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The Significance Of The Devil And Related Beliefs in Early Modern Welsh Popular Culture

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Contents

Introduction: 1 - 10.

Part I

Chapter I: Superstition and Society: 11 - 26.

Chapter II: A Reformed Society? 27 - 45.

Part II: A Not So Distant Demon.

Chapter III: Devilish Dreams or Divine Visions? 46 - 69

Chapter IV: Which Craft? 70 - 92.

Conclusion: 93 - 98.

Bibliography: 99 - 106.

Introduction.

Dorothy Charles lived about 200 years ago on the banks of the river Ogmere. Locals believed she was a witch, and it was reported that she attended the witches Sabbath, and stole babies and small children in the night to sacrifice to Satan.¹

‘Casineb I ddarfu i’r Diafol a’i swyddogion sef y dewiniad a’r swynwyr.’²

Wales is a country with a rich folklore tradition concerning the Devil and witchcraft, yet as Clark notes, ‘Wales is a region that scarcely registers in the historiography of the so-called witch-craze.’³ This dissertation examines perceptions of the Devil in early modern Wales, and in the process tries to reintegrate the Welsh experience into the history of witchcraft and the supernatural. Part of the explanation for Wales’s absence in debates about the witch-craze lies in the European witchcraft debate, and it is important to address this as the significance of the Devil develops within this context.

The historiography of European witchcraft has shown a preoccupation with the theme of the witch-craze or witch-hunt. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra argues that witchcraft research has much to gain by asking more varied questions, for example, about the absence or low intensity of witch-trials. The number of trials in Wales were extremely low. For example, studies of surviving court records reveal the indictment of thirty-seven suspects between 1568 and 1698. Only eight verdicts of guilty are recorded, resulting in judgements of death for five suspected witches in three cases in 1594, 1633, and 1655.⁴ The only positive records of witches being put to death are at a trial in Chester in 1656. Of the four condemned, three were hanged while the other escaped.⁵ Alan Macfarlane has estimated that in England in the years 1560 - 1706, approximately 2,000 people were tried, of whom about 300 were executed.⁶ European figures are higher. In Germany

¹ Jane Pugh, *Welsh Witches and Warlocks* (Gwynedd, Garreg Gwalch, 1987) p77.

² T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul* (J.Rogers, 1711)Tr: ‘The hatred of going to the Devil and his servants , the wizards and charmers.’

³ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, O.U.P, 1997) p459.

⁴ Richard Suggett, ‘Witchcraft Dynamics in Early Modern Wales’ in M. Roberts & S. Clarke (eds.) *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, U.W.P, 2000) p77.

⁵ Pugh, *Welsh Witches*, p5.

⁶ Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, Routledge, 1970) p60.

it is reckoned that 100,000 were executed, while in France in 1557, forty witches were burned at Toulouse, and eighteen were burned by the Inquisition at Avignon.⁷ Thus, Wales is an exception to the European model due to the negligible number of trials the country experienced, and benefits witchcraft research in this respect as it highlights the importance of regional and local variations.⁸

Moreover, witchcraft has seldom been studied for the period after the trials. Owen Davies recognised this 'great lacuna' in our knowledge of witchcraft and magic in England and Wales after the witch-trials. His book extends research beyond that period, and through the utilisation of local newspapers and folklore sources, Davies convincingly demonstrates the continued practice of superstitious and magical beliefs through to the twentieth century.⁹ By focusing on eighteenth-century conceptions of the Devil, and his role in the Welsh narrative on witchcraft, this dissertation contributes to the witchcraft debate by illustrating that witchcraft has been an 'ongoing though fluctuating concern.'¹⁰ It is essential to consider the presence of witchcraft beliefs regardless of the presence of trials.

Furthermore, as Gijswijt-Hofstra argues, our definition of witchcraft should be 'all-eccompassing,' incorporating various types of magical beliefs and activities, whether harmful, beneficial, in combination with demonological elements or not. This 'inclusive' view would encourage more systematic examination of the diffusion and reception of various conceptions of witchcraft among different socio-cultural strata. One particular question that requires more attention is the diffusion of various kinds of demonological witchcraft ideas.¹¹ The relationship between demonology and witchcraft is the focus of Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons*. In his view, demonology ought to have something to offer those seeking to explain the witch-trials. Clark argues that if we isolate the concept of demonology, even demonologists themselves, then we run the risk of 'setting them apart...from precisely the things that help us understand..witchcraft.' Based on the observation that knowledge of witchcraft made sense to contemporaries, Clark explores how and in what terms it made sense. His work not only looks at writings concerned with demonology, but also 'sketches an outline of epistemological structures

⁷ Russell H. Robbins, *The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York, Crown, 1959) p315, 219.

⁸ Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'The European Witchcraft Debate and the Dutch Variant', *Social History* 15 (1990) p186.

⁹ Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester, M.U.P, 1999)

¹⁰ Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate', p186.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p185, 189.

on a much wider scale.¹² Clark argues that demonology also embraced discussions of magic, superstition, as well as demons themselves. Thus, *Thinking with Demons* is a book about 'demonology...set in a series of contexts drawn from early modern intellectual life as a whole.'¹³

However, as James Sharpe argues, it remains clear that research is needed on popular notions of the Devil which may well have been different from those of learned theologians.¹⁴ The dissertation recognises the need for such research, and proposes to bring to light through an in-depth study, the role and the significance of the Devil in Welsh popular culture.

Compared to the multitude of works on witchcraft, books concerning the Devil are relatively few. The most notable are: Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*,¹⁵ and Luther Link, *The Devil: A Mask Without a Face*.¹⁶ *Satan* is the second volume in Russell's history of the concept of the Devil. The first volume¹⁷ presented a survey of the idea of evil and the development of the concept of the Devil in Hebrew and primitive thought. The volume in discussion continues the study of the concept's development in Christian thought into the fifth century, by which time Russell argues 'the main lines of the tradition had been established.' Drawing on theology, hagiography, creeds and canon law, the book is primarily concerned with the theological development of the Devil in Christian thought, for Russell argues that 'theology cannot be independent of history.' He maintains that although history and theology are different disciplines, areas exist where they converge, and the concept of the Devil is an example. According to Russell, the historical tradition of human perceptions of an entity such as the Devil, 'constitutes a concept,' which ultimately incorporates the 'myth' and the 'social context' of such ideas. Thus, the history of concepts 'argues that a phenomenon such as the Devil is best defined through its history,' which offers the 'surest kind of statement for the historical theologian.' Therefore, Russell examines the development of the notion of the Devil within Christian thought and theology, beginning with the ideas of the Apostolic Fathers, through to the theories of Saint Augustine in the fifth century. *Satan* covers many important themes such as the problem of evil - why is evil done to us? Why does God allow evil; the nature and implications of

¹²Katharine Hodgkin, 'Historians and Witches', *History Workshop Journal* 44 (1997) p276.

¹³Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. ix.

¹⁴James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (London, Longman, 2001) p57.

¹⁵Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (London, Cornell University Press, 1981)

¹⁶Luther Link, *The Devil: A Mask Without a Face* (London, Reaktion Books, 1995)

¹⁷Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (1977)

sin, and the problems of Christian dualism. By addressing these issues, it helps us to understand how and why the idea of the Devil was formed, and its relation to other related concepts such as magic, superstition, sin, and temptation.¹⁸ However, the text is set firmly within the theological context of early Christian thought. It offers no insight into popular notions of the Devil, or the extent to which theology influenced popular attitudes.

Similarly, Link explores the origins of various conceptions about the Devil. He focuses on the Devil's features in historical sequence, and as the title suggests, the book is concerned with visual and pictorial images of Satan. The main theme is the 'discontinuity of the Devil's image within the realm of art, and this is also developed within a theological and religious context. However, the emphasis is visual, and Link's main argument is that depictions of the Devil are subject to pictorial traditions rather than a tradition solely concerned with the Devil himself.¹⁹ Through an analysis of various visual sources such as, paintings, sculptures, and mystery plays, Link highlights many interesting aspects regarding the Devil. His various attributes are explained in relation to various questions and related images and iconography. For example, by asking where is the Devil to be found? - Link explores different motifs, such as the Apocalypse, the Last Judgement (alongside the Hell Mouth), the temptations of Jesus, and the Garden of Eden. By doing this, Link helps us to understand the Devil's more trivial characteristics, like the image of Satan carrying a prod, or why he sometimes appears naked, or with horns, or hoofs.²⁰ This serves as a basis for understanding certain popular representations of Satan, and Link's use of a wide range of pictorial sources encompasses many significant features of the Devil evident in popular motifs. His main objective is to explain the development of the Devil's image in art, and while this is an interesting, and in some ways illuminating perspective, its emphasis very much resembles Russell's *Satan*, in its religious and intellectual overtones.

Therefore, both works serve as general references to the origins of Satan and some of the religious ideas associated with him. The religious context is inevitable as the Devil is an integral element of the Christian belief system, and both Russell and Link demonstrate this effectively. Yet they do not look at the broader role of the Devil in popular culture, and how religious imagery informed this concept. Moreover, their time period is not relevant to a study of early modern

¹⁸Russell, *Satan*, p22, 70,75.

¹⁹Link, *The Devil*, p14.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p73, 68, 35.

attitudes, although Link's study of medieval imagery provides a useful comparative reference for the survival of medieval ideas in the early modern period.

The most recent work carried out on the topic is *The Devil in Early Modern England* by Darren Oldridge.²¹ It is a study of the many perceptions of Satan in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The first part looks in detail at Protestant ideas about the Devil, while the rest of the text is concerned with the effect of these ideas on English society as a whole. The underlying theme looks at the social and political circumstances in which concepts of the Devil developed in early modern England. This dissertation will also consider religious and popular conceptions of the Devil in Wales, and will draw comparisons between them. As Oldridge argues, there was a 'partial assimilation' of reformed doctrines and popular beliefs about Satan, and his book covers this aspect well. Oldridge makes good use of some interesting and relevant sources relating to popular conceptions, such as popular literature, for example, the stories of Faust and Mother Shipton; ballads; woodcuts; and folklore. These highlight the appeal of Satan as a character in popular fiction, and Oldridge argues that this image did differ in many respects to official Protestant doctrine. He addresses the issue of popular beliefs about the Devil by covering many themes, like gender, witchcraft, and popular culture. His chapter on popular culture signifies a promising area of research on the Devil, and he deals with many significant details and popular themes, such as, fictional representations of the Devil as an animal, comic depictions and scenes from hell, and the popular genre of the murder pamphlet depicting Satan as a tempter.²²

Oldridge concludes that popular culture displayed a 'mixing together of traditional assumptions and Protestant teaching,' and this argument is soundly developed in subsequent chapters dealing with gender and witchcraft. Placed in the context of Reformation and largely dedicated to Protestant attitudes towards the Devil, Oldridge nevertheless incorporates popular beliefs into his study quite effectively, maintaining that they were only partially influenced by Protestant teaching, while retaining many of their previous assumptions, such as the continued popularity of medieval depictions of hell. Consequently, the religious perspective is useful and relevant, but it often has the effect of overshadowing popular beliefs, which do require further examination, especially in areas that are not directly connected to religion.

²¹ Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Gloucestershire, Sutton, 2000)

²² *Ibid.*, p59-89.

Nevertheless, research into this area of witchcraft studies has continued. For example, Oldridge has recently edited a collection of works in *The Witchcraft Reader*, which includes a significant section on witchcraft, possession, and the Devil. By addressing themes such as popular religion, popular culture, and possession, the essays in this section highlight the opportunities for research in this field.²³ The benefit for such work is that it contributes to our understanding of witchcraft beliefs, as well as illuminating popular conceptions of the Devil and demonology, thus generally helping us to understand the dynamics of early modern magical beliefs.

The dissertation builds on recent research by examining the role of the Devil in Welsh popular culture, in connection with superstition, magic, and witchcraft. Sally Parkin's work has also paid attention to witchcraft practices in Wales, but her work concentrates on the trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and does not cover any particular aspects of demonology.²⁴ However, this dissertation differs from Parkin's approach and current historiographical trends in the following ways. Firstly, it studies witchcraft beliefs in eighteenth-century Wales, thus diverging from the traditional preoccupation with the theme of the witch-hunt. Popular witchcraft beliefs and practices have been intimately bound with the witch-trials themselves, and the cessation of trials has been misinterpreted as a sign of the decline of witchcraft itself. For the period after the trials, continuity of these beliefs and practices has been overlooked by witchcraft historiography. A study of the Devil, and related beliefs in eighteenth-century Welsh society demonstrates that witchcraft has been ongoing. It highlights the continuity of witchcraft beliefs, and encourages scholars to widen their perspectives beyond the epoch of witch-trials.²⁵

Additionally, this dissertation will be paying particular attention to popular attitudes surrounding the Devil, and related beliefs, in order to gain a better insight into the significance of these beliefs in Welsh popular culture. This aspect has been underdeveloped in recent witchcraft research, and requires further attention as it can also shed light on other themes, such as superstition, and popular magic, and religion. This relates to the bigger question of how we model our conceptions of witchcraft and related beliefs. Focusing on the Devil in connection with various magical beliefs and customs, this dissertation offers an 'inclusive' outlook on witchcraft, which incorporates different belief structures. Hence Wales presents a new perspective to

²³Darren Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader* (London, Routledge, 2002) pp227-254.

²⁴Sally Parkin, 'Witchcraft in Early Modern Wales: A Continuation of Customary Practice', PhD Thesis, University of New England (1998)

²⁵Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate', p184.

witchcraft research by challenging traditional assumptions, and daring us to redefine the boundaries of witchcraft beliefs.

The dissertation aims to bring to light the significance of the Devil and related beliefs in eighteenth-century Welsh popular culture. Welsh traditions and narratives secure a prominent role for the Devil, yet the alternative belief systems evident in popular culture were able to sustain the Devil as a non-threatening presence. Through a study of elite and popular beliefs, the dissertation aims to establish the Devil's role in popular culture, and will also explore the various means through which these beliefs and ideas were expressed, and how they were received. Moreover, it will examine what influenced these beliefs, and the extent to which we can compare elite and popular attitudes.

The growing interest in cultural history increasingly involves the use of folklore passed down via 'oral traditions,' and requires a methodology for interpreting this evidence. This 'oral tradition' can be defined as a 'body of knowledge that has been transmitted orally over several generations and is the collective property of the members of a given society.' This tradition has significant 'social functions.' Such traditions were handed down because they held meaning for the culture concerned, They were a means of teaching values and beliefs integral to the culture. They also served to validate particular social, political, and cultural arrangements. One particular area that stands to benefit from the application of such sources is the history of a society that has left little or no written evidence of their own, and are known in the documents only through statements of literate, and usually prejudiced outsiders.²⁶ Wales is a prime example since very few written accounts regarding witchcraft and magic are available due to the insufficient number of witch-trials. Language poses another obstacle. The majority of evidence for Wales is in English, when the population spoke Welsh. Thus, the essence of many beliefs and cultural practices are lost or diluted by the process of translation. Therefore, this dissertation will make use of folklore, and Welsh ballads for its study of popular beliefs. As John Tosh argues, oral sources merit more attention than they currently receive, and offer a unique insight into the 'formulation of popular historical consciousness.'²⁷

²⁶ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Third Edition* (1984: London, Pearson Education, 2000) p195.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p210.

For an insight into popular conceptions about witchcraft and magical beliefs, Owen Davies advocates the use of folklore sources.²⁸ These comprise a significant amount of the sources consulted here. But, they do represent an area of controversy, and the use of folklore is often criticised by scholars accustomed to more conventional methods of documentation. However, some scholars argue that folklore can be applied to historical writings provided they are approached with caution. Joan Wake argues that folklore is liable to ‘fluctuations and variations,’ and this is a valid point. Folk tales can often differ with regards to the time and locality in which they are placed, yet they serve an important purpose. Folk traditions, myths, and legends were important means by which people learned about the powers of witches and devils, and so should not be dismissed. As Americo Pareded argues, where documents are available for comparison, one may actually trace the historical process to ‘conform with the folk groups own world view.’²⁹ Folklore has a strong sense of place, and offers valuable insight into Welsh beliefs and ideas about witchcraft and magic. Such information is not accessible through other documents used for witchcraft studies, such as trial reports. Even if a vast body of these documents existed for Wales, they would primarily be illustrative of an essentially English legal system, and the cultural context of these texts may be distorted or lost through subsequent translations. Hence, Lynwood Montell’s claim that folk history can serve as a historical record in those areas where written accounts have not been preserved,³⁰ is significant to a study of Welsh witchcraft. The folklore sources consulted here will be connected to numerous secondary literature alongside primary documents. It will thus serve as comparative literature, and can help to establish the continuity of belief.

Eighteenth-century Welsh ballads have also been examined. These sources have been completely ignored by Welsh historians as a means of gaining information on popular ideas about witchcraft, yet Oldridge makes good use of ballads for his study of the Devil in England. Through them, Oldridge illustrates popular ideas about the Devil, and argues that they provide a clue to the ‘relationship between Protestantism and popular culture.’³¹ Ballads were a means of popular entertainment as well as vehicles for disseminating local, and national news. They related themes

²⁸ Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p172.

²⁹ Richard Dorson, *The Oral Historian and the Folklorist: Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (London, Altamira Press, 1996) p178-180.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p184.

³¹ Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p81.

that appealed to the popular mind and are a valid yet untapped source into contemporary notions of magic. They also reflected the intellectual interests of the time, and so are illustrative of the interaction between elite and popular beliefs. Moreover, these ballads are in Welsh, therefore, local dialects, expressions and discourse are preserved.

This is also the case with the other main source referred to. *Cas gan Gythraul* (1711) is a rare Welsh-language tract against conjuration and magic, written by an anonymous Welsh author. The colourful language reflects many aspects of magical practices and beliefs in Wales, which would not necessarily be disclosed via an English discourse. Not only does the text reflect contemporary demonological theories, but is a rich source on the many superstitious and magical practices common in Wales during the eighteenth century. The text provides vivid evidence of a Welsh discourse of the Devil and witchcraft, giving full insight into popular magical expressions, and epithets. It is also a significant example of the interaction of elite, religious, and popular beliefs and practices. Furthermore, it is a testimony to the continued importance of demonological ideas, and popular magical practice in eighteenth-century Welsh society. Given that so few Welsh-language sources relating to popular magical beliefs exist, *Cas gan Gythraul* is paramount to a study of these beliefs in early modern Wales.

The dissertation will be organised in two parts. The first part will take a more general approach to the Devil, and other magical beliefs. Chapter one focuses on superstition in Welsh society, and explains how the Devil was such a prominent figure within this belief structure. The chapter aims to highlight the continuation of superstitious practices in Wales, and examines the significance of the Devil within this wider belief context. It also addresses the current debate on magic and superstition, and through the utilisation of *Cas gan Gythraul*, and the writings of Welsh religious observers, presents a fresh outlook and new definition of magic and superstition. Religion is a prominent theme, hence chapter two looks at the process of Reformation in Wales, and analyses the extent to which reformed attitudes influenced popular ideas about the Devil.

The second part of the dissertation is more specific, tackling particular themes and studying popular images of the Devil in more detail. Chapter three looks at religious dreams and visionary experiences that incorporate ideas of the Devil, and images of hell. The dream of the Welsh shepherd, related by the minister and antiquarian Edmund Jones,³² displays many common

³²Edmund Jones, *The Leaves of the Tree of Life* (Carmarthen, 1745)

religious themes like the notion of spiritual healing, and the torments of hell. Moreover, the discussion of Ellis Wynne's visions published at the beginning of the eighteenth century,³³ reveals many popular ideas and images of the Devil, and hell, and related beliefs such as the fairies, and witchcraft. This chapter aims to look in more detail at the interaction of popular and elite attitudes. It also highlights the significance of sleep, and sleep experiences to a study of witchcraft. Finally, chapter four studies the role of the Devil in relation to witchcraft activities, based on the demonological views expressed in *Cas gan Gythraul*. It reintroduces the arguments of early modern demonologists - that witchcraft comprised both harmful and beneficial magic - and challenges historians to reconsider the current definition of witchcraft as meaning only harmful magic, to incorporate various types of magical activities. This chapter also draws attention to the role of cunning-folk in witchcraft practices, and their role in the continuity of these beliefs. Its overall aim is to reconcile these magical practitioners to a study of witchcraft, again advocating a more 'inclusive' view of such beliefs.

Therefore, the benefits of this dissertation are that it covers many of the neglected areas of witchcraft research. It explores the dissemination of demonological witchcraft ideas by specifically studying the role of the Devil in Welsh popular culture. It does this in relation to other related, yet neglected themes such as the low-intensity of trials, and the continuity of beliefs. By concentrating on the eighteenth century, it moves away from the preoccupation with the witch-hunt, and demonstrates that witchcraft is an ongoing concern. The Welsh example is important to witchcraft research because it illuminates these neglected concerns, and questions our current understanding of witchcraft phenomena. This study of the Devil also incorporates related belief systems, namely superstition, popular religion, and magic, thus offering a broader perspective to witchcraft research. It challenges historians to redefine previous assumptions about such beliefs, and calls for a more systematic study of related beliefs and ideas so that witchcraft can be understood in its broader context.

³³Ellis Wynne, *Gweledigaethau Y Bardd Cwsg* (1703: Caerdydd, 1948.)

Part 1

Chapter 1: Superstition and Society.

In a vivid description of magic and magical practices, the author of *Cas gan Gythraul*, signed only as T.P records that ‘rhai y’nghymru... myned au plant a fytho yn anhwylyus’ and then ‘gossod y plentyn...ar y bedd, ac yn rhoddi ganhwyllau cwyr I losgi.’¹ A similar custom was practiced in Europe. For example, in the Limousin four candles were lit around the cradle of a sick child, each denoting a saint that was to be called on to effect a cure.² In Wales however, T.P argues that ‘nid wyf yn gwybod pa’r faint o ofergoelion sy’n cael eu harferyd ganthynt.’³ The aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it aims to explore various superstitions common in Wales in the eighteenth century, especially those regarding the Devil in order to highlight the significance of superstition in popular culture. Secondly, it asks what exactly does T.P mean by ‘ofergoelion’ - superstitions? This chapter considers the meaning of ‘superstition’ to contemporaries and how historians should employ the term when discussing the beliefs of a past society. Firstly, an outline of Welsh society will help place these beliefs in context.

The eighteenth century is a period that Geraint H. Jenkins terms the ‘Cinderella of historical studies in Wales.’ This is partly due to the tendency to judge the Welsh experience against the English model, and to be deluded by negative images of Wales as a ‘barren’ land. There is also a general presumption that the political assimilation of Wales by England has meant that the history of this ‘internal colony’ was merely an uneventful interlude between the rebellions of the fifteenth century and the advent of industrialisation. As Jenkins argues, this has resulted in the obscurity of the ‘socio-cultural experience of the Welsh within this period.’⁴ This chapter will explore these experiences through an examination of numerous Welsh superstitions, especially those concerning the Devil, for as Jenkins argues, ‘the culture of superstition and magic was still a powerful force’ in Welsh society.⁵

¹ T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul* (J Rogers, 1711), p43. Translation ‘some in Wales...take their children who are sick [and] place the child...on a grave, and set wax candles to burn.’

² Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual in Pre-Modern Europe* (London, Hambledon & London, 2000) p323, see illustration 27.

³ T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p43, Tr: ‘I do not know how much these superstitions are practised by them.’

⁴ (Ed.) Prys Morgan, *The Tempus History of Wales 25000 BC 2000 AD* (Gloucestershire, Tempus Publishing LTD, 2001) p141.

⁵ Geraint.H.Jenkins, ‘Popular Beliefs in Wales from the Restoration to Methodism’, *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* vol. XXVII (1977) p440.

Throughout the eighteenth century Wales remained chiefly an agrarian society despite the existence of several industries such as lead and iron, and an increasing population. Its religious outlook was initially Roman Catholic, but by the 1700s the majority worshipped in Anglican churches, or in the case of a small minority, in Dissenting chapels.⁶ This period also nurtured the Calvinistic Methodist movement which derived from notions of moral improvement. Methodism was a much more powerful force in Wales than in England, since the established church seemed remote, and indifferent to the needs of Welsh men and women.⁷

Regarding culture, Wales had no institutions of statehood, universities, or museums. There was no capital city that could cultivate any cultural trends, or any other 'major recognisable socio-cultural focal point.' Religious dissent may have compensated for this cultural breach. However, as David. W. Howells argues, what was more important for the majority, even those who attended Christian worship 'was their attachment to a coherent structure of folk beliefs.'⁸ As Jenkins argues, Welsh people nursed a rich and varied cultural inheritance 'suffused with rituals, images, symbols, myths and customs.'⁹

Was this a superstitious culture? The current debate on superstition and magic must be addressed. T.P uses the term 'ofergoelion'- superstitions, when he describes various beliefs and practices, but what are its implications and do these differ from our own? How should we apply the term to early modern belief systems? Related to this is the theme of magic and what factors constitute a magical belief or practice. These questions need serious consideration, and by adopting the anthropological method of paying close attention to language and terminology, we can gain a better insight into contemporary belief patterns.¹⁰

Superstition is a key concept in the history of early modern culture, but as Stuart Clark argues, this is not simply because it has been used 'retrospectively' to describe the beliefs and behaviour of that period. Clark argues that such usage should be 'entirely abandoned' as it infers that there are social facts that we ourselves can 'uncontentiously' label superstitions.¹¹ Today's superstitions may differ from pre-modern ideas, like the belief that a third light off a match is

⁶ Morgan, *Tempus History*, p186, 159.

⁷ Gwyn. A. Williams, *When was Wales* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985) p152.

⁸ David. W. Howells, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales* (Cardiff, U.W. P, 2000)

⁹ Morgan, *Tempus History*, p142.

¹⁰ Keith Thomas, 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic II', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, V:II (1975) p94.

¹¹ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p474.

unlucky. Stemming from the trenches of the First World War, it was thought that by the time the third person lit his cigarette, the Germans would have him in sight. Moreover, they are no longer viewed with a moral dimension. Yet as Clark argues, the history of superstition has been one of 'cultural disapproval' and the term 'superstitious' had strongly negative connotations. Thus, the way in which we use the term leads us either to commit to the cultural debates of the time, or to disregard them completely.¹² An analysis of how Welsh commentators described superstitions will help uncover whether it was used unfavourably in Wales also.

The texts of Edmund Jones, known as the 'Old Prophet' because of his apparent gift of prophecy and ability to foretell things, such as the weather, and local events,¹³ are an interesting case study. *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits* (1780) as the title suggests, is a collection of supernatural experiences designed to 'prevent the infidelity of denying...spirits: which tends to Irreligion and Atheism.'¹⁴ It seems unusual for a Reverend to want to prove the existence of ghosts and the like, which appears to concur with supernatural or magical beliefs. But Jones explains 'for when men...deny the being of spirits, the next is to deny the being of God who is a spirit.'¹⁵ His objective is to avert atheism by proving the reality of spirits and supernatural phenomena which may account for the positive tone of the book. Jones's language is far from negative or reproachful. Writing of W.E Hafodfae, who 'passed the likeness of a coal race' where he saw 'many people...some cutting the coal...some carrying,' Jones claims that this was an agency of the fairies...a Wonderful extra natural thing.' This coal race refers to a type of Welsh fairy known as 'Coblynau.' It is a name applied by miners to particular kinds of fairies who dwelt in the mines and carried out the appropriate mining duties. Their presence was generally regarded as good luck.¹⁶ Jones commends W.E as a man 'above telling an untruth.'¹⁷ This is the general structure of the narratives in the book, such as various experiences of the

¹² *Ibid.*, p474.

