tree puller.
F721.1 Underground passages.
G225 Witch's familiar spirit.
G241.4 Witch rides on object.
G243 Witches' Sabbath.
G263.4 Witch causes sickness.
G265.4 Witch causes disease or death of animals.
G265.9 Witch ruins crops.
G266 Witches steal.
G272.2.1 Rowan wood protects against spells.
G275.8.2 Witch overcome by help of fairy.
G283.1.2.3 Witches raise wind to sink ships.
G303.3.1 Devil in human form.
G303.3.3 Devil in animal form.
N411.12 Curse by witch.
N512 Treasure in underground chamber.
N538 Treasure pointed out by supernatural creature.
N570 Guardian of treasure.
N815 Fairy as helper.
R112.3 Rescue of prisoners from fairy stronghold.
V70.1.1 Beltane (May Day).
V70.3 Midsummer.
V70.6 Candlemas (Imbolg).
V70.50 Samhain (Halloween).
V134 Sacred wells.
V134.2 Offerings to holy wells.
Z72.1 A year and a day.

Tale Type
AT 400 (variant) The man in quest for his lost wife.
AT 425 (variant) Search for lost husband.
AT 503 Gifts of the Little People.
AT 930 The Prophecy.

Bruford index
F21 Absence for many years in the fairy hill, which seems only hours or minutes to the victim.
F22 Dancing in the Fairy Hill.
F34 Fairy host or sluagh.
F62 Fairy changeling.
F103 Learning tunes from the fairies.
F105 The gift of healing from the fairies.

Table 2 Witch Trials

All witch trials so far found that contain references to fairy belief.

Name	Place	Date
Bessie Dunlop	Lyne, Ayrshire	8 Nov. 1576
Alison Peirson	Byrehill	28 May, 1588
Katherine Ross Lady Fowlis	Ross-shire	22 July, 1590
Agnes Sampson	Nether Keythe	1590-1
Euphemia Makcalzane	Cliftonhall	9 June, 1591
Christiane Lewingston	Leith	12 Nov. 1597
Andrew Man	Aberdeen	1597-8
Thomas Lorn	Overton of Dyce	19 Jan. 1598-9
Walter Ronaldson	Kirktown of Dyce	20 Nov. 1601
Bartie Paterson	Newbattle	18 Dec. 1607
Jonet Drever	Orkney	1615
Katherine Caray	Orkney	June 1616
Katherine Jonesdochter	Shetland	2 Oct. 1616
Barbara Thomasdochter	Delting, Shetland	2 Oct. 1616
Elspeth Reoch	Caithness/Orkney	1616
John Stewart	Irvine	1618
Isobell Haldane	Perth	15 May, 1623
Janet Trall	Blackruthven/Perth	22 May, 1623
James Houston	Orkney	22 Jan. 1624
James Knarston	Orkney	1633
Isobel Sinclair	Orkney	Feb. 1633
Katherine Cragie	Orkney	1640
Thomas Cors	Orkney	6 April, 1643
Bessie Flinkar	Edinburgh	1661
Jonet Morison	Bute	18 Jan. 1662
Isobel Gowdie	Auldearn	13 April, 3 and 15 May, 1662
Jane Weir	Dalkeith	6 April, 1670
Donald McIlmichall	Appin/Inverary	27 Oct. 1677

Table 3 Liminal Space

HEAVEN		
	Fairies	
	MIDDLE EARTH	
PURITY	**LIMINAL SPACE**	**DANGER**
Known Space	Hawthorn Wells Hills, etc.	Unknown Space
	Mortals	
HELL		