¹³ Wirt Sikes, *British Goblins: The Realm of Faerie* (1880: Llanerch, 1991), p104.

¹⁴ Edmund Jones, *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits in the County of Monmouth and the Principality of Wales* (1780: Newport, 1813)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pvii.

¹⁶ Sikes, *Realm of Faerie*, p24.

¹⁷ Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p21.

'kyhyraeth'¹⁸ and corpse candles. But Jones does not reject these experiences and even claims to have seen a corpse candle himself, 'in Denbighshire, before the death of a lad in the adjoining house where I lodged.'¹⁹ In another text, Jones also recalls an experience with the fairies when he was a 'very young boy.'²⁰

Generally the text is supportive of supernatural experiences. Jones maintains that 'the knowledge of spirits is an interesting knowledge.'²¹ Significantly he uses the word knowledge rather than belief. The implication is that spirits are real and knowledge of them is an advantage because it leads to a knowledge of God. As Hildred Geertz remarks, religion in the early modern period shifted from signifying piety in thought and ritual to doctrine and creed; the issue of belief versus scepticism in regard to the ideas themselves became more salient,²² and Jones' vocabulary suggests this. He describes corpse candles as 'wonderful' and uses confident terms like 'accounts,' 'notable instance,' 'wonderful actings,' and a 'witness' when presenting his stories.²³ His account of Aberystroth contains a similar section on 'Apparitions and Agencies of Spirits' which bears the same style and positive representations.²⁴ The 'confirmation of the truth'²⁵ of these matters is continually emphasised and scriptural references are often included as a means of validation. For example, Mr. Edmund Miles was reportedly carried 'thro' the air' from Newport to 'Langattock' village by the fairies. 'Let none say...this is impossible' argues Jones, since the 'Devil is said in scripture Math iv. 5,6 to carry the Son of God.'²⁶ Negative connotations are reserved for sceptics, whom Jones variously terms 'a Sadducee,' 'ridiculer,' 'Infidel,' and 'unreasonable.'²⁷

¹⁸Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p73. *Y Geiriadur Mawr* (Gomer, 1958, 2002) p139 Cyhyraeth - spectral funeral. also a mournful noise heard before someone's death. Similar to the corpse candle - light seen by or near a person about to die.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p86.

²⁰Edmund Jones, *A Geographical etc. Account of Aberystroth Parish* (Trevecka, 1779) p75.

²¹Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, px.

²²Hildred Geertz, 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic I', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* V:II (1975) p76.

²³Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p23, 77, 80, 44.

²⁴Jones, *Account of Aberystroth*, p68-111.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p73.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p82.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p69. *Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969) Sadducee - member of a Jewish sect at time of Christ, emphasising traditional law and denying the resurrection of the dead.

'Superstition' fails to appear in either text and there is only one mention of 'superstitious.' In the *Relation of Apparitions*, John Jacob is described as losing his way while travelling because the fairies caused the 'ways to look strangely different' and Jones describes him as 'far from being fanciful and superstitious.'²⁸ In *Aberystroth*, Jones comments on the 'general opinion in times past' that fairies knew what was spoken in the open air.²⁹ These are the only references that hint at a notion of superstition but this is not in a definite negative context. Their isolation and obscure meanings suggests that superstition was neither a significant nor derogatory concept, a fact further demonstrated by the extensive positive discourse.

The vocabulary of other commentators is comparable. Writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Erasmus Saunders marks the 'good old custom' of singing psalms and hymns, and the 'ancient practice' of crossing oneself. Saunders concludes that the 'prevailing simplicity' explains such 'innocent good old customs' which he finds acceptable. However, he frowns on 'Roman superstitions' such as invoking the names of saints, and this is an example where superstition is applied critically.³⁰ Thus, superstition appears in an anti-Catholic context which may reflect the campaign of many religious reformers to eradicate popish elements and establish the principles of reformation. But, it shouldn't be presumed that Catholicism tolerated superstition. As Clark illustrates, the Frieberg Professor Lorichius' *Aberglaub*, was a text containing extensive lists of popular forms of divination, soothsaying, astrology, charming and healing, as well as rituals commonly performed in excess of the Church's requirements. The common criterion for judging them superstitious was that 'whether an object is associated with an effect which it has neither in nature nor the consecration of the Church.'³¹

Nevertheless, Griffith Jones echoes Saunders's anti-Romanist sentiments. He argues that 'such gross ignorance' prevails in Wales, as 'Reliques of ancient Heathenism and...popery...in expressions, notions and practice remain among the poor.'³² The absence of the word superstition suggests that Roman practices aroused criticism rather than superstition generally. Yet superstition is employed so rarely it proves difficult to gain a full sense of its implications. Thus it

²⁸Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p26.

²⁹Jones, *Account of Aberystroth*, p72.

³⁰Erasmus Saunders, *A View of the State of Religion in the Diocese of St. David's* (London, John Wyatt, Rose St Paul's Church Yard, 1721) p34-5.

³¹Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p482-3.

³²Griffith Jones, *Letter to a Clergyman*, (London, M Downing, 1745) p6.

could be argued that superstition was not as ‘immensely important’³³ to Welsh observers as it was to their European counterparts.

Magic however was a serious issue, on a popular level as well as an intellectual one. Clark explains that ‘magic’ too was said to be involved in any attempt to do that which is above nature,³⁴ but as Hildred Geertz questions, is magic a distinct belief, practice or attitude? What could be meant by ‘magical beliefs?’³⁵ Anthropologists emphasise linguistics as a means of understanding human ideas, and the language of *Cas gan Gythraul* can shed light on these important questions. However, the immediate aim is not for a ‘global’ explanation. In some respects this is inevitable as many Welsh terms have no other language equivalent, they may therefore be ‘culture-bound’ to Wales, although ‘cross-cultural comparison’ is possible.³⁶

Essentially the text is an attack on conjuration, or as T.P outlines, ‘Annogaeth I Bawb ochelyd...ymgynggori a Dewiniaid.’³⁷ It is also a rich source on popular magical beliefs and practices. T.P describes many familiar forms of divination,³⁸ such as using a Bible and key to detect a thief, the sieve and shears method, and repeating prayers to stop blood.³⁹ There are also details of magical healing, witchcraft, fairies, fortune telling and astrology. These are illuminating accounts, but T.P’s choice of terms is equally insightful.

‘Superstition’ appears more clearly though not regularly in the text, and other references resemble those of Edmund Jones and Saunders. For example: T.P describes ‘fath arferion’ (such customs), ‘arferion drwg’ (bad customs), and ‘traddodiadau’ (traditions).⁴⁰ But overall his language is more vivid. For example, a woman informed him of a variation on ‘Dewinio yn y fath ffordd’⁴¹ (referring to the sieve and shears) by using a pair of gloves instead. ‘Chwedlau’ is also

³³Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 474.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p482.

³⁵Hildred Geertz, ‘An Anthropology of Religion and Magic I’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VI:I, 1975, p71.

³⁶Keith Thomas, ‘An Anthropology of Religion and Magic II’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VI:I, 1975, p94.

³⁷T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, title page. Tr: ‘Urge to everyone to refrain from consulting magicians.’

³⁸Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750* (London & New York, Longman, 1998)

³⁹T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p 10,14,12.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p10,12,14.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p10-11, Tr: ‘Conjuring in a like way.’

used, which can mean tale, fable, saying, or report,⁴² but the key word here is 'Dewinio' and a breakdown of its meaning will highlight why.

Y Geiriadur Mawr, records *Dewinio* or *Dewino* as *hudo*, *swyno*, *proffwydo* - meaning 'to divine.'⁴³ These variations reveal the term's significance. *Hudo* is synonymous with *swyno* and *rheibio* - to charm. The noun *hud* also means magic.⁴⁴ Additionally, *swyn* translates as Charm or magic while *swyno* is multiform. Firstly it is synonymous with *bendithio* - to bless. Secondly, it conforms to *hudo* and *rheibio*, and it can also mean *creu* or *ffurfio* - to create or to fashion.⁴⁵ *Proffwydo* means to explain the will of God, or predict the future,⁴⁶ while *rheibio* also means to bewitch. Hence a *rheibes* is a witch and the masculine *rheibiwr* is enchanter.⁴⁷ It is significant that 'magic' is a common thread linking all these words together. This connection is established further by the term 'ofergoelion'. As noted earlier, T.P uses this term to describe the practice of placing sick children on a grave to invoke a cure. Furthermore, if a hare or weasel crossed someone's path T.P claims that contemporaries 'ofni'r fath ofergoelion.'⁴⁸ *Ofergoelion* is the Welsh term for superstitions. *Ofergoel* - superstition is defined as fear of that which is unknown or, 'gred wedi selio ar ofn neu hud,' a belief based on fear and magic.⁴⁹ The magical emphasis is crucial and these definitions suggest a definite relationship between the concepts of magic and superstition.

Moreover, early modern and current definitions evince this. The historiography of magic distinguishes between high or 'learned magic' and low or 'folk magic.' Owen Davies argues that learned magic is identified as 'theoretical, philosophical, and ceremonial.' It has two general components: demonic which attempts to conjure and control devils and demons, and natural magic which was 'scientifically' concerned with occult powers in nature.⁵⁰ Popular, or folk magic is seen as a mixture of inherited beliefs, practices and rituals; usually used as a 'means to an end,' for example, to combat witchcraft or procure love. Even so, Davies argues that both types shared

⁴²*Y Geiriadur Mawr*, p155

⁴³*Ibid.*, p169.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p288.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p398-99.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p370.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p378.

⁴⁸T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p45. Tr: 'feared such superstitions.'

⁴⁹*Y Geiriadur Mawr*, p378.

⁵⁰Owen Davies, *Cunning Folk: Popular Magic in English History* (London, Hambledon and London, 2003) pX.

the same principles, notably the belief in ‘sympathetic associations,’ a notion outlined by the anthropologists James Frazer and Marcel Mauss. The basic idea is that everything is connected to everything else. Frazer outlined that ‘like produces like’ and an ‘effect resembles its cause.’ Mauss added antipathy to the equation, ‘opposites work on opposites,’ and a part can stand for the whole so that teeth, hair, or saliva represent a whole person and can directly affect that individual.⁵¹ The second principle Davies argues, is the incorporation of Christian beliefs and prayers.⁵²

In addition, Clark regards superstition as ‘any practice designed to bring good fortune, and avoid or mitigate bad.’⁵³ In the view of contemporaries superstition was a key concept because it comprised religious doctrine and demonology. In the first instance it meant either ‘irrelevant or excess worship, provoked by fear and ignorance of God.’⁵⁴ It concerned demonology because superstition was derived from the Devil. As Ciruelo concluded in the sixteenth century ‘the devil has discovered and taught men all superstitions.’⁵⁵ Echoing the definitions of demonic magic, superstitions were regarded as ‘things that cannot naturally bring about the effects for which they are employed.’ As Clark argues, superstition was dependent on the principle that nature and natural behaviour had ‘ascertainable limits,’ and any attempt unassisted by divine revelation to know or do things that have no source in nature was deemed superstitious. Magic was also drawn into the equation for Clark argues that magic too was said to be involved in any attempt to achieve that which was not inherent in nature.⁵⁶ Therefore, these definitions do help to understand the essential elements of magical beliefs, but does our ‘own cultural tradition’⁵⁷ encourage us to describe these beliefs as magical or superstitious?

Geertz’s main criticism of Keith Thomas’ *Religion and the Decline of Magic* is that the construct ‘magic’ derives its ‘factualness from its place in our own culture’ and its legitimacy from contemporary elites ‘who employed the construct as an ideological weapon.’ Geertz argues that before the thoughts and actions of contemporaries are subjected to analysis, ‘we must first

⁵¹Wilson, *Magical Universe*, pxxiv.

⁵²Davies, *Cunning Folk*, px.

⁵³Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p472.

⁵⁴Ibid., p476.

⁵⁵Ibid., p478.

⁵⁶Ibid., p482.

⁵⁷Geertz, ‘Religion and Magic I’, p74.

thoroughly understand the special meanings that they held for them.⁵⁸ This is a valid point, but how do we access information on the popular understanding of magic when contemporaries left so few written records?

In his defence Thomas argues that his quest was simply to write English history, not to seek a 'universal meaning of magic,'⁵⁹ hence using language which contemporaries themselves understood was acceptable. He contends that so long as we are concerned with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 'the analytic utility of these terms is surely adequate.'⁶⁰ Certainly, Thomas concedes that there is no single definition of magic 'elastic enough to embrace all of the different usages which contemporaries gave the term,' but at the end of the seventeenth century Thomas argues that 'magic' had a 'tolerably clear connotation.' It meant the deliberate production of physical effects or the gaining of knowledge by occult or supernatural means.⁶¹ As outlined above, current historiography centres on natural magic, and demonic magic which lies outside nature. Superstition was also allied with magic as these practices 'not knowable in the normal way, were learnt from devils.'⁶²

Therefore, the similarities between early modern definitions and current historiography on magic suggests that cultural particulars can be placed into general categories or types such as 'magic' and 'superstition'.⁶³ Accepting Thomas's contention that there is no single definition of magic adequate enough to encompass its entire domain, I propose that the Welsh term *Dewinio*, in view of all its synonyms and variations, is perhaps the best general term. I am aware that in essence it is an elite term used by a seemingly educated religious man, possibly a clergyman. But, as John Mullan and Christopher Reid point out, rural clergymen were unusually positioned at an 'interface between cultures.' Their literacy and education made them suitable public representatives of the Church designed to bring politeness and enlightenment to their parish. On the other hand they operated as custodians of local memory and traditions,⁶⁴ therefore it is entirely plausible that T.P's phrases represent the local dialect. That the implications of magic and

⁵⁸ Geertz, 'Religion and Magic I', p88.

⁵⁹ Thomas, 'Religion and Magic II', p94.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p96.

⁶¹ Ibid., p94.

⁶² Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p478.

⁶³ Geertz, 'Religion and Magic I', p71.

⁶⁴ John Mullan & Christopher Reid, *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture*. (Oxford, O.U.P, 2000) p13.

superstition were interwoven is as evident in the term *dewinio* as it is in contemporary and current debates. This chapter will now look in more detail at popular superstitions in Wales within the framework outlined here.

Clearly, magic and superstition was ‘deeply woven into the fabric of men's [sic] lives.’⁶⁵ Superstition was important because it embraced three things - reformation, acculturation, and demonology. The nature of the Reformation in Wales is the subject of the next chapter, but in its broader sense it was concerned with reform, and superstition was regarded as a serious religious transgression. In terms of acculturation, superstition was used as a cultural weapon to denounce routine actions and utterances of ordinary people as valueless.⁶⁶ The third and last reason why it was so important was because its origins were demonic.⁶⁷ Popular superstitions in Wales will be explored according to these various kinds, religious, general, and demonic.

Saunders found ‘superstition and religion...very oddly mixed’ amongst the people, although as previously noted, he did distinguish between innocent practices like crossing oneself, and the ‘Roman superstitions’ of visiting springs and fountains dedicated to various saints.⁶⁸ Jenkins testifies that the practice of making the sign of the cross (*ymswyno*) to ward off evil not only survived the onslaughts of Protestantism, but persisted in some parts of Wales up to the present century. This was also the custom when a hare or stoat crossed the path,⁶⁹ and T.P informs us that these were seen as omens of ill luck. Curative wells and springs were also popular attractions. Many local beliefs accorded wells with healing or cursing power. The Virtuous Well in Trellech, South East Wales, was originally St. Anne’s Well but acquired its present name because of its medicinal virtue.⁷⁰ St. Govan’s Well in West Wales was regularly visited by people seeking a cure for lameness, and Richard Fenton recorded in 1811 that there were many crutches left there by people who had been healed. Carreg Cennen Castle in West Wales boasts a spring which was used as a ‘Wishing Well’ by throwing pins or buckles in and making a wish.⁷¹ Certain ritual observances were sometimes required. For example, Barber marks that at St. Govan’s one

⁶⁵Jenkins, ‘Popular Beliefs’, p440.

⁶⁶Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p475.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p478.

⁶⁸Saunders, *A View of Religion*, p36.

⁶⁹Jenkins, ‘Popular Beliefs’, p441.

⁷⁰Chris Barber, *Mysterious Wales*, (Gwent, Blorenge Books, 2000), p103.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p104-5.

had to drink from a limpet shell, and to make a wish at Ffynnon Barwc, South Glamorgan, the wisher had to throw a bent pin into the well then silently pray.⁷² The incorporation of Christian prayer and observances is evident here, but as Clark argues, such habits were seen as irrelevant or excessive, a perversion to true religion.⁷³

Besides, T.P relates how people ‘arferyd Gwersau a Gweddiau at Seinctiau...a’i hadrodd naw gwaith gyda...eiriau traddodiadol,’ and argues that these customs take God’s name in vain by ‘arferyd Gweddiau anghyfreithlawn...o eiddo’r Diafol.’⁷⁴ T.P contends that these are not God’s words but the Devil’s, which echoes the theories of European demonologists such as St. Thomas Aquinas, who regarded the Devil as the inventor of superstition. For reformation purposes, superstitious observances were a ‘serious religious transgression’ provoked by ‘ignorance and fear of God.’⁷⁵ Similar sentiments resound in Griffith Jones’s observation that ‘ignorance has overspread the country’ since popish ‘reliques, expression..and practice remain among the poor.’⁷⁶

Clark highlights how many Protestants viewed superstition as a fundamental object to success, as Jones exclaims ‘we cannot...be of opinion with the papists that ignorance is a help to piety,’⁷⁷ thus for the good of the Reformation such unwitting customs were condemned.

Nevertheless, superstitious beliefs remained fundamental to daily life and there was a vivid awareness of the presence of spirits, ghosts and fairies.⁷⁸ Death omens in the guise of *Y Toeli*, and the *Cannwyll Gorff* (corpse candle) were frequent. The Toeli (phantom funeral, also known as *gyheuraeth*) always appeared prior to a death in the family or neighbourhood. The corpse candles and *Cwn Annwn* (Hounds of Hell), large black ‘death hunting’ dogs whose howls or appearance signalled death,⁷⁹ are variations of this phenomena. *Ysten Sioned* records the tale of a couple working during the harvest of 1816 who witnessed the Toeli. As they collected corn they heard ‘ryw swm a sisial megys o bell,’ and as the sound came nearer they could make out a ‘haid o bobol yn dyfod i’r golwg.’ They then saw ‘arch ac elor yn cael ei dwyn as ysgwydday rhai or bobol...fel

⁷²Ibid., 102.

⁷³Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p476.

⁷⁴T.P *Cas gan Gythraul*, p12-13. Tr: ‘practicing religious verse and prayers at saints...and repeat nine times with traditional words.’ ‘Practicing unlawfwl prayers....belonging to the Devil.’

⁷⁵Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p475-6.

⁷⁶Jones, *Letter to a Clergyman*, p6.

⁷⁷Ibid., p15.

⁷⁸Jenkins, ‘Popular Beliefs’, p443.

⁷⁹Ibid., p446.

y mae ymarfer angladd,⁸⁰ and sure enough a funeral took place within three weeks. Edmund Jones noted the frequency of such spectres and describes the experience of the Curate of Aberystwyth, who on seeing a burial went to help carry the corpse, but ‘in a moment all vanished,’ and there remained in his hand ‘the skull of a dead horse.’⁸¹

The reality of ghosts and other like apparitions were commonly acknowledged. Jones relates several instances such as the example of Walter Harry, who saw a ‘spectre coming with a candle in his hand and a white woolen cap upon his head.’ Harry asked the ghost ‘why dost thou walk this earth?’ to which it replied, ‘like one in distress,’ owing to the guilt of hiding some bottoms of wool in the walls of the house.⁸² Similarly, there is a manuscript at the National Library that records a conversation between a maid and an apparition of ‘Locke House’ (1695). The circumstances are noted first, explaining that the maid ‘after going to bed saw the apparition walking about with a candle in his hand.’ The conversation that passed between them is then meticulously recorded, script style, as the apparition, one ‘Churchill that lived in this house’ confesses to murder, and reveals that ‘Locke’ must ‘have the furnace pluck’d, and dig up...and you will find the hoard.’⁸³ These encounters reflect the popular belief that the spirit of those who did wrong could not rest unless they returned to disclose the secrets of their crime. The fact that such an encounter was carefully chronicled suggests the significance of the event and its credibility, so as Jenkins argues, these visions were an intrinsic part of daily human experience, although experiences with ghosts were commonly reported in England too.⁸⁴

Fairies regularly intervened in human affairs. In Wales they were known as *Y Tylwyth Teg* (fair family), and *Bendith y Mamau* (mother’s blessing), so called because of their bestowing blessings on selected mortals whom they favoured. However, they could easily bestow fear as they reputedly stole new born babies from their cradles and replaced them with their own ugly offspring known as changelings. To name them with a harsh epithet also invoked their anger. This malevolence may be why T.P. calls them ‘cythreuliaid cymdeithgar,’⁸⁵ likewise, Edmund Jones

⁸⁰Canon Silvan Evans & J. Jones, *Ysten Sioned* (Wrexham, Hughes & Son, 1894) P24-26. Tr: ‘some sound and commotion from afar,’ then, ‘crowd of people coming to view.’ & ‘coffin being carried on some of the people’s shoulders..like the custom of a funeral.’

⁸¹Jones, *Account of Aberystwith*, p73.

⁸²Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p21.

⁸³N.L.W *Penrice and Margam*, MS A93, 1695.

⁸⁴Thomas, *Religion and Magic*, chapter 19.

⁸⁵T.P *Cas gan Gythraul*, p22. Tr: ‘neighbourly devils.’

refers to them as 'evil spirits belonging to the kingdom of darkness.'⁸⁶ Despite their regular play in human affairs, they lived secretly in remote dwellings like caves, hollows and caverns, but their supernatural abilities rendered them an ever-present reality.⁸⁷ Jones distinctively describes how as a young boy he passed a sheepfold and saw within a 'company of many people...it seemed...dancing.' The men wore white cravats and Jones remembers, 'I always think they were the perfect resemblance of persons who lived in the world before my time.'⁸⁸ T.P also relates the adventures of a neighbour with the fairies who would 'gymmyrd ef allan trwy'r simnau' and return him 'ychydig cyn dydd.'⁸⁹ Ordinary people believed that it was in fact the fairies who whisked the poet Ellis Wynne to the top of the mountain Moelfre, 'ac iddynt ei ddwyn...drwy yr holl fyd.'⁹⁰ Thus, fairy beliefs clearly helped to account for strange and mysterious situations,⁹¹ and their imminent presence encouraged ordinary folk to be mindful of their responsibilities and behaviour.

Witchcraft was also a reality, and *The Diary of William Thomas*, a schoolmaster from Michaelston-Super-Ely frequently mentions witch beliefs. For example, recording the burial of Ann Richmond in March 1763, Thomas insists that 'all folks about dread her and believe she could witch and the same belief is of her son.' At 100 years of age 'the report is that the devil...appeared to her...and offered her a year longer on earth if she would deliver her body and all to he.'⁹² The presumptions about age, reputation, diabolism, and the belief that witchcraft was a hereditary power reflect popular ideas about the art. In Pembrokeshire an 'old lady called Nansi' had a 'reputation as a gwrach or witch.'⁹³ Nansi Goch of Llanidloes was said to 'have had intercourse with Satan,'⁹⁴ while witchcraft was inherent in the females of the Llanddona witch tribe

⁸⁶Jones, *Account of Aberystroth*, p69.

⁸⁷For information on fairies see Wirt Sykes, *British Goblins:The Realm of Faerie*

⁸⁸Jones, *Account of Aberystroth*, p76.

⁸⁹T.P *Cas gan Gythraul*, p27. Tr: 'take him out through the chimney and return him a little before dawn/daybreak.'

⁹⁰Evans, *Ysten Sioned*, p13. Tr: 'and they stole/took him..through the whole world.'

⁹¹Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs', p445.

⁹²*The Diary of William Thomas 1762-1795* (ed.) R.T.W Denning (Cardiff, South Wales Record Society, 1995) p65.

⁹³Brian John, *The Last Dragon; A Book of Pembrokeshire Folk-Tales* (Newport, Greencroft Books, 1997) p79.

⁹⁴ Pugh, *Welsh Witches*, p49.

and passed from generation to generation. As Davies argues, witches were 'integral' elements of the human community.⁹⁵

Equally significant was the cunning-man or Welsh *dyn hysbys*. Studies have shown how all over Europe ordinary people regularly appealed to these practitioners for help with their common problems.⁹⁶ Davies attests that they were an amalgam of fortune teller, astrologer, medical doctor and witch doctor,⁹⁷ and in Wales they were more significant than the witch. For example, Thomas claims that David Jenkin Taylor was a 'reputed wizzard of cattle,' and many people consulted Thomas Lawrence who provided 'scripts against the ague.' William Pranch also 'had the word to witch things. His advice...much run to to heal cattle etc.'⁹⁸ Demonologists were equally damning of the witch and the wise-man. William Perkins argued that 'by witches we understand not those onely which kill and torment: but...all wizzards, commonly called wise men.' As Clark argues, very often classic devil-worshipping witchcraft was overshadowed by its beneficent or white counterpart.⁹⁹ Everywhere the agents of popular magic were demonised and Wales was no exception. T.P argues that wizards are 'swyddogion y Diafol' and by resorting to them people merely 'anfon at y Diafol I geisio help.'¹⁰⁰ Wizards and charmers are the main objects of attack in *Cas gan Gythraul* suggesting that while popular magic was a serious concern for demonologists and reformists, it remained a common practice in Wales, even more so than traditional *maleficent* witchcraft.

The Devil is suspect in the majority of these beliefs, hence the main reason why superstition was so important in Europe was that it was demonic. The general logic was that behind all the greatest sins must lie God's greatest antagonist, superstition therefore originated with the Devil. As T.P continually maintains, 'traddodiadau, Gwersau' and 'swyngyfareddion' are practices 'drefnwyd gan y Diafol.'¹⁰¹ But, what about his portrayal in popular beliefs?

The Devil played a major role in folk tradition, and Welsh narratives are abundant with details of his ventures and exploits. A Glamorganshire woman who discovered the Devil

⁹⁵ Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p192.

⁹⁶ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p457.

⁹⁷ Owen Davies, 'Cunning- folk in England and Wales during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Rural History*, 8 (1997) p91.

⁹⁸ Thomas, *Diary*, p249, 216, 85.

⁹⁹ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p463.

¹⁰⁰ T.P *Cas gan Gythraul*, p31. Tr: 'the Devil's officials,' 'Send to the Devil for help.'

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p45. Tr: 'traditions, services, and sorcery,' 'arranged by the Devil.'

hammering a horseshoe for his own hoof in her husband's forge, crept to the fowl-house to disturb the hens to prompt the cock to crow, 'whereupon the Devil fled in anger leaving one shoe unfinished at the anvil.' In Mid Wales there is a history of the Devil being shut up in a tower, with permission to get out at the top only by mounting one step a day. His escape took him a whole year.¹⁰² Stories of Sion Dafydd's encounters with the evil one are famed. It is reported that on one occasion the Devil spotted Sion carrying a gun and not knowing what it was, Sion informed him that it was his pipe. When the Devil asked him for a puff Sion placed the barrel in his mouth and fired and the Devil disappeared in a cloud of smoke!¹⁰³ As the folklorist Elias Owen perceived, Satan was generally depicted as inferior in cunning and intellect to a bright Welsh man.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, as Davies argues, he often acted against his own interests by appearing before sinners and Sabbath breakers as the popular appearance of the card-playing devil suggests. For example: in Cardigan he generally appeared as a handsome stranger inviting himself to join a party of card players. He would usually be on a winning streak, but on mentioning the name of Christ he would vanish like a 'ball of fire.' In Carmarthen he played cards besides a pool one night, but as the sun rose his horns were reflected in the water revealing his identity to the fellow players.¹⁰⁵ Such appearances, Davies suggests, were designed to frighten sinners into following a more godly way of life,¹⁰⁶ which is precisely what happened to a man baptised by Edmund Jones. When Jones enquired how he came under 'religious impressions' the gentleman told him 'he frequently used to play and visit the ale-houses on the Sabbath.' Returning home one night he felt a man walking at his side but 'could not see his face and was afraid to look much at it, being an evil spirit.' He believed that the 'devil would certainly come' and carry him away if he did not amend his life, and according to Jones he 'seemed fully determined to reform himself.'¹⁰⁷

The Devil of folklore was certainly very different from the 'dark potent figure of evil' depicted by contemporary clergymen and preachers.¹⁰⁸ In their view the Devil was a 'profligate parodist: his capacity for dissimulation...was endless.'¹⁰⁹ Protestants tended to amplify the power

¹⁰²Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore and Folk-Stories of Wales* (London, Elliot Stock, 1909) p160-2.

¹⁰³Eirlys Gruffydd, 'Y Diafol a'i Ddilynwyr', *Llafar Gwlad*, 4 (1984) p8.

¹⁰⁴Elias Owen, *Welsh Folklore*, (Aberystwyth, 1896) p144.

¹⁰⁵Trevelyan, *Folk-Lore of Wales*, p155.

¹⁰⁶Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p178.

¹⁰⁷Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p42.

¹⁰⁸Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p178.

¹⁰⁹Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p81.

Chapter II: A Reformed Society? The Welsh Reformation and Popular Beliefs about the Devil.

The 'Slow Reformation' in Wales.

Martin Luther, the most notable Protestant reformer, wrote of his visit to Saxony in 1529: 'What misery have I seen! The common man, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about Christian doctrine; and indeed many pastors are in effect unfit and incompetent to teach.'¹

Approximately two centuries later, Erasmus Saunders echoes Luther in his remarks on the Welsh Diocese of St. David's: 'the Doctrines of the Reformation begun about two hundred years ago in England, have not effectually reach'd us, nor is it indeed likely that they ever shou'd, without a fit and learned clergy.'² These observations reflect the extensive endeavours of reformers to infiltrate Welsh territory. The process by which Wales eventually adopted Protestantism is the subject of this chapter, which will also consider the effects that Protestant doctrines had on popular notions of the Devil.

The previous chapter has already noted the prominence of Roman Catholicism at the onset of the early modern period. However, by the mid-eighteenth century many Welsh contemporaries worshipped in Anglican churches, and a small minority in Dissenting chapels. Historians currently refer to this transition as a 'slow reformation,' promoted by growing numbers of enthusiastic Protestants, which only reached its fulfilment at the close of the eighteenth century.³ In 1721, Saunders expressed his hope that 'the Reformation might have gain'd more Ground, and that Popery should not be still so prevalant.'⁴ It should also be noted that the 'magical aspects of the Catholic faith'⁵ such as those outlined in the previous chapter, retained their appeal in popular culture throughout this period.

Aside from Henry VIII's severing of links with Rome, the Reformation in Wales is discerned by three distinct phases. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, was the recognition by the Elizabethan government that the key to establishing the Reformation in Wales was to permit

¹ Geoffrey Parker, 'Success and Failure During the First Century of the Reformation', *Past and Present*, 136 (1992) p43.

² Saunders, *A View of Religion*, p37.

³ Morgan, *Tempus History*, p159.

⁴ Saunders, *A View of Religion*, p40.

⁵ Morgan, *Tempus History*, p159.

the Welsh to worship in the vernacular. Jenkins argues that this was owing to the efforts of dedicated Welsh ecclesiastics such as Richard Davies, bishop of St. Davids, who convincingly argued that religious unity, being more important than linguistic unity, could only be achieved by communicating the doctrines in Welsh. The Act of Parliament of 1563 authorised the translation of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer into Welsh, thus establishing Welsh as the official language of worship in Wales. Regenerated and enthused, Richard Davies, William Salesbury, and William Morgan then set about translating the scriptures. Jenkins argues that Salesbury's version of the Welsh New Testament in 1567, received a 'dusty reception' in Welsh Churches. However, Morgan's complete translation of the Welsh Bible, published in 1588, was a huge success, due to the ease with which assemblies could read, listen, and understand the text. Without these crucial works, Jenkins maintains that Protestantism would never have taken root among the Welsh-speaking population.⁶

The second phase of the 'slow reformation' involved the rise of the godly Puritan discipline within the church, and the promotion of the idea of independent congregations which rejected Church government. Jenkins remarks that the former ideal was characterised by the small octavo Welsh bibles sponsored by London Puritans in 1630, and the 'rough and ready' popular religious verses of Rees Prichard, vicar of Llandovery, whose influential *Canmwyll Y Cymry* ran to 52 editions between 1658 and 1820. Additionally, Jenkins argues that the disruptions caused by civil war in the 1640s, the abolition of Episcopal government, and lack of press censorship allowed Puritan ministers to promote their cause undisputed, resulted in the Act for the Better Propagation for the Gospel in Wales (1650). Thus, advocates such as Walter Cradock, Morgan Llwyd, and Vavasor Powell, displayed unwavering commitment in introducing the Welsh to the 'civilising benefits of the Puritan Gospel.'⁷

The final phase marked the arrival of religious enthusiasm and 'opportunities for widespread schooling and literacy.'⁸ Griffith Jones, an Anglican clergyman from Llanddowror, developed an original system of schooling and teaching specifically designed for rural Welsh-speakers. With a basic curriculum of bible reading, Jones operated on a three-month time scale that corresponded with the cycles of rural communities, and meetings were easily accessible

⁶ Morgan, *Tempus History*, p161.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p164.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p166.

in local barns, farmhouses, and parish churches.⁹ As Jones himself pointed out - the aim was to vindicate 'the method of instructing Poor and Ignorant People to read the Holy scriptures in their native language.'¹⁰ The failure to enlighten the Welsh in their native tongue was a grave lapse on the part of earlier reformers, and a primary concern voiced by Saunders: 'the Bishops may be strangers to the Liturgy, Strangers to the Language of the people, and the people also strangers to, or incapable of understanding the offices they perform.'¹¹ This suggests that the impact of the translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588, did not fully penetrate Wales until two centuries later, and it could be argued that this achievement was largely due to the efforts of Jones' circulating schools. At the time of his death in 1761, 3,325 schools had been established in 1,600 different locations, and approximately half the population had learnt to read. As Jenkins argues, undoubtedly, the circulating schools was one of the major successes of eighteenth-century Wales.¹²

The 1730s witnessed the development of the Methodist movement in Wales, which was rooted in a wider 'stir of moral improvement,' and religious revival. Historians have tended to portray Methodism as a novel movement. However, Jenkins argues that it was mainly an 'amalgam of the old and the new,' of churchmen, Dissenters, of the efficiency of the printed word and inspiring field preaching.¹³ For example, Griffith Jones argued for the 'advancement of the Gospel of Christ,'¹⁴ and Saunders complained that 'we are but rarely , if at all to meet with preaching.'¹⁵ Howell Harris, a carpenter's son from Trefeca, was at the forefront of the movement, alongside Daniel Rowland, the young cleric from Cardiganshire. Their mission was to preach the word of God with fire and zeal in order to achieve 'that cataclysmic conversion which had men and women born again.'¹⁶ Harris' own account of his preaching best captures his enthusiasm, for example: In Rhayader during the summer of 1740 he recalls, 'I discoursed within a few yards of a public house...while discoursing on the conversion of Zacchaeus...and endeavouring to draw them by love....the Lord did lift up my voice like a trumpet, and enable me

⁹ Williams, *When Was Wales*, p154.

¹⁰ Jones, *Letter to a Clergyman*, p1.

¹¹ Saunders, *A View of Religion*, p42.

¹² Morgan, *Tempus History*, p169.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p169.

¹⁴ Jones, *Letter to a Clergyman*, p7.

¹⁵ Saunders, *A View of Religion*, p22.

¹⁶ Williams, *When Was Wales*, p155.

to declare home about the Lord's enemies...I believe some were cut through; many wept, and one fainted; others felt a great trembling, and all were filled with awe.'¹⁷ David Howell contends that rural labourers were inspired by the dynamism of the movement.¹⁸ Initially a spontaneous and fragmented group of reformers, Jenkins argues that Methodism overcame its initial obstacles, and unleashed powerful spiritual forces which greatly strengthened the work of the Reformation. Thus, when this religious enthusiasm captured the whole of Wales at the close of the eighteenth century, Jenkins argues that finally 'the Welsh Reformation came of age.'¹⁹

The pattern of the European Reformation is a valid comparison for eighteenth-century Wales. The question of success during the Reformation is strongly contested among historians. The debate was prompted by Gerald Strauss who stipulated that the efforts by Protestant leaders to make all people 'think, feel, and act as Christians' met with initial success, but the extent to which ordinary people were persuaded by Protestantism soon became questionable.²⁰ This is not a new theory. Since the 1950s it has been commonly acknowledged that 'the Reformation was an urban event' - that initially it only succeeded in the towns.²¹ Wales's pastoral outlook may in part account for the delay in reformative acceptance, a situation comparable to that in England. Patrick Collinson has studied the nature of popular religion during the Reformation in terms of popular 'irreligion' - the scrutiny of low levels of religious commitment. He argues that there is no reason to believe that an 'intellectually demanding and morally rigorous religion' had a broad natural appeal. In the country it appeared that 'the heavy, stupefied ignorance of the peasantry was commonplace.'²² However, Collinson argues that it is an 'untested assumption' that those at odds with ecclesiastical discipline belonged to the poorer classes, yet we know too little about the 'poorest of the poor' to know how they stood in relation to the church.²³ Christopher Haigh highlights the genuine enthusiasm for Catholicism before, and during the Reformation in some parts of England, in particular the north-west. For a broader based view, Haigh examines the

¹⁷H. Elvet Lewis, *Howell Harris and the Welsh Revivalists* (London, National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, no date.) p72.

¹⁸David. W Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth Century Wales* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2000) p152.

¹⁹Morgan, *Tempus History*, p168.

²⁰Parker, 'Success and Failure', p43.

²¹*Ibid.*, p44.

²²Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1982) p217.

²³*Ibid.*,p217.

religious life of the parishes which conveys an 'energetic commitment' to conventional devotions. The wills of the dying suggest large proportions of lay people who made gifts to their churches, thus Haigh contends that demand for change was 'weak.' Even after two decades, the ecclesiastical provisions of 1559 were still comprehensively ignored in some areas. Moreover, Haigh draws attention to the lack of an efficient clergy. All early Elizabethan parish clergy had originally been recruited as Catholic priests, and even as late as 1576, a significant percentage of the clergy had been ordained before 1559.²⁴ As Collinson argues, ignorance was doubtless particularly endemic in areas deprived of a preaching ministry.²⁵

But the situation was more complex for Wales, which had the added barrier of language. As Saunders remarked, the main obstacle to the Reformation's success was 'those especially that are attended with the cure of souls, to such as are wholly ignorant of that [Welsh] language.'²⁶ This problem was also apparent in Wales' neighbouring Celtic countries. In Scotland, a Protestant catechism in Gaelic was not published until 1653. Moreover, John Richardson, rector of Belturbet and chaplain to the duke of Ormond observed of Ireland, 'until they understand our language, if we would convert them we must apply to them in their own.'²⁷ Wales's experience was thus typical of any other region characterised by linguistic differences. The issue of effective preaching in the vernacular was the central tenet held by many Welsh reformists such as Griffith Jones and Howell Harris, and their efforts to instruct through the medium of Welsh were paramount to the Reformation's eventual success in Wales. Unlike the Catholics, who were prepared to compromise with traditional customs and values, Parker argues that Protestant reformers disassociated themselves from local values and practices and 'sought to suppress everything that was not rooted in scripture.'²⁸ Hence, Parker concludes that the European Reformation had been a 'long, slow process,' but, further research among visitation returns and

²⁴Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1993) p28, 248.

²⁵For recent debates on the subject see, Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England 1570-1640* (Cambridge, C.U.P, 1987). Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998), & John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (Harlow, Longman, 2000)

²⁶Saunders, *A View of Religion*, p38.

²⁷Parker, 'Success and Failure', p61.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p69.

other sources should 'pinpoint' the exact contour and chronology of Protestantism's advance.²⁹ Thus, such research may in fact find the Welsh experience as typical rather than slow.

Popular and Reformed Attitudes Towards the Devil.

The Reformation also altered ideas about the Devil. Protestants emphasised the Bible as the exclusive source of authority which meant a reassertion of New Testament teachings on Satan. Jeffrey Burton Russell underlines the 'individualism' of the new faith which demanded solitary worship and salvation where the individual was directly accountable to God, or the Devil. Exemplifying the popular tale of *Faust*, Russell argues that the stress on the 'lonely struggle of the isolated individual against spiritual powers' meant that Faust had no recourse to a 'community or...communion of saints.'³⁰ Likewise, Oldridge contends that the central teachings of the Reformation were consistent with a variety of attitudes towards Satan, one of which was the intense awareness of his earthly power, combined with a constant struggle to overcome it. The experience of religious conflict was a general factor in the lives of committed Protestants, and Oldridge argues that this accorded the Devil a 'central role in their view of the world.'³¹

Metaphorical images of war and oppression are employed by Welsh reformers. For example, Griffith Jones asks 'What good persons have not suffered evil-speaking and opposition if not...persecution?' He goes on to stress 'there is a contest between Good and Evil, and everybody must be engaged on one side or the other.'³² As Clark explains, the extension of theological interest in the demonic resulted in the 'polarising of religious experience,' whereby religious opponents were demonised alongside the theological preoccupation with the Antichrist.³³ Hence Jones argues that if people are against Christ then 'who can they be for but the Devil?'³⁴ Indeed the comments of like reformers often read like battle cries. When Howell Harris was warned of the dangers he faced by preaching in Montgomeryshire he remarked 'may the Lord cover my head

²⁹Ibid., p82.

³⁰Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p179.

³¹Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p35.

³²Jones, *Letter to a Clergyman*, p64.

³³Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p81.

³⁴Jones, *Letter to a Clergymen*, p77.

in the day of battle.’ He was acutely aware that his work ‘will cost some battles with Satan first.’³⁵

The Welsh version of William Gurnall’s *The Christian in Complete Armour* (1656) ran through several editions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and is brimming with warlike imagery. For example, the book warns ‘rhaid ichwi sefyll at eich banerau,’ against ‘fyddin y Diafol,’ who is a very cunning enemy.³⁶ As Jenkins notes, the bulk of Welsh books during this period were ‘religious and didactic,’ designed to augment the effort of Protestant preaching,³⁷ hence the recurrence of warlike themes. Russell argues that Reformation literature emphasised the Devil as a more powerful threat than the writings of the later middle ages. The themes of battle and conflict reflect the ‘favourite genre of the period,’ marked by popular representations of the fall of angels, and the victory of the archangel Gabriel, which Russell argues seldom appeared in medieval literature.³⁸

The Devil was also considered a calamity to religious observances. As Clark indicates, with an ‘endless’ capacity for dissimulation he was classed as ‘God’s Ape.’³⁹ In his letter to John Wesley, dated 9 August 1742, Harris notes the Devil’s obtrusiveness: ‘I have been in all ye towns in So:Wales, but such is ye Power of the Devil...tis few of the Better sort come to hear.’⁴⁰ Jones’s sermon, *The Power and the Influence of the Evil Spirit* (no date), encapsulates this notion warning that the Devil ‘dwells in some men’ and departs of his own accord, only to return to hurry the individual ‘on to greater wickedness.’⁴¹ As Jenkins suitably observes, the Reformation in some respects gave vent to a powerful belief in the forces of evil, with clergymen warning of the various ploys used by mankind’s most dangerous enemy.⁴²

His usual tactic was to exploit the ‘innate weaknesses’ of the human body and intellect. William Chub expressed the common view in his catechism of 1586, that men and women inevitably ‘fall into al filthie conversation, lewde lust, abominable sin and devilish desires.’⁴³ Many

³⁵Lewis, *Howell Harris*, p73.

³⁶William Gurnall, *Y Cristion Mewn Cyflawn Arfogaeth*, Tr: ‘you must stand with your legions,’ ‘army of the Devil.’

³⁷Geraint. H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales 1660-1730* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 19778) p38.

³⁸Russell, *The Prince of Darkness*, p177.

³⁹Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p82.

⁴⁰(ed.) Joan Abse, *Letters from Wales* (Bridgend, Seren, 2000) p106.

⁴¹(ed.) Rev. J. Owen, *Jones’ Sermons* (London, Hamilton & Adams & Co.) p260-262.

⁴²Jenkins, ‘Popular Beliefs’, p443.

⁴³Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p48.

Welsh ballads suggest a widespread belief in the power of Satan, and relate accounts of his abuses. For example, one ballad relates the tale of Sian Nicolson from London who ‘drwy demtiad Satan amcanodd wenwyno ei Thad a’i Mam.’⁴⁴ Likewise, ‘drwy dwyll Satan,’ a woman named Grace Williams murdered a young girl who had seen her ‘caru’r nos heb gysgu’ with her lover.⁴⁵ Another news ballad reports the incident of a wife who killed her child ‘drwy fod Satan wedi dwyn ymaith ei synhwyrâu.’⁴⁶ However, men were just as likely to succumb to the Devil. A news ballad tells the history a drunk man claiming that there was no heaven, hell, nor souls, and if he did have a soul then he would ‘Gwerthai ef hi i’r neb a’i prynu un o’i gymdeithion a prynnodd un gwydr o win, ar Cythrael a Ddoeth ac y prynnodd eilwaith am yr un pris, ac aeth y dyn ymaith..a welwyd byth wedyn.’⁴⁷ Again as a warning to ‘meddwon,’ one ballad discloses the activities of six men who denied God, claiming ‘erioed ni weles I ddim o’i hanes,’ and decided to turn to the Devil, ‘Dawn diles fod un Diawl,’ and the ‘gymryd ei sacrament yn enw’r Cythrael.’⁴⁸ The theme of gender is balanced in the ballads. Men are equally as vulnerable to the Devil’s designs as women. However, men’s transgressions remain in the masculine spheres of drunkenness, and bad husbandry, such as the man who was tempted by Satan to ‘dewis Gorddrech yn lle ei briod,’⁴⁹ while women’s crimes centre on traditional areas of female responsibility, like motherhood. The Devil’s role as instigator of these sins may therefore offer information on the social role of men and women, and their responsibilities to society in the eighteenth century. It also indicates that Welsh men and women would have been acutely aware of the presence of the Devil and the very real threat that he posed.

However, Oldridge argues that traditional ideas about the Devil survived and continued to flourish. The English population he contends, retained essentially medieval beliefs about Satan throughout the early modern period.⁵⁰ Drawing on popular literature such as *Faust*, and *The*

⁴⁴J.H. Davies Collection, No 268 by Hugh Roberts, W. Edwards (1793 - 1810)Tr: ‘though Satan’s temptation, devised to poison her father and mother.’

⁴⁵D. Goodwin Collection, No. 41, John Rowland 1748, Tr: ‘through Satan’s deception,’ ‘courting all night without sleeping.’

⁴⁶Goodwin, No. 314, Ellis Roberts (1776-1785). Tr: ‘because Satan had stolen away all her senses.’

⁴⁷ Ballad 111, Richard Hughes. Tr: ‘Sell it to any neighbour who would buy it for a glass of wine, and the Devil came and bought it for twice as much, and the man was never seen again.’

⁴⁸Goodwin, No. 144 (no date), Jonathan Hughes. Tr: ‘We/I never ever witnessed his history,’ ‘One Devil will come’, ‘took the sacrament in the Devil’s name.’

⁴⁹Davies, No 325, (1780), Hywel o’r Yri. Tr: ‘chose his concubine over his wife.’

⁵⁰Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p59.

Merry Devil of Edmonton (1604), Oldridge highlights the continuation of pre-Reformation attitudes. For example, originally based on an earlier folkloric character, the Yorkshire prophetess Mother Shipton, who was believed to be the daughter of Satan and had cloven feet. These features did not however, deem her a frightening figure. Rather, Oldridge explains that she was held in 'great esteem,' and her reputation rested on the truthfulness of her prophecies, as opposed to Satan, whom reformers presented as the 'father of lies.'⁵¹

In Wales it could also be argued that Methodism reinforced popular beliefs in the supernatural. Jenkins remarks that belief in the Devil, witches and spirits retained an 'extraordinary hold' over the popular imagination.⁵² Edmund Jones's *Relation of Apparitions* is a leading example. Combining notions of spiritual warfare and Satanic efficacy, Jones argues 'it is very improper that a preacher ..and a soldier against the Kingdom of Darkness should deny the Agency..of the spirits of Darkness upon the earth.'⁵³ Chapter 1 outlined his aim in writing this book, which was to 'prevent..the infidelity of denying spirits which tends too irreligion.'⁵⁴ Despite his advocacy of godly beliefs, Jones' compilation has the paradoxical effect of verifying the actuality and power of spirits and demons. His stories of demonic confrontations reveal a common belief in the Devil's direct influence in human affairs. For example, Thomas Andrew of Llanhyddel saw as he was coming home one night, 'a dark man creeping on all fours, scraping the ground...making a dreadful noise.'⁵⁵ Anne Herbert of Trefethin was searching for the cows in Rhiw-newith woods, when she saw 'something like a black man standing by a holly tree.' When her dog approached the figure, it 'stretched out its black tongue.'⁵⁶ Likewise, Mr. D.W of Pembrokeshire was out walking one evening when he saw 'the likeness of a man,..it had no hat...neither could he perceive that it had any arms.' Thinking it was a stranger who had lost his way, the informant thought to give way to figure but was 'seized with such a terror.' When he turned to look at the man he saw a 'ball of fire' in his place.⁵⁷ A similar experience befell a 'S.J.W' and a female companion as they travelled to Risca. They witnessed 'the resemblance of a

⁵¹Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p70.

⁵²Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs', p459.

⁵³Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p41.

⁵⁴Ibid., preface.

⁵⁵Ibid., p38.

⁵⁶Ibid., p47.

⁵⁷Ibid., p71.

boy' who put its head between its legs 'transforming itself into a ball of fire.' The experience became even more unnerving when the couple heard 'the jingling..of iron,' and saw 'the earth cleaving and opening, and out of it came a pillar of fire.'⁵⁸ These encounters portray the Devil as a dark and unnatural figure of terror. That these people did encounter the Devil is confirmed by Jones who warns that 'Satan...delights in nothing but the sin and misery of mankind.'⁵⁹ A sense of vigilance is suggested in these account, emphasising the pervasiveness of Satan and the need to be wary of his evil trappings. Yet the Devil was also presented in a humorous context as other sources testify.

The Devil of Welsh folklore is often a ludicrous and gullible character, who is regularly duped in his attempts to mislead Welsh men and women. Compared to the dark portrayals in Jones' accounts, these comical depictions reflect the 'partial assimilation' of reformed doctrines and traditional ideas.⁶⁰ A Cardiganshire tailor met a man on horseback who asked the tailor to take his measure for some new clothes. When the tailor was measuring him, he noticed that the man had horses feet, a sure sign that he was the Devil. He sought a local cunning man who advised the tailor to delay measuring as much as possible, and not to stand before, but behind the Devil. On his return, the Devil became impatient at his slow pace, and was curious to know why the tailor would not measure his front, whereupon the cunning man came to confront him, and realising that his identity was known, he suddenly disappeared.⁶¹ As Russell argues, folk stories were usually aimed at cutting the Evil one down to size.⁶² For example, for some reason the Devil was offended by the people of Pentre-cwrt and so decided to drown them. On his way to the village, carrying a shovel full of earth, he met a cobbler carrying a huge bundle of shoes. Saluting the Devil the cobbler asked where he intended to take his load. 'To the mouth of Alltafon' he replied. On further enquiry the Devil explained that he wanted to dam the river Teifi to drown the inhabitants of Pentre-cwrt. Ingeniously, the cobbler explained that the village was a considerable distance. 'How far?' asked the Devil. 'I cannot tell you the exact distance' said the cobbler, 'but in walking from there I have worn out all these shoes,' 'then it is too far' concluded the Devil,

⁵⁸Ibid., p41.

⁵⁹Ibid., p21.

⁶⁰Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p59.

⁶¹Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p65.

⁶²Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p116.

‘for I am already tired,’ and he threw down his shovel of earth.⁶³ Such tales convey his vulnerability in the face of a quick-thinking Welshman, as opposed to his traditional omnipotence. But these accounts also offer an insight into the types of people who encountered the Devil. The significance of the above characters is that they are craftsmen. It could be argued that relating these encounters was a means by which the craftsman elevated himself, and consequently his craft, to a respectable and efficient position. Overcoming the most powerful adversary of God by utilising the talents of your trade would have been a sure way of asserting independence and credibility.

Additionally, Devil’s Bridge in Cardiganshire is so-called because of the belief that it was erected by the Devil. An old woman named Megan Llandunach had lost her cow which was seen over the gorge. The Devil appeared and promised to build a bridge under the condition that the first living thing to cross it would be his. Megan agreed, and thinking that he would acquire the soul of this helpless woman the bridge was built. However, on completion Megan threw a crust of bread over the bridge and her hungry dog chased after it, thus the Devil was duped.⁶⁴ There are many tales connecting the Devil with various landmarks and buildings. For example, The Devil’s Bridge in Clydach Gorge, near Abergavenny is so-called because of a remarkable rock which resembles the head of the Devil. The Old Town Bridge of Pontypool was supposedly constructed by the Devil who lost in a tug-of-war with a local man, Dafydd ap Hywel. The loser had to build a bridge over the Afon Lwyd.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Llangyfelach church, near Swansea, has a detached tower believed to have been stolen by the Devil in a fit of jealousy over St. Cyfelach, but the saint forced him to drop it before he got too far.⁶⁶ It is worth considering why the Devil is commonly associated with bridges. Such constructions would have been relatively new, and regarded as remarkable structures. Some bridges were erected over difficult, and dangerous land features, such as Devil’s Bridge near Abergavenny (see illustration, page 45), which may have led people to believe that only the Devil could achieve such perilous yet impressive feats of engineering. The example of Bachegraig house, built by Sir Richard Clough in the sixteenth century suggests this. Bachegraig mansion was of Flemish design, built with new materials and incorporating many

⁶³Jonathan Ceredig Davies, *Folk-Lore of West and Mid-Wales* (1911:Aberystwyth, Llanerch, 1992) p179-80.

⁶⁴Davies, *Folk-Lore*, p179.

⁶⁵Barber, *Mysterious Wales*, p144, 146.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p139.

unusual features. For example, its stained glass windows were made of Flemish glass which was famous for its beautiful design and colour. The house was built with small bricks, and it is probable that Bachegraig, along with Richard's other house, Plas Clough, were the first two houses in Wales to be fashioned in this way. Bachegraig also boasted pyramid shaped roofs, another example of its Flemish inspiration (see illustration, page 45). The house was of such a strange appearance, unlike any other house seen in Wales at this time that it soon became associated with the demonic. Thomas Pennant noted that 'the country people say that it was built by the devil, in one night, and that the architect still preserves an apartment in it.' John Williams repeats the same tales in his *Ancient and Modern Denbigh*, opening with a note on Pennant's reference, 'it is not said that his Satanic majesty was the architect, but merely the contractor, who supplied the bricks, and other materials.'⁶⁷ Therefore, it seems that exceptional buildings and structures attracted an air of mystery, which led people to the conclusion that they must have been constructed by the Devil.