Table 4 **Robert Kirk's Universe**

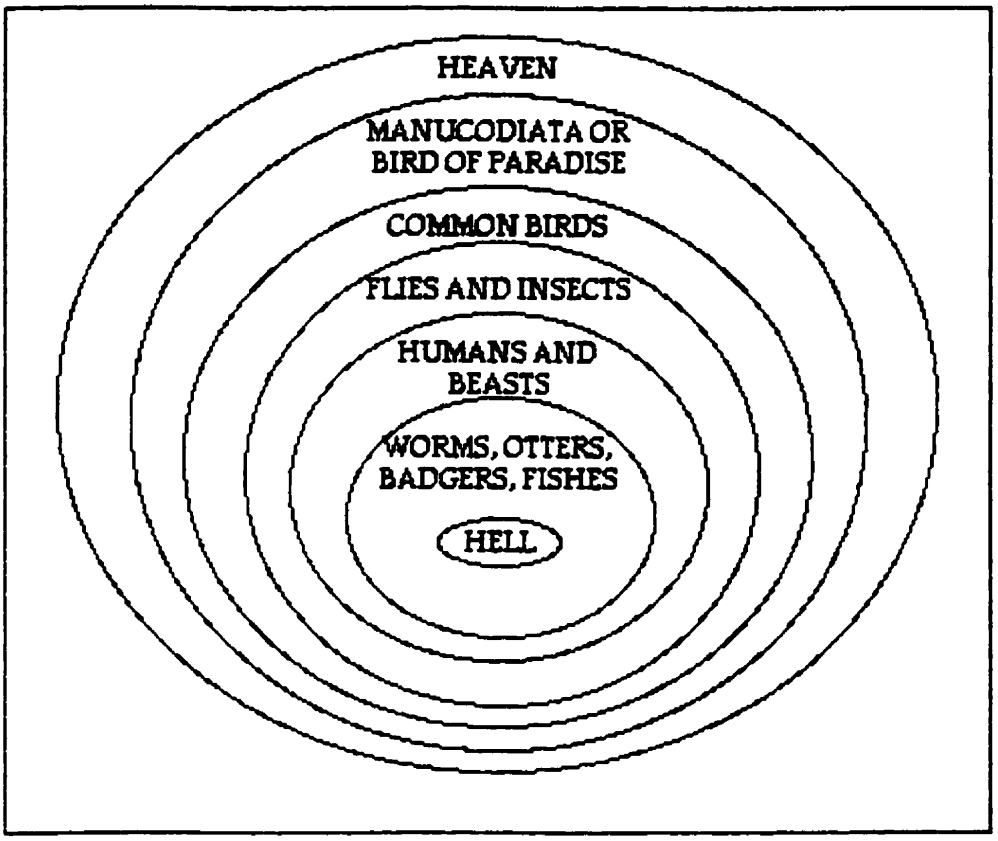

Table 5 Chronological Time Chart

Material in part thanks to Ian Donnachie and George Hewitt, A Companion to Scottish History, and Gordon Donaldson and Robert S. Morpeth, A Dictionary of Scottish History.

1507	First printing press.
1513	Battle of Flodden, death of James IV; accession of James V.
1528	Patrick Hamilton burned for heresy.
1542	Battle of Solway Moss; birth of Mary I; death of James V.
1563	Witchcraft Act.
1547	Battle of Pinkie.
1560	'Reformation Parliament;' first General Assembly; first Book of Discipline.
1566	Birth of James VI.
1567	Forcible abdication of Mary I.
1578	Second Book of Discipline.
1589	Marriage of James VI to Anne of Denmark.
1590	Beginning of North Berwick witchcraft trials.
1592	Act establishing presbyterian government.
1597	Major witch panic.
1603	Death of Elizabeth I; Union of the Crowns under James VI.
1609	Stautes of Iona.
1625	Death of James VI; accession of Charles I.
1629-30	Major witch panic.
1637	Introduction of Scottish Prayer Book.
1638	National Covenant.
1642	Beginning of English Civil War.
1643	Solemn League and Covenant.
1645	Campaigns of Montrose
1649	Birth of Charles II; execution of Charles I; major witch panic.
1650	Battle of Dunbar; execution of Montrose.
1651	Cromwellian occupation.
1660	Restoration of Charles II.
1661-2	Major witch panic.
1679	Battle of Drumclog; 'The Killing Times.'
1685	Death of Charles II; accession of James VII.
1689	Accession of William III and Mary; Battle of Killiecrankie; Act abolishing prelacy.
1692	Massacre of Glencoe.
1707	Act of Union.

1709	Judicial torture abolished.
1715-6	Jacobite Rising, 'The Fifteen;' Battle of Sheriffmuir.
1719	Jacobite Rising, 'The Nineteen,'
1727	Last person executed for witchcraft.
1735	Witchcraft Act.
1745-6	Jacobite Rising, 'The Forty-Five;' Battle of Prestonpans.
1746	Battle of Culloden.
1776	War of the American Revolution.
1788	Charles Edward Stewart dies.
1789	French Revolution.

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