By comparison, many geographical features in Brittany were interpreted as the results of battles between the Devil and Celtic saints. Giant rocks had been left by the Devil who was forced to drop them by the intervention of a saint or the sound of church bells.⁶⁸ One local story connected to Carreg y Big in west Wales claims that the Devil was carrying it when he sat down for a rest as the stone was so heavy. Suddenly startled by the crowing of a cock, he jumped up and fled, leaving the stone behind.⁶⁹ In Brittany he was also connected with various bridges such as the bridge of St. Cloud, one at Beaugency, and the Pont du Gard, which had been constructed in similar fashion to Devil's Bridge in Cardiganshire. As David Nicholls argues, legends associating the Devil with buildings and natural features, 'could also bear witness to his weaknesses.'⁷⁰ They stood in testimony to his various defeats and thwarted attempts to carry out his evil tasks, thus emphasising the possibility of overcoming the greatest enemy of God.

The disposition of folklore to make Satan seem ridiculous and impotent was according to Russell, a natural psychological reaction against the terrors of the official religious view, which

⁶⁷Robin Gwyndaf, 'Sir Richard Clough of Denbigh', *Denbighshire Historical Society of Transactions* 22 (1973) pp55-85.

⁶⁸David Nicholls, 'The Devil in Renaissance France' in Darren Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader* (London & New York, Routledge, 2002) p238.

⁶⁹Barber, *Mysterious Wales*, p23.

⁷⁰Nicholls, 'Devil in France', p238.

portrayed the Devil as an all-encompassing terror. The popular Devil on the other hand ‘shades into other negative power figures,’ such as ghosts, giants and fairies.⁷¹ Evidence of this can be gleaned from the demonic apparitions recorded by Jones, such as the case of Jeremiah Jones who witnessed ‘the resemblance of a man coming from the hay-loft and violently turning upwards and downwards,’ after his neighbour had hanged himself. Jones suggests that this was ‘no other than an evil Spirit going with his prey.’⁷² Jones also includes a letter dated March 24th, 1772, from a Mr. E. W-, a ‘pious young gentlemen from Denbighshire,’ concerning an apparition he saw as a child in 1757. The author records that a group of children, himself included, were playing in a field when they spotted a company of dancers. One of these dancers gave chase, and the author recalls ‘I looked back and saw him just by me; upon which I cried out.’ The figure had a ‘grim countenance, a wild and fierce look...his complexion was copper-coloured,’ which the author reasons might ‘be significative of his disposition - not good.’⁷³ Although this story is symptomatic of a fairy experience, there are diabolical undertones to it. Similarly, Stuart Macdonald has suggested that portraits of the Devil in witchcraft cases for Fife, in Scotland, ‘are suggestive of a fairy or an elf.’ For example: Walking home late one night, Andrew Patrick saw seven or eight women dancing ‘with a meckle man in the midst of them.’ The Scottish example offers great comparative insight into the amalgamation of demonic and magical beliefs which will be analysed further in the next chapter. As Macdonald argues, confessions show not only elements of demonic theory, but also a ‘strong dose of popular belief.’⁷⁴ The relation to witch-beliefs will be explored in Chapter 4.

Folklore often provides other peculiarities regarding the Devil, such as what he wears, how cold or heavy he is, and other physical characteristics. For example, a young man collecting nuts on the Sabbath was accosted by the ‘hairy hand’ of Satan.⁷⁵ He also appeared to a collier on the Aberdare mountain as a ‘handsome young gentleman’ dressed in a red waistcoat, blue coat, and three-cocked hat. His identity was betrayed by his cloven foot and the long tail protruding from beneath his coat.⁷⁶ The Devil was usually heavy. He was renowned for molesting travellers

⁷¹Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p111.

⁷²Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p21.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p53.

⁷⁴Stuart Macdonald, ‘In Search of the Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases’ in Julian Goodare (ed.) *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context* (Manchester, M.U.P, 2002) pp33-50.

⁷⁵Owen, *Welsh Folklore*, p152.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p189.

on Crack Hill, the main road leading from Bridgend to Cowbridge, by jumping on their backs and pressing heavily on their shoulders, or weighing down horse-carts and pony-traps.⁷⁷

Satan's colour is significant. Usually he is black, signifying his dark domain and opposition to light and good. Hence the aforesaid Mr. E. W noted the significance of the colour of evil spirits - 'The Red - of their cruelty: The black of their sin and misery.' An account of a living round object encountered in a lane, 'altering its size' also displayed a 'reddish colour with a mixture of ash colour.'⁷⁸ Red may be linked to images of hell and its burning flames, for it was often believed, as some people claimed to have witnessed, that the Devil could turn himself into a ball of fire. Moreover, the 'hellfire' preaching of Welsh ministers such as Harris, who regularly preached on 'death and judgement' without any mention of Christ, may have influenced these popular perceptions.⁷⁹

Satan could also manifest himself as an animal, which Oldridge argues was a classic feature of popular literature and almost entirely absent in godly works, where the Devil was usually in the form of a man or monstrous beast. The first English edition of the Faust legend (1592), presented Satan as a squirrel with his 'tayle turning upwards on his back.'⁸⁰ In Wales he often appeared in the form of a pig, a dog, and a black calf. When the Merthyr collier recognised the Devil he 'changed himself into a pig...gave a big grunt, and then ran away.'⁸¹ The Devil's materialisation as a pig may be rooted in the New Testament stories of Jesus exorcising devils from the possessed, and the sick, and the expelled devils would then possess a herd of pigs nearby. Satan was also seen as a 'dog more terrible than any...ever seen' on a moor in Pembrokeshire. A Black calf also said to be the Devil haunted a stream in Pembroke, and in Cardiganshire a black calf 'but with a head like that of a dog' often appeared to travellers on the Rhosygarth road late at night.⁸² The canine features are synonymous with the notorious omen of the *Cwn Annwn* (Dogs of Hell.) Often believed to be 'devils under the semblance of hunting dogs,'⁸³ these hounds signified death to those who saw them, or heard their blood curdling howl.

⁷⁷Trevelyan, *Folklore of Wales*, p163.

⁷⁸Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p40.

⁷⁹Lewis, *Howell Harris*, p24.

⁸⁰Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p59.

⁸¹Owen, *Welsh Folklore*, p189.

⁸²Davies, *Folk-Lore of Wales*, p181.

⁸³Owen, *Welsh Folklore*, p126.

It was also believed that they were sent to collect souls forfeited to the Devil, and were often seen lurking by the corpses of the damned. Oldridge argues that the idea that the Devil could appear as an animal was 'probably linked to the idea that he always possessed cloven hoofs.'⁸⁴ But in Wales it was an essential component of a wider belief system which conferred animals with supernatural or magical significance, such as *Gwiberod* - flying snakes; the milk-white cow with an endless supply of milk, also represented in fairy lore; and the advice of a Welsh proverb, 'Na chadw byth ynghylch dy dy, Na cheiliog gwyn, na chath ddu.'⁸⁵ Indeed the significance of animal-lore in popular belief systems is an opportunity for further research, and could possibly uncover some of the mystery surrounding the under-researched field of witches' familiars. Besides, Oldridge argues that this animal dimension was largely absent from Protestant descriptions of the evil one, and such a trivial limitation of his power was at odds with reformed theology.⁸⁶

So too was his name. Religious commentators refer to him in the strictest forms of Satan, Diafol, and Evil Spirit, but popular culture referred to him more intimately as 'Old Nick, 'Old Harry', 'Old Scrat', and the 'Old One'.⁸⁷ General Welsh expressions are *Cythraul*, *Diawl* or *Diafol*. *Y Gwr drwg* (the bad man), *Gwas drwg* (wicked servant), *Ysbryd drwg* (bad spirit), and *Yr hen fachgen* (the old boy) are also common names.⁸⁸ 'Old Nick' or 'Nick' was also a popular title in Wales as well as England, and one version of its origin is given in the following account. The Devil greeted a blacksmith at his forge in the Gower one night, and offered to test the strength of the chain he was fashioning. The blacksmith agreed and once the chain was finished the Devil came back to test it, and the blacksmith declared to know his name. 'Any name will do,' said the Devil, 'and as I came in the nick of time, you shall call me Nicholas.'⁸⁹ Russell argues that giving the devil 'popular nicknames' was an antidote to the terror he struck,⁹⁰ and they do seem to present him as a passive acquaintance rather than an evil foe. However, they also suggest a sense of anxiety when confronting Satan, for as Wirt Sikes observed, people used euphemisms to avoid pronouncing the name of the Devil which was considered a 'profane utterance,' and if his name

⁸⁴Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p61.

⁸⁵Davies, *Folklore of Wales*, p227-8. Tr: 'Never keep about thy house, A white cock, nor a black cat.'

⁸⁶Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p61.

⁸⁷Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p178.

⁸⁸Owen, *Welsh Folklore*, p192.

⁸⁹Trevelyan, *Folkstories of Wales*, p161.

⁹⁰Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p112.

was mentioned in church then the congregation would spit profusely⁹¹. Invoking the name of the Devil was also a means of conferring a curse, so folklore can be ambiguous, suggesting familiarity, as well as real fear when faced with Satan, which in turn indicates the amalgamation of popular and reformed attitudes.

Thus far the evidence suggests that popular attitudes towards the Devil were only slightly affected by Protestant doctrine. Oldridge remarks that in England, only some aspects of 'godly thinking' were assimilated into pre-existing beliefs.⁹² At the end of the sixteenth century, Russell argues that the spirit of 'scepticism and irony' was revived as the comic Devil reappeared. A more constructive role played by God's adversary was that of a 'vehicle for ironic criticism of Christian society itself.' Letters from the Devil were a popular genre in the middle ages, whose purpose was to satirise corrupt ecclesiastics, to amuse, and to offer rhetorical instruction.⁹³ Similar literature circulated in Wales during the eighteenth century. The ballad *Taith Nick: neu Y Diafol yn Ymweld ar Wlad*, is a satirical account of the Devil's visit to Wales. On his travels he encounters many pleasing things, for example, 'Fe welai 'ffeiriad meddw, a Nick a ddwedai'n hawdd, 'Peth goreu wnes yw cwrw.'⁹⁴ Meeting with Sabbath breakers, cheats, misers, and general profanity reassures him that his kingdom is safe, and he declares 'mae 'nghalon yn gwresogi, Nid af fi adre dro, Mae'r byd mor hyfryd imi.'⁹⁵ The object of criticism is not the Devil, whose purpose is to illustrate the sins of society. Neither is he the object of blame. The ballad is aimed at targeting the individual, and as opposed to playing the 'olde serpent [who] maye destroy and brynge everlasting damnation to mortall menne,'⁹⁶ the affectionate Nick is merely a passive, yet pleased observer.

A similar style is adopted in *Arweinydd Diogel I Uffern*, a translation of an older book, *The Sure Guide to Hell* (no date). Here 'Beelzebub' takes a more direct approach, as he is the narrator - giving advice on how best to get to the 'tiriogaethau uffernol.'⁹⁷ Beelzebub sets down his instructions, advising parents to teach their children to be 'ddialgar' (vindictive,) and to

⁹¹Sikes, *British Goblins*, p214.

⁹²Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p87.

⁹³Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p182.

⁹⁴Ballad, *Nick's Journey: Or the Devil visiting the country*, 1800. Tr: 'He saw a drunken preacher, and Nick remarked easily, best thing I made was beer.'

⁹⁵Tr: 'it warms my heart, for now I won't go home, this world is so beautiful to me.'

⁹⁶Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p23.

⁹⁷E Griffiths, *Arweinydd Diogel I Uffern* (Abertawy, Heol Fawr, 1853.) p4. Tr: 'territories of hell.'

‘ddywed celwydd a bod yn ddaueiriog.’⁹⁸ He directs young people to go out late at night, ‘gosod dwyllwis am’danant, gwthio ddynton I lawr, tresio fenywod, curo blant,’⁹⁹ and he also encourages clergymen to preach insensibly about the meaning of terms and proverbs, thus avoiding the true message of the scriptures, and misleading congregations.¹⁰⁰ The Devil is the instigator here although there is a suggestion of individual choice and responsibility. Dated 1853, the book may in fact be more illustrative of nineteenth-century social ills rather than eighteenth-century perceptions of Satan. Nevertheless, it is part of a long literary tradition where Satan parodied legal, religious, and social maladies. Russell points out that such a literary composition, *The Letter of Lucifer*, was composed in 1351. Saluting the ‘princes of the modern church’ it proclaims that ‘we are sending... eminent demons and nobles of hell to counsel and aid you,’ and was widely copied and adapted throughout the period.¹⁰¹

Therefore, not only did the Devil occupy a major role in folk tradition but this tradition helped to mould popular ideas about Satan, which were in many ways resilient to reformed doctrine. As Russell argues, popular religion consisted of theological ideas combined with legendary and folklore elements.¹⁰² The humorous aspect of the Devil’s character was part of an extensive tradition rooted in medieval thought, yet its emphasis was mutable. The onset of Reformation brought with it a pessimistic view of religion which elevated the Devil as the ultimate and most extreme antagonist on earth. However, the comic Devil soon appeared, as the focus of evil shifted on to the human personality. So, as Oldridge contends, the set of beliefs that emerged from the process of Reformation were neither wholly Catholic or Protestant, but a ‘remarkable melange of apparently incongruous ideas.’¹⁰³ Tessa Watt argues that historians are too rigid in distinguishing between Protestantism and traditional culture. Watt contends that this ‘polarisation’ of cultures overlooks the ability of the culture to absorb new beliefs while retaining old ones.¹⁰⁴ Hence Oldridge attests that most English folk retained ‘essentially medieval beliefs about Satan’ throughout the early modern period, but concedes to a partial assimilation of reformed ideas,

⁹⁸Ibid., p8. Tr: ‘tell lies and be double-worded/two faced.’

⁹⁹Ibid., p15. Tr: ‘in disguise, knock men down, rape women, and beat children.’

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p42.

¹⁰¹Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p120.

¹⁰²Ibid., p110.

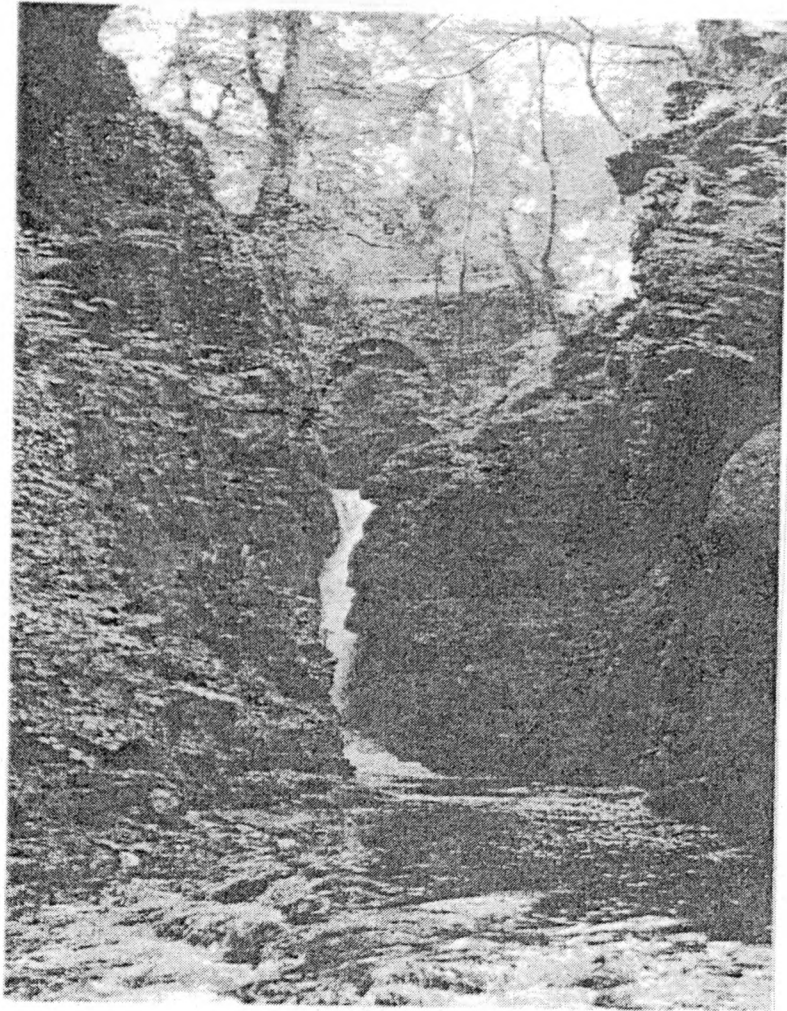
¹⁰³Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p89.

¹⁰⁴Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1991) p126.

resulting in a diverse and ambiguous set of beliefs.¹⁰⁵ The Welsh experience with the Devil also exposes an amalgamation of Methodist doctrine and a reverence for superstitious and magical practices. Even so, as Jenkins maintains, these belief systems were measures of a traditional age old mentality, merely ‘ambiguous...reminders of old mysteries.’¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p58-9.

¹⁰⁶Jenkins, ‘Popular Beliefs’ p442.



The Devil's Bridge, Clydach Gorge, near Abergavenny, South Wales.
SO 216125 (161)

Devil's Bridge. Barber, *Mysterious Wales*, p144.
Bachegraig. Gwyndaf, 'Clough of Denbigh', p85.

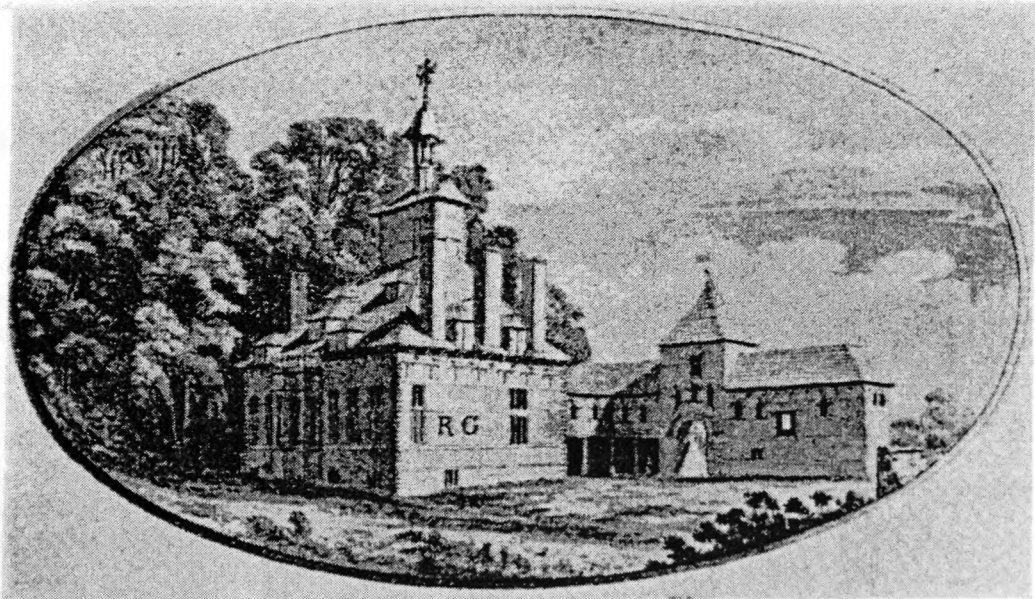


Plate x: BACHEGRAIG IN 1770

From a drawing by Moses Griffith, in Thomas Pennant, 'An extra illustrated copy at N.L.W. of *A tour in Wales 1770*', Vol. 2, 1st ed. 1781, p. 22.

Part II: A Not So Distant Demon

Chapter III: Devilish Dreams or Divine Visions?

‘Newydd roi ‘mhen I lawr.... fy Meistr Cwsc ydoedd.’¹

T.P records one of the ways in which ‘mae rhai dynion yn cadw cyfrinach a’r Diafol,’ and that is ‘trwy freuddwydion,’ and he distinguishes three types. The first is ‘Pan y bytho Duw neu’r Angelion da yn datguddio trwy freuddwydion...yr hyn a fytho ef yn ewyllysio.’ The second type of dream is ‘naturiol...megis pan bytho dyn yn breuddwydio ynghylch yr hyn a fytho ei feddylfryd arno’r dydd o’r blaen neu’n tarddu oddiwrth ei dymherau naturiol.’ Lastly are those dreams ‘sydd yn cael ei hyrddu I feddylfryd dyn gan y Diafol...oherwydd hyn gochelwch fod yn rhy chwannog I geisio gwybodaeth trwy freuddwydion, rhag trwy hynny ddyfod ohonoch I ymgryfrinachu ar Diafol.’² Part one highlighted how the Reformation and subsequent exertions of reformers accentuated the fearful influence of the Devil in human affairs. Although popular beliefs surrounding the Evil one were more subdued, one particular area where religious ideas had a more definite impact was on experiences of divine inspiration, prophetic trances, dreams, and visions. The aim of this chapter is to examine the sphere of dreams and various prophetic, or visionary experiences in order to discover popular conceptions about the Devil, and the cultural relevance of dreams. As Katharine Hodgkin argues, historical thinking about subjects like prophecy and witchcraft have undergone an important shift in recent years. Scholars have moved away from insanity as an explanation towards attempts at interpretation that are more ‘historically understanding.’³ By analysing Welsh examples of ‘gweledigaethau’ (visions/dreams), this chapter will develop this new approach to witchcraft studies and apply it to a neglected area of research.

Firstly, the differences between possession and visions must be outlined. This chapter is concerned with dreams and visions within the wider context of sleep, rather than demonic

¹ Ellis Wynne, *Gweledigaethau Y Bardd Cwsg*, (1703: Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1948.) P55. Tr: ‘just put my head down...it was my Master of Sleep.’

² T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p31. Tr: ‘some men keep secrets with the Devil,’ ‘through Dreams.’ ‘When God or his Angels reveal His will through dreams.’ ‘Natural for example, when a man dreams about what was on his mind the day before, or which derives from his natural tempers.’ ‘That are rammed into men’s minds by the Devil...so beware of being too greedy in trying to get knowledge from dreams, by which you are conspiring with the Devil.’

³ Katharine Hodgkin, ‘Reasoning with Unreason: Visions, Witchcraft, and Madness in Early Modern England’, in Stuart Clark (ed.) *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology, and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 2001) p218.

possession, yet both experiences are related. As Oldridge points out, one of the classic symptoms of possession was the communication and receipt of visions via a 'state of trance or bewitchment,' where normal physical abilities were suspended. Other symptoms were physical signs of the Devil's occupation, such as swellings, and grotesque bodily contortions. Oldridge emphasises the 'alien nature' of speech, which emanated from unusual places in the body, or came without the subject moving its lips. The Devil would converse in a variety of languages, usually in a characteristic voice which differed to the victims. The Devil also expressed an abhorrence to religion and a relief in blasphemy. This was directed at particular forms of pious behaviour such as churchgoing, prayer, or religious texts like the Bible. As Oldridge argues, the symptoms of possession conformed to 'certain recognised types,' and the cause was understood in 'highly conventional terms.'⁴

However, the causes of dreams and visions were not so conventional, and their source could be attributed to divine as well as demonic influences. Dreams do not convey the standard symptoms of possession. They are, along with visions, essentially mental manifestations rather than physical ones. Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, there are common elements to the experiences of dreams and prophetic visions, such as, preaching, the press, prophecy, and oral communication.⁵ Nevertheless, they remain distinct from possession cases which were identified largely through physical symptoms. Besides the common effect of sleep or trance, this chapter regards supernatural dreams and sights as distinct episodes to early modern cases of possession.

Sleep as an avenue for historical research is a new and somewhat unrecognised field. Roger Ekirch argues that historical thinking towards sleep has been so indifferent that aspects of 'slumber' before the nineteenth century 'remain an enigma.' His article explores various features of sleep, and dreams, which he maintains 'played a profound role in early modern life,' not least because of the value placed on their prophetic communications and personal insights.⁶ Additionally, Peter Burke advocates the possibility 'of a cultural history of dreaming,' and suggests that the contents of dreams 'is shaped in part by the dreamer's culture.'⁷ An analysis of a selection of Welsh dreams, or dreamlike experiences, can shed significant light on the culture of

⁴ Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p115.

⁵ Ottavia Niccoli, 'The End of Prophecy', *The Journal of Modern History*, 4 (1989) vol 61, p668.

⁶ A. Roger Ekirch, 'Sleep we Have Lost: Pre-industrial Slumber in the British Isles', *American History Review* 106:2 (2001) p375.

⁷ Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1997) p27.

eighteenth-century Wales, especially the role of the Devil and the significance of dreams within this culture. This chapter proposes to look at two main experiences - the dream of a Welsh shepherd recorded by Edmund Jones, and the poetic revelations of Ellis Wynne, in order to discover popular conceptions of the Devil, and the significance of dreams as a means of expressing these ideas. As Burke argues, if dreams do tell us something about an individual and their culture, then historians need to pay them more attention.⁸

During the early modern period, the belief that the Devil could invade your innermost thoughts was common. William Perkins affirmed that Satan was capable of implanting his own thoughts into the human mind. In an anonymous London pamphlet recorded in 1643, the author claimed to be singing a psalm in church when he was overpowered by the temptation to blaspheme. He claimed that Satan encouraged this so 'vehemently on my mind that I had no power to resist.' As Oldridge argues, the belief that satanic thoughts could be planted in the minds of men and women raised the obvious problem of distinguishing between one's own meditations and those 'injected' by the Devil.⁹ Hence the Welsh Puritan, Richard Davies, noted of his conversion - 'I would go to the woods..to wait upon the Lord, yet still I was afraid of being deceived for I had read and heard that Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light.'¹⁰

If Satan could permeate your thoughts then he could certainly pervade your dreams. Nightmares, bad dreams, and delirium were means by which the Devil sought to get possession of people's souls. As noted earlier, T.P reiterates Perkins' assertion that the Devil communicates through dreams. Dreams were also channels for prophecy, but the overwhelming power of the Devil and his ultimate aim of deception often brought the prophetic nature of dreams into serious question, as we shall see.

Visions, whether visual or prophetic, also relate to this phenomenon. T.P was troubled by horrific manifestations of the evil one as he attempted to write his tract against conjuration. He describes the 'anesmwythder' he felt while writing because 'yr oedd llun rhyw fath o Anghenfil hyll gwedi ei ossod ar y...gwydr.' T.P concluded that 'hwn gwedi wneuthu gan Sattan I geisio fy nychrynnu.'¹¹ The future fifth monarchist, John Rogers, as a boy suffered greatly from 'a fear of

⁸ Burke, *Cultural History*, p28.

⁹ Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p46.

¹⁰ Richard Davies, *An Account of the Convincement...of Richard Davies* (London, Whitehead, 1710) p15.

¹¹ T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, preface. Tr: 'uneasiness,' 'there was an image of some ugly monster placed on the glass (window),' 'done by Sattan to try and startle / terrify me.'

Hell and the devils, whom [he] though [he] saw at every foot in several ugly shapes.’ As a precaution he slept with his hands in prayer position should the Devil come to take him.¹² Prophetic visions were also traditional experiences in the early modern world. For example, Ottavia Niccoli emphasises the ‘prophetic enthusiasm’ that was common in Italy, and how ‘itinerant hermits’ would preach their prophecies in the market squares.¹³ Oldridge highlights the significance of women’s visionary experiences, yet like Niccoli, argues that this tradition was suppressed by the politics of Reformation, which will be discussed in more detail shortly.

The Devil’s materialisation in visions may recall earlier accounts of his appearance in folklore. Witches were also prone to the Devil’s visitations. He appeared to Ann Richmond of Michaelston-Super-Ely ‘with a Bull’s Head.’¹⁴ He is also a familiar acquaintance of Scottish witches. For example, Beatrix Laing claimed she saw the Devil ‘in the shape of a Black dog.’ Stuart Macdonald argues that a ‘strong dose of popular beliefs’¹⁵ is evident in these accounts, and they do reflect considerable folkloric elements. The Devil’s involvement with witches is the focus of the next chapter, but these experiences suggest that dreams, and visions, indeed people’s mental perspectives generally, reflected and shaped the cultural climate of the time. The Devil occupied a central role within this culture, notably as ‘God’s irony’ which Clark explains contemporary theorists associated with ‘counterfeiting, dissembling, and taunting.’¹⁶ The mental structure of dreams, thoughts and visions were viable means in which the Devil could achieve this.

Prophecy was the essential design of dreams and visions. A Dalmatian schoolmaster, emphasised before the Venetian Inquisition in 1558 that ‘dreams were once holy, and by means of them our fathers and the prophets saw great and lofty things, and they announced them by prophecy.’¹⁷ Niccoli maintains that the schoolmaster is referring to a period before 1530, when a ‘highly visionary’ form of religious life was common in Italy. This ‘prophetic culture’ was evident in different social and cultural environments. For example, prophecy through verse was the fashionable literary genre. Prophecies were sold in market squares, or performed aloud by John the Baptist styled prophets. Niccoli argues that even official preachers partook in this trend by

¹²Thomas, *Religion and Magic*, p563.

¹³Niccoli, ‘End of Prophecy’, p667.

¹⁴Thomas, *Diary*, p65.

¹⁵Macdonald, ‘The Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases’, p42.

¹⁶Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p82.

¹⁷Niccoli, ‘End of Prophecy’, p667.

preaching on themes such as the Day of Judgement, and the coming of the Antichrist. Thus, it was unlikely that contemporaries were not unacquainted with this movement.¹⁸

Visions took various forms, but by looking at European, English, and Welsh examples, a general pattern emerges. They usually took place in a rural setting. The recipient of these visions was typically female. Moreover, the apparition or divine messenger was normally seen by a tree, or a hedge, and would communicate godly messages or instructions to the visionary, such as, to respect the Sabbath, to refrain from blasphemy, and to live by God's laws.¹⁹ Welsh visionaries received similar instructions which will be examined shortly.

The issue of gender is crucial. Niccoli argues that this relates to the stereotype of female sanctity current in Italy at this time. *Sante-vive* - living saints, rose above their condition which was naturally prone to diabolical illusions, to become mothers and teachers of the divine message.²⁰ But, Niccoli argues that this notion waned after 1530 as did the number of divine visions. Niccoli attributes this to political and ecclesiastical developments which enabled the church to reorganise, and focus its energies on a Counter-Reformation, and 'disorderly or direct' relations with the supernatural. Consequently, 'divine' women were soon accused of pretence, pride, hypocrisy, and more extremely, 'coming to an understanding with the Devil.'²¹

Oldridge contends that the same process was encouraged by the English Reformation. He maintains that Protestantism was justly cautious of claims of divine inspiration. Firstly, Protestants were anxious to avoid the promotion of 'unpredictable and potentially heretical fanatics,' whose disclosures could bring the Church into disrepute. But more importantly, visionaries offered an alternative source of religious authority which could ultimately undermine Protestantism.²² The central role apportioned to Satan by the Reformation amplified these concerns. Since the Devil thrived on falsehood, and aimed to destroy the church, it was acknowledged that he would deceive godly persons with 'false prophets' in the guise of Holy messengers. While a number of male visionaries suffered from this view, Oldridge argues that the main targets were women, because divine inspiration was a traditional aspect of female piety, reflecting the standard idea that

¹⁸Ibid., p668.

¹⁹Ibid.,p676.

²⁰Ibid., p670.

²¹Ibid., p677.

²²Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p105.

women's passivity made them particularly susceptible to the power of God.²³ For example, in 1629, Jane Hawkins from the village of St. Ives, experienced religious ecstasies and 'uttered verses in rythm' during a period of illness. Initially, her revelations were taken as genuine by some members of the community. However, when the Bishop of Lincoln heard the news, he charged an investigation which denounced Hawkins as a fake who abused the name of God, 'as if those notions...came from fraud, and from Satan.'²⁴ Patricia Crawford highlights the prevalence of female prophecy as opposed to male. Women who heard voices, saw visions, or spoke in a trance were regarded as archetypes of religious enthusiasm. Contemporaries showed a deep interest in women's prophecies, but fearing that they would be heeded by the populace, and would thus lead to disorder, they sought to discredit female prophets by arguing that they were demonically possessed. Thus, by the later seventeenth century, Crawford argues that educated male public opinion was hostile to religious enthusiasm and prophecy.²⁵

In the context of witchcraft, Hodgkin attests that experiences of visions and prophecy are typically 'gendered female.' Because witches as a category are gendered female (something I will challenge in the next chapter), Hodgkin argues that the proximity of prophecy to witchcraft has an 'immediacy for the female prophet that is absent for the male.'²⁶ However, Christopher Hill argues that despite its stance against magic, the Reformation actually 'stimulated the spirit of prophecy.' The revolutionary decades also gave wide publicity to a 'new profession - the prophet,' which by Hill's example appears to be a male domain. Perhaps the most notable prophet was Arise Evans, alongside many others like William Lilly, and John Knox.²⁷ The following analysis of Welsh visionary experiences does two things. Firstly, it challenges the pre-eminence of female visionaries as the Welsh seers examined here are male. The first is the vision of a Welsh shepherd, and the second example is the visions of Ellis Wynne, the Bardd Cwsg (Sleeping Bard). It is worth commenting on the title 'Bardd.' By applying this to his work, Wynne is setting it in a firm Welsh context by linking it to the distinctive bardic tradition of Wales. The most prominent figure of this tradition is the poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, whose work can in some ways be compared

²³Ibid., p106.

²⁴Ibid., p106.

²⁵Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London, Routledge, 1993) p98-115.

²⁶Hodgkin, 'Visions, Witchcraft, and Madness', p217.

²⁷Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (1972: Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975) p91.

with Wynne's. The term *bardd* is relevant here. Dafydd was born into one of the most influential families in South Wales. His genealogy has been recorded in a sixteenth-century manuscript, and the last three names are as follows: Cuhelyn Fardd ap Gwynfardd Dyfed ap Cynan Gerdd Gemmell (*gymell*- 'song-imposing?') As Rachel Bromwich points out, these names bear an epithet which denotes its holder as a poet, which suggests that Dafydd belonged to a family of professional bards.²⁸ So, by styling himself as 'Bardd' it appears that Wynne is presenting himself as a professional bard, identifying himself and his work with this distinctive Welsh tradition, and moulding it in a Welsh context. Other comparisons between Wynne and Dafydd will be drawn later. Moreover, the analysis of these eighteenth-century visions also questions Oldridge's and Niccoli's assertion that these experiences were suppressed by the forces of Reformation.

Dreams in Wales were closely related to the supernatural world. The interpretation of dreams was a popular, and essential element of the cunning man's work, and plenty of literature pertaining to this subject was in circulation. For example, in 1698 Thomas Jones of Shrewsbury published his Welsh translation of part of 'the great dream bible of the day,' *De somniorum interpretatione* by Artemidorus Daldianus of Ephesus. The work had ran through twenty editions by 1722. Jenkins argues that few subjects were more popular in Welsh literature than the 'vivid re-creation of dreams and visions,' and so long as the talents of the cunning man were not intended for any diabolical purpose, then Jenkins maintains that churchmen were not likely to deny that dreams were a genuine source of divine communication.²⁹

Edmund Jones's *The Leaves of the Tree of Life* is a prime example. The book is styled as a sermon, based on the dream of Solomon Owen Caradoc, a Welsh shepherd. Jones explains to his readers that 'knowledge of a subject by a dream will appear strange,' but they are reminded that 'this was one of the..ways by which God..revealed his sacred will to his people,' referring to Genesis, Numbers xii, and 6 Judges vii.³⁰ The Tree of Life is a metaphor for the teachings and essence of Christ. Christ 'being the procurer, author, and finisher' of spiritual life is thus, 'resembled by the Tree of Life in Paradise.'³¹ The leaves represent the 'blessed and powerful words' of Jesus, symbolising the gospel, which Jones explains is the 'healing word.'³² Healing in

²⁸Rachel Bromwich, *Writers of Wales: Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff, U.W.P, 1974) p22.

²⁹Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs', p453.

³⁰Jones, *Tree of Life*, p7.

³¹*Ibid.*, p3.

³²*Ibid.*, p6.

the sense of spiritual healing is a prominent theme. The purport is that the gospel is a 'means for a full cure...of Blindness, superstitions, Errours, Idoltary, sinfullness.'³³ Christ is thus the 'only physician of souls.'³⁴ Therefore, the divine message is that in order to 'live the Life Spiritual and Eternal,' one must fully embrace the word of God, and the enlightenment of Christ so as to save their souls from the 'Terrorours of Death and Judgement.'³⁵

Unlike the *Sante-vive*'s of Italy, the recipient of this sacred message was male, a local shepherd. Jones describes him as near forty, bred up only to husbandry, and a great lover of books despite no 'University or Academy.'³⁶ Although this contradicts the typical image of the female visionary, there are certain comparisons. For example, the Welsh shepherd is also presented as a pious man 'of no small zeal for God,' and 'well versed in scripture.'³⁷ Rural imagery is a common aspect. The shepherd is from a rustic background, similar to Judith Klatten, a German girl who experienced several visions during a prolonged illness, and who Midelfort describes as 'symptomatic of a rural...view of things.'³⁸ Margharita, a poor Italian woman encountered the Virgin as she planted beans in the countryside.³⁹ Moreover, it may be significant that the Virgin usually appeared in a tree or bush,⁴⁰ while Solomon's divine dream is symbolised by a tree. The significance of such rural imagery may derive from biblical accounts and representations, such as the image of Jesus as the Lamb of God, and the good shepherd, and Moses receiving God's message via the burning bush. Comparison of such imagery requires further research. As Burke argues, what might be termed the 'iconography of visions' deserves further study,⁴¹ which would help us gain further insight into the cultural particulars of dreams in a European context.

Burke has noted several recurrent themes in an analysis of seventeenth-century cases of the 'individual' dreams of Elias Ashmole, Ralph Josselin, and William Laud.⁴² Most relevant to

³³Ibid., p12.

³⁴Ibid., p15.

³⁵Ibid., p3.

³⁶Ibid., px.

³⁷Ibid., px.

³⁸H.C. Erik Midelfort, 'The Devil and the German People', in Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader*, p251.

³⁹Niccoli, 'End of Prophecy', p672.

⁴⁰Ibid., p669.

⁴¹Burke, *Cultural History*, p38.

⁴²Ibid., p30.

this study are the themes of death and burial, and the church. Burke has adopted the classification system of Jackson S. Lincoln. Lincoln identified two kinds of dream evident in primitive cultures, both divulging social meanings. The 'individual' dream's distinct content reflected the culture, while the 'latent content was universal.' Secondly, the 'culture pattern' dream conformed to a stereotype established by the culture, that is, in a given culture, people tend to dream particular kinds of dream where even the latent content is subject to the culture.⁴³ Burke also includes culturally stereotyped dreams. For example, the sixteenth-century artist Benevenuto Cellini, dreamt that a 'terrifying old man appeared at my bedside and tried to drag me by force into his enormous boat.' Burke explains this character as the obvious figure of Charon, since Cellini was a Renaissance artist familiar with Dante and the figure of Charon in Michaelangelo's Last Judgement.⁴⁴

So, how should the Shepherd's dream be classified? The themes of death and the church from Burke's sample of individual dreams relates to the subject of spiritual death and the religious perspectives of the *Tree of Life*. However, Burke argues that two phenomena of the early modern period which have confused historians, that is, religious visions and the witches Sabbath, may be explained in terms of 'culturally stereotyped dreams.'⁴⁵ Since Solomon's dream was essentially a religious vision, it could be classed as a 'culture pattern' dream. The work of David Blackbourn supports this. Concentrating on a particular case of the apparition of the Virgin Mary to some children in the village of Marpingen at the time of Bismarck and the following pilgrimages to the German Lourdes, Blackbourn explains this not only in religious terms, but in the wider context of war, political upheaval, and Bismarck's campaign against the Catholic church.⁴⁶

Thus, the sophisticated religious dream of a simple Welsh shepherd can be attributed to the Reformation's constant emphasis on the forces of evil and the need for godly observance. His dream revealed the 'torments of Hell' which awaited 'sinners who refuse to be healed.'⁴⁷ This is reminiscent of medieval and Protestant traditions of the last hour conflict between God and the

⁴³Ibid., p24.

⁴⁴Ibid., p36-7.

⁴⁵Ibid., p37.

⁴⁶Ibid., p37.

⁴⁷Jones, *Tree of Life*, p3.

Devil for the soul of the dying Christian.⁴⁸ The confrontational world view of many Protestants encouraged a preoccupation with the Devil, a notion suggested in Solomon's visions of hell. The divine source reveals that those who partake of the Tree of Life will 'overcome...sin, and the Devil in spiritual warfare.' Those who do not risk the 'everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.'⁴⁹ This echoes the typical Protestant view that faith alone could triumph over the Devil, and as Russell argues, such accounts 'indicate the powerful hold that traditional diabolology had' on contemporary thought.⁵⁰

Popular accounts incorporated such ideas, most notably the association of the Devil and fire. For example, Mr. D.W from Pembroke, cited earlier, noticed the Devil while he was out walking one evening. Proceeding on his journey, he looked back to where the Devil had been standing and 'there he saw a ball of fire.'⁵¹ A Cardigan tale, previously noted, describes the Devil joining a party of card players at a village inn, but when the name of Christ is mentioned he vanished up the chimney 'in a ball of fire.'⁵² Thus it seems there was a 'partial assimilation' of reformed doctrines into popular culture.⁵³

Furthermore, the *Tree of Life* suggests that 'dreams have a cultural layer of meaning as well as a personal and universal layer.'⁵⁴ A study of dreams offers valuable insight into the dynamics of a given culture, and Solomon's dream implies that the 'prophetic enthusiasm'⁵⁵ that dominated early modern European culture did not recede with the tide of Reformation as Niccoli and Oldridge contend, but continued well into the eighteenth century. The Welsh example also questions the female specifics of prophetic experiences so typical of most European cases, as the following case also demonstrates.

Gweledigaethau Y Bardd Cwsg by Ellis Wynne is a poetical representation of three dreams, offering an insight into the various progressions of sinners. The first dream, 'Gweledigaeth Cwrs y Byd,' gives a view of the course of the world. 'Gweledigaeth Angeu,' is a vision of death, and 'Gweledigaeth Uffern' describes the poet's tour through the cells of hell,

⁴⁸Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p53.

⁴⁹Jones, *Tree of Life*, p3.

⁵⁰Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p176.

⁵¹Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p71.

⁵²Trevelyan, *Folkstories of Wales*, p154.

⁵³Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p59.

⁵⁴Burke, *Cultural History*, p28.

⁵⁵Niccoli, 'End of Prophecy', p667.

where various sinners are tortured. At the end of every dream is a song, summarising the visions. The verse at the end of 'Gweledigaeth Uffern' explains that the purpose is to dissuade people from sin, and being condemned to hell.

**'Mynych gofio'r Fagddu danbaid
Trwy Grist Unblaid
A geidw'd Enaid
rhag mynd yno.'**⁵⁶

Patrick Donovan and Gwyn Thomas note that the *Gweledigaethau* reflected the general idea that man was solely responsible to God. This individual style of devotion as Russell argues, secured the place of the Devil in human affairs.⁵⁷

Additionally, this work mirrored the contemporary literary trend of dream composition and interpretation. It seems that Wynne's dreams drew largely on the work of the Spanish writer, Don Francisco de Quevedo Villegas, 1580-1640. A letter written by Humphrey Foulkes to Edward Llwyd, date the 27th of November, 1702, reports, 'Mr Ellis Wynne...promises us his Bardd Cusc very shortly which is in imitation of Don Quevedo.'⁵⁸ Quevedo's famous work *Los Suênos* - Dreams, was a series of dreams relating to the final judgement, hell and death. The most notable English translation of the seventeenth century was by Sir Roger L'Estrange, *The Visions of Dom Francisco de Quevedo Villegas* (1667). Thomas maintains that these works were Wynne's main sources, although the *Gweledigaethau* is an original work drawing only on certain elements of the *Los Suênos*.⁵⁹ As noted earlier, Wynne's work is also comparable to that of Dafydd ap Gwilym. Dafydd's significance is that he made himself the main subject of his poetry, whereas court poets of the medieval bardic tradition composed their poetry in a 'fundamentally impersonal and objective mode.' Dafydd's poems are subjective, based on his own feelings and experiences,⁶⁰ as are the *gweledigaethau* of Ellis Wynne.

Sleep is the most obvious theme in the *Gweledigaethau*. For each dream the 'Sleeping Bard' experiences sleep in three distinct ways. At the onset of his worldly dream, Wynne takes

⁵⁶Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p153. Tr: ' frequently remember the fiery darkness, only through Christ, will keep your souls, from going there.'

⁵⁷Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p173.

⁵⁸Patrick, J. Donovan & Gwyn Thomas, *Gweledigaethau Y Bardd Cwsg: Ellis Wynne* (Ceredigion, Gwasg Gomer, 1998) pxii.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pxxiii.

⁶⁰Dafydd Johnston, *The Literature of Wales: A Pocket Guide* (Cardiff, U.W.P, 1994)p37.

himself and his 'spienddrych' (spying-glass) to the top of a Welsh mountain on an afternoon of 'ha hir felyn Tesog.'⁶¹ As he lay on the grass,

**'daeth blinder, ac ynhyscod Blinder, daeth
Fy Meistr Cwsg yn lledradaidd i'm rhwymo,...fe gloes fy
Llygaid a'm holl synhwyrâu...Etto gwaith ofer
oedd iddo geisio cloi'r Enaid a fedr fyw a thrafaelio
heb y corph.'**⁶²

It seems that Wynne is having an 'out of body' experience which takes him all over the world. His vision of death comes on a 'hirnos Gaia dduoer' (long, black cold winter night), a stark contrast to the previous 'yellow' summer afternoon. Death's dream creep on him as he,

**'newydd roi'mhen I lawr ac yn lléd-effro,
Mi glywn bwys mawr yn dyfod arnai'n lledradaidd
o'm coryn i'm sawdl, fel na allwn symud...a
gwelwn meg Mâb ar fy nwfron, a merch ar
gefn hynny.'**⁶³

He recognised that it was his Meistr Cwsg by his strong scent, dewy locks, and 'lygaid Môl-glafaidd' (sickly eyes), and they both go on a voyage to death.

His vision of hell comes on an April morning, when the world is 'lâs feichiog' (refreshed), and there are hints of 'heulwen ha' (summer sun). Despite reading a book of godly practices, Wynne is preoccupied by his previous dreams, so much so that 'dalasant i'm blino' (they still wearied/tired me). This dream has a sense of urgency, and Wynnes realises that 'nad oes un weledigaeth ond oddiuchod er rhybudd I ymgroesi,' and he hurries to write his visions down. Whilst doing so, 'daeth arnai heppian,' and typically 'braidd closei Cwsg fy synhwyrâu nad dyma'n cyfeirio atta'i ryw drychiolaeth ogoneddus.'⁶⁴ Wynne's seasonal settings seemingly correspond to his type of dreams. For example, the long, black, cold winter night is a convenient setting for oncoming death, but the fresh and promising season of spring seems at odds with the ensuing tour of hell. Nevertheless, this may be intended to emphasise the terrors of hell by setting it in contrast to the pure initiation of spring.

⁶¹Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p5. Tr: 'long, warm, yellow summer.'

⁶²Ibid., p6. Tr: 'Tiredness came, and in the shade of tiredness, my master of sleep came secretly to bind me. I closed my eyes and all my senses, yet it was vain work to close the souls that could travel without the body.'

⁶³Ibid., p55. Tr: 'just put my head down, wide awake, I heard/sensed a big weight/stress coming on me secretly, from head to toe so that I could not move...and I saw the likeness of a boy on my chest, and a girl on his back.'

⁶⁴Ibid., p84. Tr: 'but from above, as warning to shun sin.' 'a doze came upon me,' 'sleep scarcely shut my senses than he'd directed me to some glorious apparition.'

The dream or vision genre, whose antecedents in verse can be found in classical poetry, is well represented in Welsh prose. In Dafydd's poem 'Y Breuddwyd' (the dream), the poet is 'dargwsg mewn lee dirgel' when 'gwelais ar glais dichlais dydd, breuddwyd yn ael boreudydd.' His other dream poem 'Y Cloc' (the clock) alludes to the medieval explanation of dreams as a means of communicating or expressing feeling of love for, or to the poet's lover. In 'Y Cloc,' Dafydd's soul, or angel, leaves his body and goes forth to his beloved, for example, 'A'm pen ar y gobenydd,...yng ngolwg eang eilun, Angel bach yng ngwely bun.'⁶⁵ Related to the dream genre is the natural setting. Dream poems were set in the framework of a forest or garden scene on a May morning. Dafydd's poems also relate back to earlier Welsh nature-poetry which are linked in sequences, beginning for example, 'eira mynydd' (mountain snow), 'Kalan gaeaf' (winter's day), which Bromwich highlights are conventional formulas designed to introduce a series of unconnected statements about nature and humanity.⁶⁶ It appears that Wynne is employing the same technique in his *Gweledigaethau*, which always open with a particular natural setting which tends to emphasise the significance of his oncoming visions. Let us now examine Wynne's sleep experiences in more detail.

Witchcraft historiography is now paying closer attention to mental and physical experiences which contemporaries may have interpreted as acts of witchcraft, such as, schizophrenia, depression, and sleep disorders.⁶⁷ Éva Pócs highlights the distinctions of visions or 'enchantments' in Hungarian witch trial narratives. Pócs argues that they primarily refer to an 'altered state of consciousness in which the supernatural is perceived, apparitions are experienced, and occasionally a journey is made to an alternative world.' Sometimes the victim can travel on a 'soul' journey. For example, a witch trial in Kiskunhalas in 1747 reported that Anna Hos witnessed her husband, 'lying there stiff, barely drawing breath.' After an arduous attempt to wake him, he cried out, 'My Lord Jesus Help me! Fiery witches took me to Marmaros, and...put six hundredweight of salt on me.'⁶⁸ Similarly, Ellis Wynne's senses were stifled, except his soul which travelled through the spheres of death, hell, and an alternative world.

⁶⁵(ed.) Thomas Parry, *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Caerdydd, Prifysgol Cymru, 1963) p107, 178. Tr: 'Sleeping/dozing in a strange place,' 'I saw dawn on a stream, and on the morning's brow a dream.' 'My head on the pillow..in the wide vision of his image, an angel had been in my bed.' Huw.M.Edwards, *Dafydd ap Gwilym: Influences and Analogues* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1996) p198-199.

⁶⁶Rachel Bromwich, *Aspects of the Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff, U.W.P, 1986) p75,92.

⁶⁷Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, p16.

⁶⁸Éva Pócs, 'The Alternative World of the Witches' Sabbat'in Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader*, p129.

Moreover, the bard's sleep induced a sense of helplessness - 'lledradaidd i'm rhwymo,' suppression of the senses - 'y closei cwsg fy synhwyrau,' all suggestive of sleep paralysis. Owen Davies has highlighted the classic characteristics of this phenomenon in his recent article which examines sleep paralysis in relation to witchcraft.⁶⁹ The symptoms are, inability to move or speak, heavy feeling on the chest, and hallucinations. All of Wynne's dreams display many of these symptoms, but his vision of death is an archetypal example. He notes a heavy weight upon him - 'bwys mawr yn dyfod,' so that he couldn't move from his head to his toe - 'o'm coryn i'm sawdl na allwn symud,' and he thought he saw a boy on his chest with a girl on his back - 'Mâb ar fy nwfron, a merch ar gefn hynny.'⁷⁰ This is similar to other cases of sleep paralysis. For instance, at the end of the sixteenth century, Joan Jorden of Suffolk was terrorised by a spirit at night, which on one occasion 'pressed her so sore that she could not speak.' Another night it 'held her hands that she could not stir.'⁷¹ Medical textbooks give sufficient coverage to episodes of sleep paralysis, yet Davies argues that it is seldom related to witchcraft experiences. His innovative article highlights the possibilities of studying episodes of sleep paralysis as a means of understanding witchcraft. Davies argues that this condition gives witchcraft experiences a reality that should not be discounted.⁷² Oldridge also contends that cases of sleep disorder suggest that real experiences were attributed to malicious magic, and since these conditions are yet to be understood, 'this can be regarded as a reasonable response.'⁷³

While Ellis Wynne did not interpret his experience as witchcraft, the characters he encountered reveal a lot about his beliefs and culture, and as sleep paralysis has a sound medical basis then we cannot discount his visions as absurd. As Hodgkin argues, visits from spirits, angels and devils, bewitchments, and visions, seem to mark out our difference from early modern mentalities, and perhaps 'offer a way into that difference.' However, as Hodgkin maintains, we cannot understand them as 'literal descriptions of real events,' and must mind our own presuppositions and methodologies.⁷⁴ In light of the findings on sleep paralysis, it is possible that

⁶⁹Owen Davies, 'The Nightmare Experience: Sleep Paralysis and Witchcraft Accusations', *Folklore* 114, 2 (2003) pp181-203.

⁷⁰Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p55.

⁷¹Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p141.

⁷²Davies, 'The Nightmare Experience', p181-203.

⁷³Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, p16.

⁷⁴Hodgkin, 'Visions, Witchcraft, and Madness', p217.

Wynne's experiences were real, and although his visions are based outside reality, they can nevertheless be related to a cultural reality of their own.

The first thing the bard saw in his worldly dream was 'dwmpath chwareu, a'r fath gâd-gamlan, mewn peisiau gleision a chapieu cochion yn dawnsio'n hoew-brysur.'⁷⁵ Here we may recall the letter of Mr. E. W., concerning his encounter with the fairies. He remembered 'a company of dancers...after the manner of Morris dancers...They were clothed in red..with yellow about their heads.'⁷⁶ Wynne's apparition was clearly one of fairies who were renowned for their love of dancing and music. Pôcs notes that the most important motifs of fairy Sabbats was the 'merriment with dance.'⁷⁷ Again, Judith Klatten claimed that throughout her illness 'little tiny men and maids wearing beautiful ornaments...ran about her everyday and brought her food.'⁷⁸ Although no dancing is mentioned by Klatten, it appears that fairylore was a basic element of magical beliefs. However, Wynne feared that the company he saw were actually 'Sipsiwn newynllyd' (poisonous/harmful gypsies). Wynne noticed these on a 'twmpath,'- tump. Fairies generally dwelt in remote places like woods, groves, caverns, and by lakes and riversides. Circles in the grass of fields or meadows, 'Cylchau y Tylwyth Teg' (fairy rings) were tell tale signs of their revels. It is likely that gypsies abided in such places, possibly to avoid confrontation with locals and maintain their habitual entertainment and practices. Scenes of these gypsies may have passed into folk memory as fairy encounters. It is also possible that fairy rings were signs of a previous gypsy camp.

Gypsies could also be accused of witchcraft as the following account indicates. In Aberystwyth, two gypsies visited the house of a Thomas Harry, asking his wife 'for this and that that they wanted.' She refused, and the gypsies left 'muttering and threatening revenge.' That night, Thomas and his wife were awoken by strange noises, and the following morning found a bare footprint without a big toe, marked in soot from the foot of the stairs to the door. That day the butter wouldn't churn, so Thomas's wife boiled the cream believing 'it would torment the witch and they were no longer disturbed.'⁷⁹ This account is not unlikely, yet the ensuing bad luck

⁷⁵Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p6. Tr: 'play on a tump, like a confused battle/army, in blue petticoats and red caps, dancing busily, and gaily.'

⁷⁶Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p71.

⁷⁷Pôcs, 'Witches' Sabbat', p133.

⁷⁸Midelfort, 'Devil and the German People', p240.

⁷⁹Jones, *Relation of Apparitions*, p17.

and the strange footprints, which could have been left by a domestic animal, were regarded as acts of witchcraft, and the necessary counter measures were taken. That an ordinary event could be interpreted this way suggests that witchcraft was an acceptable assumption. Jones remarks that 'this was the malicious trick of an old witch in compact with the Devil.' The footprints may have been an obscure indication of the Devil, who possessed a cloven hoof, and Jones's statement reflects contemporary notions of diabolology and witchcraft (explored in chapter 4). So far it seems that magical beliefs blended elements of fairylore, diabolology, and witchcraft.

Consequently, the whispering of 'ddirgel swynion' (mysterious enchantments) and the bard's abduction through the air leads him to conclude that his acquaintances were 'carn-witsiaid melltigidig'⁸⁰ (crowd of accursed witches). In fact, these are classic fairy traits. T. P affirms that fairies sometimes have 'lais cerddoriaeth,' and are creatures that 'cyfaneddu yn yr awyr.'⁸¹ Fairylore was often embroiled into witch beliefs. Pócs argues that witches displaying fairy attributes are mentioned several times in the Hungarian trials. They reportedly abducted their victims into their companies and 'fairylike witches sabbats' by making music and dancing.⁸² This is the essence of many Welsh fairy tales. For example, a farm servant from Tregaron was lost to the fairies for a year and a day. When he was found he explained how he entered a fairy circle and was 'seized by them,' but found their company so delightful that he thought he was only there a few minutes.⁸³

Moreover, as Pócs argues, something fairylike is always closely related with the archaic and demonic witches' world of the dead.⁸⁴ Stuart Macdonald has studied the role of the Devil in witchcraft cases in Fife, Scotland. His findings reveal a strong component of popular belief, and a Devil 'suggestive of a fairy or an elf.' For example, Katherine Sands, one of the witches who confessed to having met at the abandoned West Kirk at Culross, admitted to dead people attending their meetings, and 'the devill dancing and playing and tat the devill played to them on a pype.' Earlier in the witch-hunt, Alison Pearson in Byrehill confessed that she was taken by 'ane lustie mane with many mene and wemen' to a mystical place where there was plenty of piping, dancing and merriment. Macdonald argues that the people of Fife blended these popular beliefs

⁸⁰Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p7.

⁸¹T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p25. Tr; 'musical voices', 'converse in the air.'

⁸²Pócs, 'Witches' Sabbat', p133.

⁸³Davies, *Folk-Lore of West Wales*, p109.

⁸⁴Pócs, 'Witches' Sabbat', p133.

with the elite ideas of the demonologists, yet never abandoning traditional ideas about fairies.⁸⁵ Welsh sources also convey a connection between fairies and the Devil. They are sometimes termed 'Gwragedd Annwn' (Dames of Hell/ the Underworld), or 'Plant Annwn' (Children of Hell).⁸⁶ T.P. employs the term 'cythreuliaid cymdeithgar' (neighbourly devils) and Ellis Wynne uses the term 'Plant Annwfn.' These titles pertain to their supernatural origins. It was believed that fairies were once the souls of virtuous Druids, who not being Christians could not enter heaven, but were too good to be cast into hell.⁸⁷ Thus existing in limbo, fairies fluctuate between earthly and supernatural spheres.

Similarly, Scottish folklore sees fairies as among the followers of the Devil. They tried to get back into heaven when they saw hell but found the gates barred. They settled in the mounds between heaven and hell, becoming fairies. As Purkiss argues, this story does not claim that the general belief was that fairies were devils although there was a perceived overlap in the eyes of the populace and the elite, but it highlights the reason why 'such an overlap seemed likely.' Such overlaps she maintains made it easy for participants of witch-trials to see fairies and lost souls, or devils as 'interchangeable, or at least related.'⁸⁸ Purkiss examines two stories told by two seventeenth-century Scottish women accused of witchcraft, which are essentially fairy stories. For example, Elspethh Reach who was charged in 1616, confessed that as a young girl she encountered two men at a loch. One was clad in black, and the other in the typical fairy dress of green tartan plaid. This man offered her a gift, but the former was wary, claiming that Elspeth would not keep the source of her knowledge secret. This is typical of all fairylore that the source of a fairy gift must remain secret. Elspeth is given an egg but is not to eat it. Instead she is to use the sweat or steam of its boiling which Purkiss argues becomes the fairy ointment, a staple of folktales which confers magical sight. Elspeth now becomes privy to a family secret involving a young girl like Elspeth, who is pregnant by another woman's husband. Purkiss suggests that the pregnant girl is a 'displaced self-portrait of Elspeth,'⁸⁹ and that fairy stories provided Scottish witches with a means to talk about feelings, experiences, and desires that their own culture did not

⁸⁵Macdonald, 'Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases', p46-7.

⁸⁶Davies, *Folk-Lore of West Wales*, p89.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p89.

⁸⁸Diane Purkiss, 'Sounds of Silence: Fairies and Incest in Scottish Witchcraft Stories', in Clark (ed.) *Languages of Witchcraft*, p84.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p87.

permit.⁹⁰ This is a promising approach, though Ellis Wynne's encounter with the Tylwyth Teg reveal more about his own culture and cultural beliefs, rather than his own personal feelings.

Wynne's confusion over the persons he is encountering demonstrates the common 'overlap' between fairies, witches, and devils which early modern belief structures made possible. The bard's descriptions are wholly representative of popular beliefs, and may thus be directed at a popular audience with the aim of dissuading them from conforming to sinful practices. But Wynne was part of this culture too, therefore these beliefs may reflect his own assumptions. As noted earlier, dreams have a cultural level of meaning as well as a personal and universal layer, thus a study of changes in the content of dreams 'should reveal changes in their myths and images which were psychologically effective at the time.'⁹¹ A study of Wynne's visions also suggests the moderate absorption of reformed attitudes and popular ideas about the Devil, which will become more marked when we discuss his depictions of hell. The eminence of Ellis Wynne seeped into local traditions, which held that the bard had in fact 'gael ei gymmeryd I fynydd gan y Tylwyth Teg,' and had typically been gone for many years, yet the poet himself thought that he had only been gone for the morning.⁹² As Oldridge argues, the role of fairy beliefs in European witchcraft is a subject that awaits fuller investigation, but it is possible that such popular ideas offered a basis from which learned notions of the witch-cult was formed.⁹³

Wynne's depictions of the Devil and his religious overtones are fairly typical of Protestant emphasis on Satan and hell, and medieval apocalyptic traditions. The idea behind the Gweledigaethau was that revelation of sins and the fate of sinners would instil in people a more godly way of life. For example, the bard's guide tells him at the end of his tour in hell, 'scrifenna'r hyn a welaist, a'r sawl a'i darllenno'n ystyriol, ni fydd byth edifar ganddo.'⁹⁴ Penitence is referred to as 'physygwriaeth nefol' (heavenly medicine), thus expressing the theme of spiritual healing evident in the Tree of Life. To encourage repentance the portrayal of hell is especially graphic. It is termed the 'Wlâd tragwyddol,' eternal country, which immediately stresses its infinite doom. This sense of inevitability is confirmed by its location in a 'Gwagle hyll' (ugly desolation). Hell

⁹⁰Ibid., p81.

⁹¹Burke, *Cultural History*, p29.

⁹²Silvan Evans, *Ysten Sioned*, p13. Tr: 'was taken to the top of a mountain by the fairies.'

⁹³Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, p10.

⁹⁴Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p148. Tr: 'write what you have seen, and those who shall read it shall never be penitent.'

itself is ‘ddofn iawn a thywyll, di-drefn,..weithie’n oer ac weithie’n boeth.’⁹⁵ Di-drefn - chaotic, is a significant description because it is designed to contrast with the orderliness, and peace of heaven. Clark’s insights into the dynamics of European witchcraft focus on the contrariety of demonic beliefs. His theory is that demonic witchcraft made sense in a world of meanings structured by ‘opposition and inversion.’ Theologians saw Christ and Satan as ‘antithetical.’ As previously observed, the early modern Devil was a ‘profligate parodist’ with an ‘endless capacity for dissimulation.’⁹⁶ Devils and witches turned particular things upside down. Witches model their behaviour on our world, but because they are inspired by the Devil their perception is overturned.⁹⁷ Clark argues that carnivals were essentially a ‘cluster of inversionary rituals conducted on a grand scale,’ and elements of licence, disguise, play, and composition were in ‘obvious antithesis to the components of everyday life.’⁹⁸ Hence Wynne explains that in hell ‘nid oedd yno ddim cwrs, na dim cyfa, dim by, na dim lluniaidd’ in this ‘gymmyscfa fawr arswydus.’⁹⁹ The scenes that confronted Wynne on his tour are equally disheartening. He witnesses ‘gantoedd o ddynion anhappus..yn dyfod ar eu pennau..a llu o Ellyllon yn ei gyrru.’ There is also a river known as Afon y Fall (The Fall River) whose ‘dwr melltgedid...yn golchi ymaith bob gweddillion daioni, pob rhith gobaith a chysur.’¹⁰⁰ This river may exemplify the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, who were deceived into disobeying God by the serpent. This act subsequently brought sin and death into the world. Alternatively, the river may symbolise the more obscure fall of the Rebel Angels towards hell. As Link argues, this image is rarely depicted in art, yet when it is Satan and his angels are ‘grotesque spirits,’ spiralling down to hell with Satan at the apex. The origin of these fallen angels is located in the opening verses of Genesis, chapter 6, ‘When the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men...they bore children to them.’ The book of Enoch explained that some angels violated the right order of things, gave in to sexual impulses, and had intercourse with women whose children became demons. These demons are the cause of murder, war, adultery, and every other evil.¹⁰¹ Link explains that it was in the book of Enoch that the idea

⁹⁵Ibid., p86. Tr: ‘very deep and dark, chaotic..sometimes cold and sometimes hot.’

⁹⁶Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p81.

⁹⁷Ibid., p13.

⁹⁸Ibid.s, p16.

⁹⁹Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p87. Tr: ‘no course, no completion, no life, no grace’, ‘dreadful mixture.’

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p89. Tr: ‘hundreds of men...passing on their heads... and a host of fiends driving them.’ ‘Accursed water washes away all traces of goodness, hope and comfort.’

¹⁰¹Link, *The Devil*, p28.

of an ‘abyss of fire’ and a kingdom of hell ruled by Satan first appeared. Although the book was removed from the canon in the fourth century, the first publication of some of its extracts was not until 1800,¹⁰² nonetheless, similar ideas and depictions of hell were evident in cheap literature and medieval traditions. Oldridge argues that the sufferings of the damned were portrayed in ‘intensely physical terms.’¹⁰³ Hence, Wynne implores ‘beth yw Polioni a lifio Dynion yn fyw?’ He describes people having their flesh torn to pieces by ‘gwrthrimynod heirn, neu friwlio cig a chanhwylleu a fesur golwyth, neu wasgu penglogeu’n lledfennau.’¹⁰⁴ This is the fate of those who choose self destruction by such means as ‘feddwod’ (drunkenness), or ‘gybyddod’ (miserliness). Additionally, Thomas Darling received a vision of the ‘place of torments’ whilst possessed in 1596. He claimed ‘drunkards are hanged by their throats, swearers and filthy talkers by their tongues.’ As Oldridge contends, most of these horrors were taken from medieval illuminations of hell, and the influence of pre-reformation traditions were also apparent in pictorial representations of the afterlife. For example, seventeenth-century woodcuts often portrayed condemned souls trapped in the gaping mouth of a dragon, an image derived from medieval mystery plays.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, Ellis Wynne conjures a typical image of the Devil in hell when he observes ‘Diawliaid â phigffyrch yn eu taflu I ddesgyn ar eu pennau,’ and ‘hiflanod gwenwynig o bicellau...i wingo gerfydd eu menyddieu.’¹⁰⁶ Link highlights that the Devil carrying a ‘prod’ was a medieval device symbolising the grapnel that jailers used.¹⁰⁷ Wynne’s journey through hell takes him through the various ‘gelloedd,’ cells of the fall which are the final destination of many sinners, where they are tortured for their wrong doings. By carrying pitchforks and spears, and driving sinners to their doom, the ‘ellyllon’ seem synonymous with medieval portrayals of the Last Judgement. The Apocalypse is often confused with the Last Judgement, but both events are separate and distinct. Link demonstrates that the medieval concept of the Apocalypse, that is the end of the world, derived from the Revelation of St. John, which foresaw the final conflict between Good and Evil where the Angel Michael fought with the dragon in a cosmic war, that

¹⁰²Ibid., 27.

¹⁰³Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p66.

¹⁰⁴Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p90. Tr : ‘what is it to impale or saw men alive?’ ‘Heavy iron, or broil flesh with candles and measure a rasher, or press skulls flat.’

¹⁰⁵Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p68.

¹⁰⁶Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p91. Tr: ‘Devil’s with pitchforks throwing them...to fall on their (victims’) heads’ , ‘poisonous spears..to writhe in/by their brains.’

¹⁰⁷Link, *The Devil*, p68.

would result in the dragon and his followers being cast out of heaven. The emphasis is on 'expulsion of pollution,' cleansing the system of evil and wrongdoing. However, the principle of the Last Judgement is not conflict, but harmony. The conviction is the judging and separating of sinners. Link argues that 'all' are included in this judgement, which decides the souls selected for heaven, and those condemned to hell. It is a process of 'ordering and rearrangement' within the system.¹⁰⁸ Thus, Wynne's vision of hell is arguably an archetypal version of the Last Judgement.

Link argues that the main source for the Devil in presentations of the Last Judgement was not from 'the culture of the upper classes,' or from the debated descriptions of scholastics. Rather, the main 'pictorial source' was the Devil that painters and sculptors had seen first hand in the mystery plays. The famous Cailleau illustrated manuscript of 1547, shows actors as grotesque devils coming out of the Hell Mouth, while sinners within are boiling in the cauldron. Thus, Link argues that the popular pictorial source of the Devil is a classic illustration that high culture has its counterpoint in popular culture.¹⁰⁹

Wynne's visionary experiences and images of hell are in accordance with Oldridge's study on English popular culture, which finds that the beliefs that emerged from the process of Reformation were a mixture of 'traditional assumptions and Protestant teaching.'¹¹⁰ The visions of the Welsh shepherd and the sleeping bard also convey a miscellany of ideas and images cultivated from learned and popular belief systems. The most notable example is the amalgamation of fairylore, which on further examination may prove the basis for other related beliefs such as, the witches' Sabbath, familiars, ghosts, spirits, and aspects of gypsy culture.

The *mélange* of popular and elite cultures has been observed by several historians. Opposed to the traditional 'bi-polar' model, Martin Ingram has emphasised areas of 'cultural consensus' in his study of 'rough music' in early modern England.¹¹¹ Tessa Watt also recognises the interaction of popular and elite cultures. Her survey of godly ballads points to areas of cultural coalescence, where Protestantism and traditional culture merged.¹¹² Yet at the same time, Watt argues that there was a strong continuity with pre-reformation piety. Medieval traditions of

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p84.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p69-71.

¹¹⁰Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p89.

¹¹¹Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music, and the Reform of Popular Culture in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 105 (1984) p113.

¹¹²Watt, *Popular Piety*, p126.

death and judgement persisted, and Saints and deadly sins remained part of the conceptual framework. The ballads often employed ‘conflicting languages of religious discourse,’ which Watt suggests is addressing a ‘variety of audiences.’¹¹³ The works of Ellis Wynne and the Welsh shepherd also convey a varied discourse as do the majority of Welsh ballads. Most are concerned with religion. One example is in the form of a letter ‘ygafwyd tann Garreg’ (found under a stone). Many stones in Wales are accorded with magical and sacred significance¹¹⁴ which may account for this letter being discovered beneath a stone. Christ the narrator, commands that the Sabbath be observed ‘trwy barch a Defosiwn a trwy weddio ac ersynio arnaf I am faddeuant am eich Pechodau.’¹¹⁵ This style corresponds to the favourite medieval genre of letters from the Devil offering rhetorical religious instructions. The counsel of respecting the Sabbath and avoiding sin is a recurrent theme in visionary disclosures. Another ballad relating the ‘Breuddwyd Rhyfeddol’ (wondrous dream) of a Carmarthenshire man is congruous with the visions of Ellis Wynne. The author was ‘trwm gysgu’ when he was disturbed by a dream in which he journeyed to ‘ryw le dieirth creulon.’¹¹⁶ His dream was a reminder to ‘cofio y Sabbath i’w sancteiddio,’ and to follow the laws of God. When he awoke, the author exclaims ‘rhyfeddol oed fy nagrau, I feddwl faint fy meiau,’ and he penned his vision ‘er rhybydd, fy ngwladwyr.’¹¹⁷ These narratives testify to the popularity and continuity of medieval traditions. The favoured depiction of St. Bernard’s vision in the English ballads follows the same pattern, where the narrator experiences a deathlike state but is revived to tell the tale. Watt attests that this is a powerful argument for the continuity of a medieval outlook well into the early modern period,¹¹⁸ and the Welsh literature supports this.

Moreover, it indicates the persistent trend of prophetic dreams and visions thereby challenging the ‘end of prophecy’ advocated by Niccoli and Oldridge. Both scholars debated that the pressures of Reformation altered women’s visionary experiences into cases of demonic possession. Similar conclusions have been confirmed by research in other European countries¹¹⁹

¹¹³Ibid., p86.

¹¹⁴Barber, *Mysterious Wales*, see for examples.

¹¹⁵Ballad No. 614. Anonymous presses. *Wrtydyn*. Verse 3. Tr: ‘through respect and devotion by praying and to behold in me for forgiveness for your sins.’

¹¹⁶Ballad No. 598. Anonymous Presses. *J.H Davies*. Verse 4. Tr: ‘sleeping heavily,’ ‘some strange cruel place.’

¹¹⁷Tr: ‘remember to sanctify the Sabbath,’ ‘wonderful were my tears, to think of all my faults,’ ‘as a warning, my countrymen.’

¹¹⁸Watt, *Popular Piety*, p111.

¹¹⁹Midelfort, ‘Devil and the German People’, p240-253.

but Wales remained resistant. The cases studied here allude to a recurrent prophetic tradition. In addition, these experiences were not denounced as demonic but upheld their divine origins. Wynne states that ‘nad oes un weledigaeth ond oddiuchod,’¹²⁰ and this is indeed the standard interpretation. This tradition was not exclusive, seeping through the whole social scale. The religious overtones and devout imagery convey intellectual influences, yet the absorption of popular beliefs and medieval legacies present a culture conducive to both popular and elite persuasions. The regular feature of dreams and visions in Welsh ballads also suggest their popular appeal. Tegwyn Jones argues that this ‘journalism of the masses’ reflected the interests of ordinary Welsh people in a period unacquainted with vernacular newspapers and periodicals.¹²¹ However, Peter Lord warns against such assumptions, arguing that ballads were generally derived from newspapers and pamphlets, thus largely echoing intellectual opinions.¹²² Religion was a common subject matter all over Europe, so while Welsh ballads may not necessarily be ‘Welsh’ in outlook they should not be discounted. The sheer numbers printed confirm their popular demand. For example, over 1,700 nineteenth-century ballads are preserved, with similar estimates for the eighteenth century.¹²³

Thus, unlike in other parts of Europe, a ‘highly visionary’ form of religious life still flourished in Wales into the eighteenth century. However, preaching, the press, and oral communication are elements that bound European and Welsh experiences of prophecy. For example, Niccoli argues that prophecy in verse was the preferred literary genre in Italy. There are over 50 published works in the vernacular for the period 1490-1530. Printed anonymously on poor paper with no printer’s imprint, Niccoli marks that they prove their low price and ‘modest social...level of readers.’¹²⁴ Likewise, ballad-pamphlets were the most frequently printed Welsh items, regularly featuring predictive and divinatory experiences. The *Bardd Cwsg* is a poetical work, possibly intended for intellectual circles. Nevertheless, each vision is summarised into popular songs, such as the tune of ‘Heavy Heart’ as a setting for Wynne’s vision of hell.¹²⁵ These

¹²⁰Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p86. Tr: ‘there are no visions other than those from above.’

¹²¹(ed.) Philip Jones & Eiluned Rees, *A Nation and its Books; A History of the Book in Wales* (Aberystwyth, National Library Of Wales, 1998)p247.

¹²²Peter Lord, *Words with Pictures: Welsh Images and Images of Wales in the Popular Press 1640-1860*. (Aberystwyth, Planet, 1995) p17.

¹²³Jones & Rees, *The Book in Wales*, p247.

¹²⁴Niccoli, ‘End of Prophecy’, p668.

¹²⁵Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p149.

simplified verses imitate the form of ballads, indicating that Wynne also catered for a popular audience. Furthermore, these musical arrangements could be transmitted orally and easily memorised by those unacquainted with their written forms. The bard's potential audience was vast, since his work could be conveyed completely, partially, and orally.

Additionally, Niccoli attests that preaching was an integral part of prophetic discourse as official preachers often participated in this trend through their apocalyptic style sermonising, and premonitions of death and judgement.¹²⁶ Solomon's dream is an intermediary between official and popular prophecy. The humble shepherd is the recipient of a divine vision, yet it is communicated by the preacher, Edmund Jones, who transfers the message to a book in the form of a sermon. These varied forms of communication denote the reformer's awareness that 'oral delivery of sermons' was by itself an inadequate means of communicating divine truths. Jenkins argues that the clergy regarded oral transmission and the reading of books as 'two sides of the same coin.'¹²⁷ Thus, as in early modern Italy, prophecy was disseminated through various channels. As Niccoli argues, it would have been difficult for anyone to 'avoid contact with the prophetic enthusiasm that pervaded.'¹²⁸

This chapter also raises important questions about the significance of dreams in early modern life, which historians have so far paid little attention to. The recent feature of dreams in the *History Workshop Journal*¹²⁹ marks an attempt to explore their relevance, yet there is undoubtedly more to be said. The relation of gender to prophecy has also occupied many witchcraft researchers, as the work of Purkiss and Hodgkin shows. Hodgkin maintains that since witches were usually female, the alliance of prophecy and witchcraft means that visionary and prophetic experiences are also typically female. Welsh visionary experiences do not conform to this female dimension as all the recipients of divine communications in this chapter were male. The following chapter will examine the significance of gender in Welsh witchcraft, and will challenge the general view that witches and witchcraft practices were nominally a female domain.

¹²⁶Niccoli, 'End of Prophecy', p668.

¹²⁷Jenkins, *Literature, Religion, and Society*, p33.

¹²⁸Niccoli, 'End of Prophecy', p667.

¹²⁹'Feature: Dreams' *History Workshop Journal*, 48 (1999), 49, (2000).

Chapter IV: Which Craft? Demonology, Gender, and Conjunction: The Welsh Experience.

‘At y Diafol y maent yn myned, er eu bod yn cymmyrd y dewin rhyngddynt ac ef.’¹

Witches too were cast as the Devil’s agents, most notably by the *Malleus Maleficarum* which established the demonological view on women and witchcraft. William Perkins agreed that the essence of witchcraft was ‘the covenant with Satan.’² In fact, witches and conjurers were often cast in the same net. Perkins insisted that ‘by witches we understand not those onely which kill and torment: but all...Wizzards commonly called wise men and wise women,’³ whose ultimate inspiration was the Devil. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the role of the Devil in Welsh witchcraft by investigating the diffusion of various demonological witchcraft ideas in popular culture. This chapter will also confront the standard conception of witchcraft practices as harmful or diabolical, and challenge current ideas about the ‘sex-specific’ nature of witchcraft, by focusing on the neglected role of cunning-folk in witchcraft historiography.

Magical practitioners were referred to variously as cunning-man, wizard, or conjurer. As Davies argues, such names betokened their possession of occult knowledge and wisdom. ‘White’ or ‘good’ witch was also applied, though not regularly in popular discourse.⁴ In Wales the most common epithet was *dyn hysbys*, equivalent to the English cunning-man, denoting a man of considerable learning and knowledge. The terms employed by T.P in *Cas gan Gythraul* which is the main source for this chapter are, *dewiniaid* and *swyngyfareddwr* - wizard/magician and sorcerer. These terms shall be used when quoting directly, but to avoid confusion cunning-folk will constitute general references. The question of definition will be addressed in more detail later.

Firstly, a discussion of *Cas gan Gythraul* is necessary. The title page explains that the book is an ‘*annogaeth I bawb ochelyd myned I ymgynhori a Dewiniaid...a Chonsurwyr*,’ with an ‘*eglhurhad*’ (explanation) about the ‘*perigl mawr*’ (considerable danger) in consulting such people. In addition is a ‘*chrybwylliad*’ (mention/reference) about numerous ‘*arferion a thraddodiadau*

¹ T.P *Cas gan Gythraul*, p6. Tr: ‘to the Devil they turn, even though they take the wizard between them and him.’

² Thomas, *Religion and Magic*, p524.

³ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p463.

⁴ Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p215.

drygionus, sydd yn cael ei harferyd yng Nghymru.’⁵ But why are conjurors and magicians the objects of concern? As Davies argues, the answer obviously lies in the ‘perceived relationship between cunning-folk and the devil.’⁶ Hence, T.P argues that ‘consurwyr’ and ‘dewiniaid’ are ‘swyddogion’ and ‘caethwaesion i’r cythraul,’ and their ultimate ‘awdurdod a llywodraeth’ is ‘gan y cythreuliad tros y cyfryw.’⁷ Cunning-folk therefore lured people into a pact with the Devil by encouraging them to seek magical solutions instead of maintaining their faith and recouring to God’s will. T.P insists that everyone who communes with them ‘gwedi torri cyfammod eu bedydd ac yn...fradwriaeth yn erbyn Brenin Nef a daiar.’⁸ As Clark argues, experiences of misfortune and such were regarded as an opportunity for ‘spiritual self-scrutiny,’⁹ but the services of cunning-folk prevented this which is why it was regarded as a more dangerous art than traditional maleficium.

Davies argues that it must be recognised that demonologists ‘readily accepted’ that cunning-folk were able to effect cures, discover lost or stolen property, and perform other beneficial acts.¹⁰ The stress was rather focused on their diabolical source. T.P does not repudiate the abilities of cunning-folk to ‘iachau clefydau,’ rhagddywedyd marwolaethau,’ ‘gwybod...ynghylch pethau a fydd gwedi eu colli,’ nor their ‘Counter Practices’ against ‘dyn neu anifail...gwedi eu rheibio.’ However, he warns that even if people don’t realise ‘beth y maent yn eu wneuthur...fe wyr y Diafol dy fod trwy ymddial yn dinistrio dy Enaid.’¹¹ T.P explains that illnesses are sent by God and it is to him that people should turn ‘yn eich clefydau a ac yn y’ch cyfynderau,’ but instead they ‘anfon at y Diafol’ by taking ‘y dewin rhyngoch ac ef.’¹² As Davies attests, their skills in healing confirmed their satanic powers since besides God, only the Devil had the relevant medical knowledge to cure that which others could not.¹³

⁵ T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, Tr: ‘urge to everyone not to consult magicians and conjurors,’ ‘wicked customs and traditions that are practised in Wales.

⁶ Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p30.

⁷ T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p37. Tr: ‘Servants...slaves to the devil,’ ‘authority and lawfulness is with the devils over the like.’

⁸ *Ibid.*, p7. Tr: ‘broken the contract of their baptism and commit treason against the Lord of heaven and earth.’

⁹ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p464.

¹⁰ Davies, *Cunning-folk*, p31.

¹¹ T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p20, 39. Tr: ‘cure sicknesses,’ ‘foretell deaths,’ ‘know about lost things,’ ‘man or animal...that is bewitched.’ ‘What they do...the Devil knows through your revenge that you destroy your soul.’

¹² *Ibid.*, p16. Tr: ‘In your illnesses,’ ‘send to the Devil,’ ‘the magician between you and him.’

¹³ Davies, *Cunning-folk*, p32.

Another cause for concern equated with cunning-folk was the practice of various customs regarded as popish superstitions. Popular religion employed many aspects of Catholic worship such as Latin prayers and the veneration of saints. Included in T.P's tract on conjuration is a denunciation of related superstitious and magical practices. He disapproves of the habit of 'arferyd Gwersau a Gweddiau at Seinctiau...a'i hadrodd naw gwaith...er atal gwaed,' without the use of 'moddion naturiol.'¹⁴ T.P remarks on the conjuror's art of 'fwrw allan gythreuliaid or neb a fydd gwedi eu meddianu ganthynt,'¹⁵ the habit of placing ill children on the graves of 'hen seinctiau,' and the 'seremoniu anghyfreithlon' performed at 'rhai ffynhonnau...megis ffynnon Gwen Frewi.'¹⁶ He does not go into too much detail, explaining that 'na allaf...gyfri amdanynt,'¹⁷ but condemns them as 'draddodiadau Papistiadd,' and maintains that 'os ceiswch chwilio a allwch ganfod o...le a pha fodd y daeth y fath draddodiadau,' which ultimately derive 'o Uffern ac o Rufain, a rhwng y Diafol a Phabau Rufain.'¹⁸ Davies explains that Protestant demonologists portrayed catholic priests and cunning-folk as representatives of some 'infernal brotherhood,'¹⁹ a connection evident here. Again this reinforces T.P's central argument that by means of such practices people abandon 'yr Holl-alluog Duw' (Almighty God) in favour of the Devil.

Cas gan Gythraul is therefore a valid source regarding the dissemination of demonological witchcraft ideas into popular belief systems. It also offers a valid insight into contemporary notions of witchcraft and popular magical practices. It thus illuminates several key areas. It is an exceptional example of a Welsh-language text dealing with early modern magical beliefs, so vernacular expressions and discourse are not lost through translation. More importantly, it provides rare coverage of the religious and magical traditions of Welsh contemporaries. The only other significant recordings were collected in the nineteenth century by proponents of the folklore and antiquarian movement such as, Elias Owen,²⁰ William Howells,²¹ and Wirt Sikes,²² but these

¹⁴T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p14. Tr: 'practising services and prayers to saints...and repeating them nine times..to stop blood.'

¹⁵Ibid., p41. Tr: 'exorcising (hitting out) devils out of anyone possessed by them.'

¹⁶Ibid., p43. Tr: 'old saints,' 'unlawful ceremonies,' 'some wells...like Gwen Frewi well.'

¹⁷Ibid., p44. Tr: 'I can't account for them.'

¹⁸Ibid., p44. Tr: 'Popish traditions,' 'if you look you shall find from where such traditions came,' 'Hell and Rome and between the Devil and the Popes of Rome.'

¹⁹Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p36.

²⁰Owen, *Welsh Folklore* (1896)

²¹William Howells, *Cambrian Superstitions*, (1813)

²²Sikes, *British Goblins*, (1880)

are essentially middle and upper-class representations of nineteenth-century beliefs. Thus the book offers a rare insight into the beliefs and practices of early modern Welsh people which has so often been neglected by mainstream witchcraft studies and Welsh history generally.

The only modern scholar to refer to this work is Geraint H. Jenkins.²³ His article on popular beliefs in Wales draws on examples of popular customs, and Jenkins remarks that T.P. 'echoed the fulminations of William Perkins in his insistence that magicians and wizards did much to sustain Satan's kingdom.'²⁴ It formed part of a wider literary trend which sought to combat the popular resort to cunning-folk. Clark argues that Protestant authors were 'pre-occupied' by the task. Jean Calvin wrote a commentary on the text of Deuteronomy, addressing 'witchcrafts' and explaining their demonic powers, but Clark argues that throughout, his remarks are directed at 'popular magicians and their clientele' rather than the more 'sensational witchcraft of the Sabbat.' Calvin referred to Deuteronomy 18: 10-11, which targets 'any one...that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a wizard..,' and these types of magic came to distinguish demonological writings.²⁵ *Cas gan Gythraul* opens with the exact references and regularly refers to Deuteronomy throughout, thus emulating such writings in style and content.

Dialogues were also popular genre for articulating the case against cunning-folk. The supposed benefits of consulting these practitioners was outlined, only to be countered by emphasising the awful implications of such recourse. Henry Holland's *Treatise Against Witchcraft* introduced Mysodaemon and the learned Theophilus. Mysodaemon defends cunning-folk claiming they 'cure the sick and find things loste,...they seem to do no harme,' but Theophilus rebukes this view by utilising the relevant Biblical and demonological testimonials.²⁶ George Gifford's *Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcrafts* also engaged with the role in Essex villages of what he termed the 'other sort of witches, whome the people call cunning men and wise women.'²⁷

²³Geraint H. Jenkins, *Thomas Jones Yr Almanacwyr* (Caerdydd, Prifysgol Cymru, 1980)

²⁴Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs', p460.

²⁵Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p462.

²⁶Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p32.

²⁷Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p463.

The only demonologist to 'venture into print in the Welsh language' was Robert Holland.²⁸ *Tudor and Gronow* (1595) was a tract against 'conjurers and wizards in the manner of a dialogue.' Its essence resembled Gifford's *Dialogue*, the main topic being beneficent magic. For example, Tudor exclaims 'as for wizards and Astrologers...I never thought God's word could be against them...for they do great good.' But Gronow is unyielding, explaining 'it's just as bad to go to the Devil himself as to go to the people who serve him.'²⁹ However, Clark and Morgan argue that the tract's significance lies beyond intellectual demonology, as Holland's inspiration came not from book learning, but from his own experiences of rural society in the parishes where he served. Consequently, Clark and Morgan contend that his work is a 'mixture of gnomic truths and folk-lore which coloured the belief in magic and witchcraft at the popular level.'³⁰

The similarities with *Cas gan Gythraul* are noteworthy. T.P. is compelled to write because of his awareness of popular superstitious practices. To the reader he claims 'Y Cymru hawddgar yr achos mwya...i ossod allan y Llyfr hwn,...oherwydd fy môd yn gwybod fod llawer o rai...yn eich mysg, yn myned I ganlyn Dewiniad a Swyngyfareddwr.'³¹ It is to these practitioners that T.P. reserves his condemnation. Furthermore, there are sections in the book that follow the style of conversation. T.P. poses seemingly common questions, for example, 'mae rhai dynion hyspys yn dywed maer'r Angelion da sydd yn rhoddi gwybodaeth iddynt hwy?'³² His answer is a reasoned explanation, 'cais feddwl ar y dichon Angel tywyllwch ymritho fel Angel y goleuni.' Besides, 'nad ydyw Duw yn anfon ei Angelion Sancataidd eu gyfarwyddo Dewiniad a daragonwyr cythreulig I ddywed *Tesni* dynion.' The Bible shows 'ond dau fath o Angelion,' that is good and bad angels, and it was the latter, namely 'cythreuliaid' (devils) that aid cunning-folk.³³ Therefore, *Cas gan Gythraul* forms part of a persistent literary tradition aimed at demonizing agents of popular magic. The advantages of this source are that it reflects the contemporary demonological climate,

²⁸Stuart Clark & P.T.J. Morgan, 'Religion and Magic in Elizabethan Wales: Robert Holland's Dialogue on Witchcraft', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27, 1 (January 1976) p31.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p39.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p35.

³¹T.P., *Cas gan Gythraul*, Tr: 'the amiable Welsh are the main cause...in setting out this book...because I know that many amongst you...consult magicians and sorcerers.'

³²*Ibid.*, p33. Tr: 'Some wise men claim that Angels give them their information?'

³³*Ibid.*, p33. Tr: 'Think you that perhaps the Dark Angel assumes the form of an Angel of Light?' 'God does not send his hallowed angels to instruct magicians and devilish lords to foretell men's futures..' 'two sorts of Angels.'

yet it is set in a unique Welsh context and divulges valuable information on Welsh demonological witchcraft ideas and popular culture.

But why apply this source to a study of witchcraft? As we saw in the Introduction, the number of trials in Wales were negligible. Yet, despite a lack of trials witches were commonplace in early modern Wales. William Thomas, the schoolmaster from Michaelston-Super-Ely, records details of local witches in a matter of fact tone in his diary. Concerning the burial of Ann Richmond in March, 1763, Thomas comments, 'all folks...dread her and believe she could witch..and tales of hurt she and son made to cattle etc.'³⁴ Witches are also prevalent in folk and narrative traditions. A Pembrokeshire folk tale relates the history of 'an old lady called Nansi, who had a reputation as a gwrach or witch.'³⁵ In Ystrad Meurig 'an old witch' bewitched a sheep and its lamb. When a Shepherd refused her request for the lamb she warned 'thou wilt soon lose both,' and typically both had died when the shepherd ended his journey.³⁶ The evidence suggests that the witch-stereotype was part of folk tradition, and also points to the existence of such archetypal witches in Welsh society. As Davies argues, they were an 'integral element of the human community.'³⁷

Thus, as Jenkins argues, what demands explanation is 'why belief in witchcraft was woven into the normal fabric of life whereas trials were not?'³⁸ The nature of Welsh witchcraft is partly accountable. As opposed to the traditional act of maleficium, Welsh witches engaged in 'collective ritualised cursing,' which was also a significant aspect of community life.³⁹ Olly Powell, a seventeenth-century witch from Pembroke, provoked fear through her 'dark muttering and cursing.'⁴⁰ Peddws Ffoulke from Denbigh 'muttered something about a horse' when a farmer refused her some potatoes. Later, his cart horse was discovered lame.⁴¹ A better understanding of the 'comprehensive nature of cursing' is possible where the actual words are preserved. The curse of the Llanddona witch tribe, which troubled the inhabitants of Anglesey from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries is a prime example. It reads,

³⁴Thomas, *Diary*, p65.

³⁵John, *Pembrokeshire Folk Tales*, P79.

³⁶Davies, *Folk-Lore of West Wales*, p236.

³⁷Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p192.

³⁸Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs', p448.

³⁹Suggett, 'Witchcraft Dynamics', p89.

⁴⁰Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs', p447.

⁴¹Pugh, *Welsh Witches*, p29.

**‘Crwydro y byddo am oesoedd lawer,
Ac ym mhob cam, camfa;
Ym mhob camfa, codwm;
Ym mhob codwm, torri asgwrn;
Nid yr asgwrn mwyaf na’r lleiaf;
Ond asgwrn chwil corn ei wddw bob tro.’**

It Translates,

**‘May he wander for ages many;
And at every step, a stile;
At every stile, a fall;
At every fall, a broken bone;
Not the largest, nor the least bone;
But the chief neck bone every time.’⁴²**

It would certainly sound menacing in the vernacular, taking into account the alliteration and guttural pronunciation. Suggett rightly contends that cursing acted as a ‘weapon’⁴³ as the intimidation inherent in these threats would suggest.

When misfortune inevitably occurred the ‘conceptual opposite of a curse, a blessing formally uttered by the...witch over her victim’⁴⁴ would bring relief. Peddws was sought by the farmer whose horse she had bewitched and was forced to pronounce ‘God be with this horse’ which immediately recovered.⁴⁵ In Welsh, *Rhad Duw* (God’s blessing/ God bless) or *Duw a’i bendithio* (God bless you) were common sayings. The witch could also counter a blessing by invoking the Devil’s name instead. In a petition to the Justices of the Peace in Denbighshire of January 1673, it was recorded that one Elizabeth Parry passed a ‘woman milking’ and said ‘The Devill bless the work whereupon the cow fell down upon her and had the like to have smothered her.’⁴⁶ As Suggett argues, the ‘active or performative nature of blessing and cursing was an inseparable part of the definition of witchcraft,⁴⁷ and of a broader oral and ritualistic popular culture. Protection from the Devil and bad luck were sought in appeals to God. *Rhad Duw ar y gwaith* (God bless the work) was a common greeting. Oral preservation was supplemented by physical rituals, such as ymswyno (making the sign of the cross) and circling one’s nose to ensure

⁴²Owen, *Welsh Folklore*, p225.

⁴³Suggett, ‘Witchcraft Dynamics’, p90.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p92.

⁴⁵Pugh, *Welsh Witches*, p29.

⁴⁶N.L.W Chirk Castle B29A Denbighshire Quarter Session Files, 14 January 1673. Elizabeth Parry invoking Devil’s curse.

⁴⁷Suggett, ‘Witchcraft Dynamics’ p94.

God's protection.⁴⁸ Thus witchcraft was not perceived as a 'transformation' or 'cultural preposterousness'⁴⁹ because it was part of the general cultural framework of Wales.

Continuation and toleration of witchcraft are related themes. Studies of witchcraft have seldom developed beyond the trials, yet as the evidence suggests, witchcraft beliefs were certainly not waning in eighteenth-century Wales. Dutch research has made significant inroads concerning the continuation of witchcraft in Western Europe, notably in the works of William de Blécourt and Marijke Giswijt-Hofstra. Owen Davies has compiled a significant body of literature relating to England, and to a lesser extent Wales, contributing greatly to our understanding of witch-beliefs beyond the period of trials. Yet much still needs to be said about witchcraft in Wales after, and even during the trials.⁵⁰

It is essential to consider the role of cunning -folk and their role in the contribution to the continuity and toleration of witchcraft beliefs.⁵¹ Again, Davies's work has addressed this aspect of popular magic in England, but Wales is still in want of further research. The *dyn hysbys* occupied a central role in witchcraft beliefs, not least as a upholder of witchcraft practices but as a key component of the beliefs themselves. Research into Welsh witchcraft inevitably develops into a study of Welsh cunning-folk as they represent the essence of witchcraft. What remains unique is the traditional belief system evident in Welsh popular culture which provided society with the agencies to combat and treat the effects of witchcraft, such as the oral and physical gestures described above. Nevertheless, the majority of protective options centred on the activities of cunning-folk.

Appealing to cunning-folk for help with everyday problems was a general European trend, yet Davies highlights how little we really know about cunning-folk in the context of European witchcraft.⁵² He describes how people came to them with numerous requests, some trivial, many concerning matters of life and death like curing the terminally ill or the bewitched.⁵³ T.P describes the popular resort to 'Dewiniaid' who 'arferyd llyisiau (ac ennaint) tuac at iachau clefydau,' and

⁴⁸Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs', p441.

⁴⁹Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p14.

⁵⁰De Blécourt, 'On the Continuation of Witchcraft', in Barry Hester & Roberts (eds.) *Witchcraft In Early Modern Europe*, pp335-52. Marijke Giswijt-Hofstra & William Frijhoff (eds.) *Witchcraft in the Netherlands, 14th to 20th Centuries* (Hague, 1990). Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, (1999).

⁵¹Giswijt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate' p189.

⁵²Davies, 'Cunning -Folk in England and Wales', p91.

⁵³Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p93.

could 'ymddial ar y hudoles...a gwneuthur niwaid.'⁵⁴ William Thomas's references to witchcraft primarily concern wizards. The memorials for June 1781 records the burial of William Jenkin 'a reputed wizard.'⁵⁵ William Pranch was also a reputed wizard of many talents. He possessed 'the word to witch things, his advice was much run too, for to heal cattle etc.'⁵⁶ David Jenkin was also a 'reputed wizzard of cattle.'⁵⁷ As Davies argues, cunning-folk were an 'amalgam of fortune-teller, astrologer...medical doctor, veterinary surgeon, and witch-doctor.'⁵⁸ They thus served as a complementary counterpart in witchcraft practice.

A rare Welsh conjuring book, *Llyfr Dewiniaeth* (1800), contains interesting spells and remedies which volunteers an insight into the various ministrations of cunning-folk. It includes a spell, or a method to conjure 'ar yspryd im rhai a elwir Tylwyth Teg' for the purpose of 'gymedroli, ag I ddysgu, ag I amddifyn ni yn y Dymuniad.'⁵⁹ The author also divulges 'modd I gael trysor giddiedig' and how to 'ddwad I hyd I leidr a ddygo Riwbeth oddi arnoch chwi.'⁶⁰ These were designed for personal or material gain which suggests that Welsh contemporaries were seduced by the prospect of attaining significant fortune. This may not imply greed, but rather a hope of rising above the fiscal means of rural labour to a position of relative wealth and independence.

Moreover, the book also covers domestic issues such as how to 'gadw haearn rhag rhydu,' 'I rwystro grochen ferwi,' and the means of 'dynu ben pob deulen , mor naturiol,'⁶¹ possibly for medical or cooking purposes. There are procedures to 'stopio gwaed' (stop blood), 'I sychu briw' (to dry sores), 'rhag brathiad ci drwg' (against a dog bite), and 'rhag pesychu' (against coughing). These illustrate the types of everyday, regular problems affecting Welsh people, rather than the fanciful designs of treasure hunting. Overall, as Davies argues, an examination of what cunning-folk practised reveals far more than what they did. It provides an

⁵⁴T.P *Cas gan Gythraul*, p17. Tr: 'practice/apply vegetables (herbs?) towards curing illness', 'revenge the witch...which caused harm.'

⁵⁵Thomas, *Diary*, p65.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p85.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p92.

⁵⁸Davies, 'Cunning-Folk In England and Wales', p92.

⁵⁹N.L.W. MS 99E Cwrtmawr, Tr: 'spirits we call fairies,' 'undertake, and teach, and defend us in our wishes.'

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, Tr: 'Method to get hidden treasure', 'Come across/ identify a thief that has stolen something from you.'

⁶¹*Ibid.*, Tr: 'prevent iron from rusting,' 'stop the saucepan from boiling,' 'pull the head/tips of leaves so naturally.'

insight into the anxieties and fears of people and illuminates their private hopes and aspirations,⁶² which in many respects are not so different from our own. Therefore, an investigation of cunning-folk not only addresses a neglected aspect of witchcraft historiography, it can also shed light on the continuation of witch-beliefs, and with regards to Wales, offers a better understanding of why this country remained resistant to the typical witchcraft model despite a widespread belief in witches.

This leads to the problem of definition. As Giswijt-Hofstra highlights, most scholars are in agreement that only harmful and/ or diabolical witchcraft should be included, which means that counter-magic or white-magic as practised by cunning-folk, witch-doctors, and exorcists, has been largely neglected.⁶³ German Scholars have subjected witchcraft to even stricter delineation, applying only *Hexerei*, a term denoting diabolism. *Hexerei* usually refers to harmful witchcraft - maleficium - and to one or more demonological elements such as the pact with the Devil, copulation with the Devil, and attendance to the witches sabbath. *Zauberei*, signifying ritual acts effecting harmful or beneficial ends has been distinguished from *Hexerei*, and thus excluded from research.⁶⁴ The texts consulted for this chapter are primarily concerned with the activities and rituals surrounding beneficial magic so such a narrow definition fails to comprehend the precise nature of witchcraft in Wales.

Alternatively, Giswijt-Hofstra advocates using terms ‘in an encompassing sense - preferably in accordance with former usage.’ In English this implies the term witchcraft, and in Dutch *toverij*.⁶⁵ The most appropriate term in Welsh would be *Dewinio*, due to its varied and comprehensive magical connotations (see chapter 1). These definitions are in accordance with contemporary distinctions. Those to whom the victims of maleficium appealed to for counter measures were also regarded as witches. ‘A witch’ wrote one demonologist, ‘is but a wicked man or man or woman that worketh with the devill.’ Another claimed the conjuror, enchanter, sorcerer, and diviner were all ‘compassed’ by the term ‘witchcraft.’ As Clark argues, evident in much of the literature dealing with ‘witchcraft’ in early modern Europe was an attempt to ‘broaden the application of the term witch’ to practitioners of popular magic.⁶⁶ This notion was

⁶²Davies, *Cunning-folk*, p93.

⁶³Giswijt-Hofstra, ‘European Witchcraft Debate’ p184.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p184.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p185.

⁶⁶Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p459.

encapsulated in the witchcraft acts also. The statutes of 1542, and 1563 were aimed at conjuration, sorcery, and enchantments as well as witchcraft. Even the 1604 Act of James I was essentially orientated towards cunning-folk. As Davies contends, historians have been somewhat misleading in describing them as Witchcraft Acts. Perhaps a more appropriate label would be the 'Conjuration Acts.'⁶⁷

However, as de Blécourt stresses, we should not be misled by the demonological interpretation that defines both forms of witchcraft as a crime of devil worship.⁶⁸ Of course we must be aware of all-embracing terms which can lead to a disregard of social, cultural, and regional differences, as well as varying degrees of magical practices. As de Blécourt emphasises, the restoration of cunning-folk to witchcraft research involves recognising their position vis-à-vis their clients, and the people they accused, whether indirectly or directly, as the perpetrators of harmful witchcraft.⁶⁹ Davies illustrates how many people distinguished between cunning-folk, astrologers, astrologer physicians, and physicians who cure witchcraft. Davies convincingly highlights the importance of definition with regards to cunning-folk, because they have often been 'clumsily lumped together with other practitioners.' This is most evident in the amalgam of cunning-folk with charmers. Charming, Davies maintains, was a distinct tradition based either on the possession of an innate healing touch, or a healing object, or usually the ownership of one or more 'simple verse charms' based on Biblical extracts. Moreover, charmers did not require payment for their services, unlike cunning-folk, since they 'respected the tradition of gratuity.' Thus as Davies argues, charmers and cunning-folk represented 'different branches of folk-medicine,' although some cunning-folk did dispense charms for money.⁷⁰ It is important to recognise these distinctions and the various services that cunning-folk and other magical practitioners offered, in addition to their different social and cultural settings, which would facilitate a clearer understanding of their social role and significance. By reverting to the distinctions of demonologists I do not conflate cunning-folk with witches, and do acknowledge their distinctive functions and practices. Rather, I am arguing that cunning-folk should be viewed and studied as fundamental elements of witchcraft. Like Giswijt-Hofstra, I support an 'inclusive

⁶⁷Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p8.

⁶⁸William de Blécourt, 'Witch-Doctors, Soothsayers, and Priests: On Cunning-Folk in European Historiography and Tradition', *Social History* 19 (1994) p296.

⁶⁹Blécourt, 'Witch-Doctors', p296.

⁷⁰Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p83-4.

view' of witchcraft that incorporates various types of magical beliefs and activities, harmful and beneficial, as well as diabolical.

Beneficial magic continued to cause concern in the eighteenth century. The statute of 1736 was aimed at 'punishing such persons as pretend to exercise, or use any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, or conjuration.' This removed the stress on witches and maleficium, but the focus on cunning-folk remained. The key word in this new legislation is 'pretend' which bespeaks a profound change in the official perception of cunning-folk. No longer were they conceived as the pernicious practitioners of evil, but rather as counterfeit craftsmen who fooled the 'credulous'. Yet as Davies argues, technically the same activities remained criminal offences, only the interpretation had changed.⁷¹ This is emphasised by the case against Daniel James in Breconshire in 1739. Thomas Daniel who lived with his father Griffith Daniel, 'as a servant,' claimed that in 'the course of last summer, the milk of his father's cows had very extraordinary appearance, they believed it was effected by witchcraft.' On the orders of his father, Thomas consulted James who 'immediately said it was the effect of witchcraft and that he would prevent it.' Carrying out the usual ritual of 'looking 'into a Book,' he instructed to 'take the cows piss and some hair off their tails to boil the sauce with salt,' and then 'bury it by a stile near a particular woman's house.' This was also supplemented by a 'paper to put over the door in the dairy,' for which was paid 5s. This didn't work, and a second attempt to use the charm alongside 'two horse shoes having three nails in each of them..failed in success.' Still, James 'pretended by various means having generally a book before him to find out the witch.' He was ordered to compensate Griffith Daniel for his 'pretended to offer services in conjuration.'⁷² The case clearly represents Daniel James's activities as 'fraudulent pretences,'⁷³ representing a shift in educated attitudes towards cunning folk, who were now regarded as charlatans rather than servants of the Devil. However, it is equally revealing of a persistent belief in witchcraft and the continued popular recourse to cunning-folk. This belief is evident on several levels. The witnesses against Daniel James believed the milk to be bewitched, which was confirmed by James, thus emphasising the role of cunning-folk in the diagnosis and continuation of witch beliefs. The official outlook does not question these beliefs, the only concern in line with the law is the apparent 'pretence' of Daniel

⁷¹Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p21.

⁷²N.L.W. MS 4483, Mayberry, Vol III. 1739.

⁷³Davies, *Cunning-folk*, p21.

James. Neither his activities, or the request and disposal of his services are subjected to scrutiny. This begs the question, had Daniel James been successful in relieving the effects of witchcraft, would Thomas and Griffith Daniel have sought action against him?

This is a firm indication that resort to cunning-folk and witchcraft beliefs continued well into the eighteenth century despite a change in official attitudes. But to what extent did official attitudes really change? T.P, writing in 1711, still held to the theories of sixteenth-century demonologists claiming that 'Dewiniaid' were merely practising rituals belonging to the Devil. Ian Bostridge maintains that witchcraft theory could remain 'an unquestioned assumption' which is suggested by the evidence thus far. While *Cas gan Gythraul* is used as a source for popular ideas and practices, T.P's views conform to the typical attitudes of earlier demonologists. A lack of trial sources and any other literature concerned with popular beliefs qualifies T.P's text as a window into popular conceptions. However, the 'intellectual demise' of the concept of witchcraft requires further research. Bostridge argues that it has rarely been studied to 'symmetrical effect' with the decline of trials. The customary idea has been that witchcraft theory was in retreat during this period, but Bostridge challenges this view, arguing that 'witchcraft theory had a serious constituency well beyond 1700.'⁷⁴ T.P was definitely an advocate of the demonological view that regarded cunning-folk as witches too, in the sense that both worked with the Devil. But how far did this attitude influence popular beliefs in Wales?

Immersed in his writings are two themes that warrant further discussion, the sabbath and the witch's mark. T.P declares 'fe ddywedir y bydd hudoliaid yn cyfaddeu pan y byddant ar nosweithiau yn myned i'w cyfarford cythreulig lee bydd y Diafol a hwythau yn cyfarford,' where they 'ymrwymo na byddo iddyndt sôn...am enw Duw mewn ffordd parchedig eithr mewn foordd a amharch a chabledd.'⁷⁵ Furthermore, when combating the popular view that cunning-folk are inspired by good angels, T.P attests, 'nid wyf yn anmau na ddychon Duw anfon eu Angelion I datguddio yr hyn a fytho...yn ewyllysia,' but, 'y mae dewiniaid...yn I gael y mae Pîch-mark neu Nôt haiarn y Diafol I weled ar y cyfryw.'⁷⁶ James I's treatise on witchcraft included his

⁷⁴Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its Transformations 1650-1750* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997) p2.

⁷⁵T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p18. Tr: 'It's said that witches/magicians admit that at night they go to their devilish meetings', 'bind/promise that they won't mention God's name in a respectful manner, but in an disrespectful and disdainful manner.'

⁷⁶T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p18. Tr: 'I do not doubt that God does not send his angels to disclose to people this that he wills,' 'Magicians have Pitch-mark or iron knot/note/mark of the Devil is evident on the like.'

interpretation of the sabbath, 'The devill...counterfeites in his servants...for as the servants of God...convene for serving of him, so makes he them in great numbers to convene for his service.' Moreover, as God's servants are marked 'with his seale, the sacrament of baptisme...so none serves Satan that are not marked with his mark.'⁷⁷ As Clark argues, such depictions reflect the 'inversionary patterns' evident in 'witchcraft's foundation in a rebellious and parodying demonism.'⁷⁸

Suggett's contention that the notion of Welsh witchcraft was in some ways 'borrowed from England' is suggested by the above comparisons. It has already been established that T.P drew inspiration from the works of other leading demonologists, so his reference to the sabbath may be a regurgitation of these outlooks, although this does imply that a conception of the sabbath was influential in Welsh thought. Suggett persists in maintaining the 'underdeveloped' nature of witchcraft beliefs in Wales, arguing that 'notions of the pact with the Devil and the sabbat were not present in Welsh witchcraft cases.'⁷⁹ This is questionable. Witchcraft cases for Wales are so few that any conclusions based on them are misleading as they are not wholly representative of witchcraft beliefs. Moreover, the concept of witchcraft centred on ritual cursing, and incorporated cunning-folk within its definition, constituting a sharp divergence from maleficium, hence the absence of demonological elements.

However, folklore sources can provide information on the extent to which theological concepts of the diabolical witch became absorbed into popular culture.⁸⁰ Welsh folklore testifies to the presence of demonological elements in popular beliefs. For example, Dorothy Charles, an eighteenth-century witch living on the banks of the river Ogmore, was believed to be a regular attendant of the sabbath, and reportedly stole babies and small children in the night to sacrifice to Satan.⁸¹ A deviant form of the sabbath was practised by witches in Cardiganshire. For example, two old women attended the morning service at Llanddewi Brefi church and partook of the Holy Communion, but kept the bread in their mouths and left. They circulated the outside of the church nine times, and the Devil appeared to them 'in the form of a frog.' They gave him the bread of communion from their mouths thereby selling themselves to Satan. Similarly, an old man

⁷⁷Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p134.

⁷⁸Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p29.

⁷⁹Suggett, 'Witchcraft Dynamics', p84.

⁸⁰Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p167.

⁸¹Pugh, *Welsh Witches*, p77.

claimed to have obtained the power of bewitching by pocketing the bread of his first communion and feeding it to a dog who met him at the church gate, selling his soul to the Devil.⁸²

Jim Sharpe argues that popular images of the Devil may account for popular conceptions of the connection between the witch and the Devil,⁸³ which is likely considering the regular appearance of the Devil in various animal forms to witches and other persons, which in Wales formed part of a broader culture of belief that attributed animals with magical qualities. However, ideas about the sabbath and the witch's mark are usually associated with theological dispositions although evidence suggests that they were partly absorbed into popular culture. Thomas's diary records interesting details concerning local beliefs about William Jenkin. On 22nd March, 1763, there 'was determined a wager between William Jenkin of Cadoxton and Evan Thomas of the Brook in that Evan called him a wizards and wagered him he had teats. But Dr. Bates of Cowbridge determined the matter between them.'⁸⁴ The intervention of a doctor indicates the severity of the allegation and an extensive belief in the idea of the witch's mark, suggesting that demonological theories did influence popular beliefs.

The East Anglian trials of 1645 display similar notions that bear comparison. Initially Mathew Hopkins became troubled by a 'horrible sect of witches' gathering beside his house at night and offering 'solemn sacrifices to the devill.' Hearing them mention the name of Elizabeth Clarke, Hopkins reported her to the authorities and she was apprehended 'and searched by a woman who had...knowe the devill's marks and found to have three teats about her.'⁸⁵ The parallels are obvious despite one crucial difference - gender. The problem of gender has only recently been studied by historians of crime, the law and legal systems generally, the general consensus being that women have been at a continual 'disadvantage.'⁸⁶ Sharpe has studied gender in relation to witchcraft and has identified a 'distinctive female contribution' to the prosecution of witches, particularly 'the role of women in searching for the witch's mark.' The mark was seen as a method of establishing guilt, the importance of which remained central to witchcraft prosecutions. It was a task specifically delineated to women, thus Sharpe argues that this use of 'female juries' modifies the general assertion that women were 'excluded from participation in the

⁸²Davies, *Folk-Lore of West Wales*, p231.

⁸³Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p136.

⁸⁴Thomas, *Diary*, p65.

⁸⁵Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p154.

⁸⁶Jim Sharpe, 'Women, Witchcraft and the Legal Process' in Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader*, p289.

legal process of prosecuting witches.⁸⁷ The case of William Jenkin questions this model, since all those involved were men, including the doctor. This implies a digression from traditional witchcraft beliefs as it was a male 'wizard' who was accused of having teats by another man. It therefore calls for a more inclusive view of witchcraft which may help to explain the concern over wizards, which seemed more prominent in Wales than a fear of witches. It also demonstrates that the issue of gender is as significant to cunning-folk as it is to witches.

Welsh references to the witch's mark rare as they are, suggest the melange of popular and theological ideas. For example, T.P explains that cunning-folk bear the 'Pitch-mark' or 'Nôt haiarn' (iron knot/note/mark) of the Devil. The Pitch-mark is linked to ideas and representations of the Devil carrying a pitchfork, or grapnel, an image which as we have seen, was also deployed by Ellis Wynne who described devils with 'phigffyrch' (pitchforks).⁸⁸ This is usually the grapnel used by jailers, and Link argues that such images relate to the 'popular pictorial image' of the Devil evident in medieval mystery plays.⁸⁹ Moreover, the 'Nôt-haiarn,' an example not yet come across, pertains to popular details conferred on the Devil. For example, popular images often portray him carrying a 'fiery sword' or an 'iron bar,' or wearing clanking chains.⁹⁰ In some of the older folklore account of Wales, the Devil assumes the form of a blacksmith, and is often seen working at the anvil, or replenishing the forge-fire. He is also described as a maker of horseshoes, bolts, bars, and ploughshares.⁹¹ Thus the iron mark seems an appropriate logo for the evil one, which confirms the suggestion that popular notions of the Devil's involvement with witches derive from his portrayals in popular culture.

Furthermore, the Hopkins trials contain traces of popular beliefs. For example, Elizabeth Greens claimed the Devil appeared as a man at her bedside 'an nipped her by the neck' then drew 'three drops of blood of her arme.' Another of the accused, Rebecca West, described his appearance to a gathering of witches 'in the shape of a dogge...in the shape of two kitlyns...and the said familiars did doe homage to Elizabeth Clarke,...and kissed her.' Oldridge argues that the Hopkins trials 'endorsed a plethora of folk beliefs about witchcraft.'⁹² As with the Welsh

⁸⁷Sharpe, 'Witchcraft and the Legal Process', p293.

⁸⁸Wynne, *Bardd Cwsg*, p91.

⁸⁹Link, *The Devil*, p68.

⁹⁰Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, p114.

⁹¹Trevelyan, *Welsh Folk Stories*, p154.

⁹²Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p157.

examples, it is difficult to establish 'if statements about witchcraft were borrowed from folk tales about the devil or vice-versa.'⁹³ They certainly point to a system of shared beliefs.

Unlike Scotland and mainland Europe, demonological theories concerning the sabbath have been largely absent from Welsh and English cases. The East Anglian cases prompted the idea of a devil-worshipping cult in England, but historians tend to dismiss this as a freak variation, attributing it to the influence of continental ideas. But as Sharpe argues, the Hopkins trials constitute the largest and most complete single body of evidence relating to England, and it would be careless to discount them as 'unusual.'⁹⁴ The assimilation of popular and demonological interpretations suggest that they were integral elements of the popular belief system. The Welsh example reinforces this, and contests Suggett's claims that Welsh witchcraft did not reflect ideas about the pact with the Devil, when clearly they did. Although *Cas gan Gythraul* is intellectually orientated, when combined with the evidence presented in folklore it can be argued that demonological witchcraft beliefs were a significant feature of Welsh popular culture. This is contrary to Robert Muchembald's opinion that the sabbath 'is simply and solely a figment created by theologians.'⁹⁵ As Pócs argues, the search for the foundations of the witches sabbath in popular belief is 'promising ground' for research since these elementary images are 'astonishingly homogeneous throughout Europe,' and Wales highlights the possibilities of such research.⁹⁶

The demonological view that regarded witchcraft as a shortcoming particular to females is reflected in the surviving records of witch trials. The most recent accurate estimates report that three-quarters of those executed for witchcraft in Europe were women. This has led historians to consider the relationship between witch-hunting and gender relations. Despite the considerable deliberation of this issue there is still no consensus among historians.⁹⁷ Marianne Hester for example, regards witch-hunting as a result of conflict between male-female relations. She argues that witch-hunts are examples of 'social control of women' within the context of the reconstruction of patriarchal society. The 'female' became synonymous with the witch, and Hester concludes that witch-hunting was a means of maintaining male dominance 'vis-à-vis

⁹³Ibid., p136.

⁹⁴Ibid., p136

⁹⁵Robert Muchembald, 'Satanic Myths and Cultural Realities', in Oldridge (ed.) *The Witchcraft Reader*. p137.

⁹⁶Pócs, 'The Witches Sabbath', p134.

⁹⁷Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, p268.

women.⁹⁸ Louise Jackson complements this view by arguing that witch-trials are a clear example 'of state violence against women.' Jackson concentrates on the depositions of the Suffolk trials of 1645, emphasising that witch-hunting curbed the 'inversionary' behaviour of women.⁹⁹

While it is undeniably true that women formed an overwhelming majority of those accused of witchcraft, recent research has highlighted the important role of women as accusers and witnesses in witch trials. Sharpe argues that they were of 'unique importance' in the witchcraft trials due to their eminent roles in searching for the witch's mark, and as witnesses against witches. He does not regard the trials as a process imposed by men to control women, but argues that accusation reveal a 'social arena' that provided women with a significant degree of authority where they could establish themselves in a public sphere.¹⁰⁰ Clive Holmes addresses this theme also, and acknowledges that ordinary women frequently voiced concerns about witchcraft, but maintains that women's experiences with witches remained within the village sphere. It was men rather than women who took the lead in prosecuting witches.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, Christina Lerner objects to viewing witch-hunting simply as woman-hunting as it results in 'too narrow a range of questions.' It must be considered why women were considered threatening, and why this attitude changed around 1700. Lerner formulates that witchcraft was 'sex-related' but not 'sex-specific' because men too could be accused of the crime, and approximately 20% of European suspects were men. This line of inquiry she argues, leads to further possibilities of research regarding parallels with other great 'less sexually persecutions' of past and present.¹⁰²

The gendering of Scottish witchcraft corresponds to the general European pattern, 85% of the accused were female. Such comparison offers important insights, but as Ronald Hutton argues, others are presented by comparison with 'Scotland's forgotten neighbour: Iceland.' Trials here were held in the same period but on a lesser scale due to the smaller and more dispersed population. Between 1604 and 1720, 120 individuals were indicted and 22 executed in four outbreaks of accusations. Hutton argues that this record is a 'microcosm of the usual European

⁹⁸Marianne Hester, 'Patriarchal Reconstruction and Witch-Hunting', in Oldridge (ed.) *Witchcraft Reader*, p286.

⁹⁹Louise Jackson, 'Witches, Wives and Mothers: Witchcraft Persecution and Women's Confessions in Seventeenth-Century England' in Oldridge (ed.) *Witchcraft Reader*, p357.

¹⁰⁰Sharpe, 'Witchcraft and the Legal Process', p300.

¹⁰¹Clive Holmes, 'Women: Witches and Witnesses', in Oldridge (ed.) *Witchcraft Reader*, p270.

¹⁰²Christina Lerner, 'Was Witch-Hunting Woman-Hunting?' in Oldridge (ed.) *Witchcraft Reader*, p275.

pattern' but with one crucial difference - of the 120 tried only 10 were women.¹⁰³ Kristen Hastrup, historian of the Icelandic trials remarked that Icelanders 'tended not to credit women with magic.' This is remarkable as Iceland's gender relations were virtually identical to Scotland's. Additionally, Iceland during this period was under the rule of Denmark, yet Danish witch-trials mostly involved women.¹⁰⁴

Wales presents a similar situation. Suggett observes how relatively little women figure in a discussion of witches in Wales. Figures reveal that witches for whom some details of status have survived forms a 'miscellaneous group' of widows (10), yeomen (6), the wives and daughters of yeomen (6), and the wives of craftsmen (2). As Suggett argues, such small numbers make it difficult to form any 'convincing regularities.'¹⁰⁵ Bearing in mind the low number of trials it would be unrepresentative to form any conclusions on the gender dynamics of Welsh witchcraft through these sources. Like Iceland, Wales experienced a low-intensity of trials which is remarkable because following the Acts of Union (1536 and 1542) Wales and England shared the same legal machinery. But as Suggett argues, these differences in prosecution patterns are not explicable in judicial terms due to the obvious regional differences of language and culture.¹⁰⁶ This links to the nature of Welsh witchcraft as a form of ritualistic cursing, and as a craft dominated by the activities of cunning-folk, rather than the harmful actions of witches. In terms of gender relations then, Wales contradicts the female specifics in two ways. It highlights the significance of male magical practitioners, and also places the theme of gender particulars in a broader perspective that incorporates cunning-folk into witchcraft research.

Lara Apps and Andrew Gow have drawn attention to the 'blind spot' in witchcraft historiography which excludes male witches especially in studies concerning gender.¹⁰⁷ They argue that this is not congruent with early modern understandings of witches, and that explanations of the dynamics of witchcraft should be equally applied to both female and male witches.¹⁰⁸ General conclusions concerning male witches are dismissive. The few who were accused were usually related to a female suspect; men were only accused in 'mass panics' when the female stereotype

¹⁰³ Goodare, *Scottish Witch -Hunt*, p26.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p27.

¹⁰⁵ Suggett, 'Witchcraft Dynamics', p78.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p80.

¹⁰⁷ Lara Apps & Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, M.U.P, 2003) p3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p7.

broke down, or in instances where witchcraft was conceptualised as heresy.¹⁰⁹ William Monter's study of male witches in Normandy exposes the majority of witches tried and executed for witchcraft as men, which offers 'concrete evidence that early modern beliefs about witches were not sex-specific.' For example, both men and women were searched for the Devil's or witch's mark, men being just as likely to display them as women.¹¹⁰ But Monter classifies the male witches as heretics, effectively downplaying and overlooking the significance of the male witch. The work of Eva Labouvie conveys a more promising perspective as she focuses on the differences between the sorts of magic men and women practised and were accused of. Examining cases from Saarland, Labouvie observes that men were accused of certain kinds of witchcraft mainly rooted in 'agricultural everyday reality,' and male areas of responsibility, like the health and care of children and animals.

Aspects of Welsh witchcraft resemble these types of magic. For example, the wizard William Jenkin, was also believed to be a witch, and 'tales of hurt' he had 'made to cattle etc' were common.¹¹¹ Labouvie's distinctions also relate to the different magical practices of Welsh witches and their cunning counterparts. The case of William Jenkin highlights the immersion of the practices of cunning-folk and witchcraft activities evident in Welsh witchcraft. Both comprised important components of witch-beliefs despite their varied practices. De Blécourt dismisses male witches because 'their witchcraft was usually of a different, less malevolent kind,'¹¹² yet an inclusive view of witchcraft, essential to an understanding of Welsh witchcraft, would benefit an analysis of male witches and discourage such a dismissal.

This argument is supported by the discourse of demonological literature, which compared to non-literary, archival materials like court records and pamphlets, has received little attention. Interpretations of demonological ideas about gender and witchcraft are unanimous regarding the position of witchcraft theorists on women, but the focus on women itself has not been challenged.¹¹³ The analysis of T.P's *Cas gan Gythraul* does contradict the female emphasis as it has shown that the objects of criticism were the masculine 'Dewiniaid,' 'Swyngyfareddwyr,' and 'dynion hypsys.' Apps & Gow also draw attention to masculine references in the *Malleus*

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p29.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p37.

¹¹¹Thomas, *Diary*, p65.

¹¹²Blécourt, 'Witch-doctors', p35.

¹¹³Apps & Gow, *Male Witches*, p97.

Maleficarum. It is explained that *malificius* and its feminine version *maleficia*, came to denote a person who committed evil deed by means of magic. The feminine plural *Maleficarum* in the title would seem to suggest a belief that all witches were female, but throughout the text both feminine and masculine forms of *maleficius* are used. For example, the first line refers to witches in the masculine form *maleficos*. There are also many other references to *malefici* (masculine plural) and *maleficae* (feminine plural), sometimes in the same sections of the text which would indicate that men were also conceptualised as witches.¹¹⁴

Additionally, Jean Bodin's *De la demonomanie des sorciers* also deployed masculine plurals and singulars, unless the specific subject references are female witches. For example, his first chapter begins, 'Sorcier est celuy qui par moyens Diaboliques sciemment s'efforce de parvenir a quelque chose' (a witch is one who knowingly tries to do something by diabolical means).¹¹⁵ This correlates to the wider implications of witchcraft forwarded by demonologists, which encompassed conjurer, enchanter, diviner, and sorceres who work with the Devil, by the term witchcraft. In connection to this is T.P's use of the comprehensive term 'Dewinio' which has been shown to encompass masculine and feminine form of bewitchment - *rheibio*, as well as denoting various magical practices such as charming, blessing, enchanting, and prophecising (see chapter 1). The analysis of such discourse demonstrates a 'readiness' to acknowledge the possibility of male witches, and the existence of a masculine type of witchcraft and magic, and as Apps and Gow attest, it also provides a means of introducing 'some methodological rigour to the discussion of gender and witchcraft.'¹¹⁶ Moreover, the language of T.P emphasises the need to adopt an inclusive view of witchcraft which would ultimately illuminate the various neglects of witchcraft historiography, like the male witch.

This can then be incorporated in a study of cunning-folk, who occupy contrary yet comparative positions in terms of gender and witchcraft. The majority of cunning-folk were male,- Davies calculates roughly some two-thirds,¹¹⁷ which is almost level with the statistics regarding female witches. Moreover, Davies highlights that the source material 'reveals frustratingly little about female status in this respect.' For example, there is no mention of the

¹¹⁴Ibid., p4.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p106.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p107.

¹¹⁷Davies, *Cunning-folk*, p69.

social status of cunning-women in the records for early modern Essex.¹¹⁸ There are a few scant references in Welsh materials. T.P divulges the ‘hanes fenyw hysbys’ (history of a wise woman) who apparently bewitched, or cast a spell on a troublesome neighbour which caused him to feel faint (lewygu) and he subsequently found himself transported to another village.¹¹⁹ Additionally, an eighteenth-century ballad recites the conversation of two companions ‘ynghylch Alis Y ddewines o blwyf tregaion yn Sir fon.’ She is described as ‘wraig lesol ragorol i’w chael, cyfarwyddyd yn fynych i’r gwyh ag i’r gwael.’¹²⁰ People consult her ‘Dros Anifeiliaid a’i hunaint,’ or for ‘hanes eu harian.’ Her ‘gwrthia’ (miracles) were learnt from ‘un Elspeth hên ddewines o felin Hirdresaig,’¹²¹ but no other personal refernces are made to either women. What can be gleaned however, is that women constituted a ‘sizeable minority of cunning-folk.’¹²² Robin Briggs has noted the prevalence of women witch-doctors in Lorraine,¹²³ a comparable situation to Icelandic witches. Both examples reflect a variation to the typical European pattern, but Wales offers the sharpest contradiction to this model because the essence of its witchcraft beliefs incorporated antithetical beliefs and practices. Thus current trends and conceptions need to be re-evaluated. As Briggs argues, a truly rounded picture of witchcraft must incorporate the ‘complex world of village suspicions, threats and counter magic.’¹²⁴

Research into gender relations and the contrary experiences of witchcraft in Wales contributes to witchcraft research by questioning established models and offering new lines of enquiry. The uniqueness of the Welsh experience implores scholars to reconsider previous assumptions about witchcraft practices and ideas. It shows that demonological conceptions and witchcraft practices had a consistency that extended well beyond the period of trials, thus disputing the supposed demise of the demonological debate and diabolical witchcraft ideas in the seventeenth century. It also redefines the debate on gender, highlighting the significance of male practitioners in the spheres of witchcraft and magic. The exceptional nature of Welsh witchcraft

¹¹⁸Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p71.

¹¹⁹T.P *Cas gan Gythraul*, p28.

¹²⁰Ballad No.138 , Richard Hughes. Tr: ‘Alis the wise woman from tregaion in Anglesey,’ ‘The most beneficial woman to have/around, you can consult her on good and bad matters.’

¹²¹Tr: ‘for animals and themselves,’ ‘history of their money,’ ‘one Elspeth, an old wise woman from Hirdresaig mill.’

¹²²Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p80.

¹²³Robin Briggs, ‘Circling the Devil: Witch-Doctors and Magical Healers in Early Modern Lorraine’ , in Clark (ed.) *Languages of Witchcraft*, pp161-177.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, p161.

challenges us to embrace an inclusive view of witchcraft that includes beneficial and harmful magic, either in connection with demonology or not. This queries the validity of the traditional definition of witchcraft as harmful magic as a means of gaining a full understanding of witchcraft and related beliefs, and also introduces the importance of cunning-folk and their function in the continuation and indulgence of witchcraft beliefs. The Welsh experience thus provides a modus for studying witchcraft beliefs and practices sufficiently, and effectively as an 'integral part of particular socio-cultural settings.'¹²⁵

¹²⁵Giswilt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate', p183.

Conclusion.

By adopting a broader approach to witchcraft research this dissertation has shown that not only did the Devil play a major role within Welsh witchcraft beliefs, but he was also a significant character in the general alternative belief structure evident in eighteenth-century society. Witchcraft has seldom been studied for the period after the trials, yet witchcraft beliefs continued to flourish in Welsh popular culture, as did the popular resort to magical practices. Using Wales as a case study has proved fruitful to witchcraft research. It is a country that has been overlooked by witchcraft historiography because of the insufficient number of trials it experienced, and mainly for this reason, Wales addresses many of the neglected aspects of the witchcraft debate, and has brought to light various themes and new avenues of thought, which challenge the ways in which we think about, and model our conceptions of witchcraft.

The varying degrees of prosecution requires a more specific examination of the many aspects of different sorts of trials, indeed the lack of witch-trials. Gijswijt-Hofstra argues that large scale witch trials require demonological views on witchcraft, like the pact with the Devil, and particularly the nocturnal gatherings of the witches Sabbath.¹ Suggett maintains that notions of the pact with the Devil and the Sabbath were not present in Welsh witchcraft cases,² but given the insignificant number of trials, this is not a general representation as this dissertation has shown. The central argument of T.P is that conjuration, and the common magical and superstitious practices originated with the Devil, and his text includes a significant section on perceptions of the nightly 'cyfarfod cythreulig' where the 'Diafol a hwythau [meaning conjurors, witches, and magicians] yn cyfarfod.'³ Although this is an intellectual viewpoint, evidence provided by folklore accounts of witches and their activities suggests that such demonological views penetrated into popular culture, and notions of a compact with Satan and attendance to the Sabbath are evident in popular ideas about witchcraft. Therefore, the presence of demonological ideas was not a necessary precursor for witchcraft prosecutions.

The presence of witchcraft beliefs is an essential consideration, whether in combination with demonological elements or not. What this dissertation has uncovered is the alternative belief structure evident in Welsh popular culture which permitted the Devil a central role, alongside

¹ Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate', p187.

² Suggett, 'Witchcraft Dynamics', p86.

³ T.P, *Cas gan Gythraul*, p18. Tr: 'Devilish/Satanic meetings where they and the Devil meet.'

many other supernatural entities such as fairies, apparitions, and witches. The immediate presence of these beings, and their intervention in everyday human affairs was generally acknowledged. Yet their existence was complemented by society's abilities to sustain them, and to counteract any misfortune they threatened to bestow on the community. These were achieved through various symbolic, physical, and linguistic rituals such as making the sign of the cross, leaving provisions for the fairies, invoking prayers or blessings, or recouring to the local *dyn hysbys*.

The *dyn hysbys*, or cunning-man was an essential component of witchcraft beliefs and practices, largely due to his significant role in counteracting or curing bewitchments. He was also sought after for help and advice with everyday problems like illnesses, lost property, and difficulties with domestic and rural labour. The cunning-man therefore fulfilled an important social role as regulator of the community's general misfortune, and mediator between the witch and her victim. An examination of cunning-folk addresses another equally important yet underdeveloped aspect of research, that is their role in the continuity of witchcraft beliefs and practices, thus offering a more 'inclusive view' of witchcraft.⁴ This can shed light on the theme of repression and tolerance. The role of cunning-folk in the process of diagnosing and curing witchcraft provided society with a mode to deal with witchcraft without prosecution. At a popular level witchcraft could be tolerated since adequate recourse was available.

Therefore, actions in relation to witchcraft need to be 'more systematically studied' in relation to their relevant social and cultural belief systems. As Gijswijt-Hofstra argues, related to the theme of tolerance is the theme of rationality and superstition.⁵ Beliefs in witchcraft, the Devil, and other related phenomena have been shown to have been part of a general superstitious belief culture that characterised eighteenth-century Welsh popular culture. This belief system allowed the regular intervention of the Devil, fairies, and witches in human affairs because it was such an intrinsic part of everyday life. Popular culture provided the necessary means of protection against the possible dangers posed by these figures. Such protective methods had a variety of forms, symbolic, ritualistic, linguistic, and so could be easily effected in any social situation. Moreover, this dissertation has shown how official religion inadvertently reinforced this belief structure by emphasising the reality of the Devil, and supernatural forces. Popular culture combined these religious influences with its established beliefs and customs, which created a

⁴ Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate', p189. De Blécourt, 'Witch-doctors', p205-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p191-3.

distinctive popular religion incorporated within a broader superstitious culture that centred on magical beliefs and practices.

Consequently, focusing on the Devil and related magical and superstitious beliefs in eighteenth-century Wales has covered many important areas of research. One is the diffusion of various demonological ideas by a consideration of the significance of the Devil in superstitious beliefs, and popular ideas about the witchcraft. Attention has been drawn to the themes of continuity and toleration, thus expanding research beyond the period of trials and the preoccupation with the theme of the witch-hunt. Furthermore, this research has been extended to a consideration of the 'internal rationality' of witchcraft and magical beliefs by studying superstition as a rational characteristic of Welsh popular culture, thus helping us to understand witchcraft ideas as part of an ordered system of beliefs.⁶ As Davies argues, researching witchcraft beyond the early eighteenth century helps to reveal the ways in which wider social factors influenced patterns of prosecutions, and also provides a better definition of the diversity of associated beliefs.⁷

One particular belief element that has come to light and which provides a basis for further research is fairylore. Fairies regularly intruded into human affairs, and fear of them encouraged the proper social behaviour, and reminded people of their responsibilities. In this instance, fairy beliefs were a means of teaching and encouraging proper social relations. However, fairylore was also a significant element of demonic and witchcraft beliefs. As Pócs argues, fairy beliefs were a dominant motif in representations of the demonic witches' world of the dead.⁸ Welsh sources revealed a definite connection between fairies and the Devil, most notably with regards to their origins, which is also paralleled in Scottish folklore. Moreover, an analysis of various demonic experiences and popular witchcraft accounts conveyed significant traces of traditional beliefs about fairies. As Oldridge argues, the role of fairy beliefs in European witchcraft is a subject that awaits fuller investigation,⁹ and a study of Welsh witchcraft beliefs has shown the possibilities of such research. One particular line of enquiry that has emerged is the role of fairy beliefs in formulating popular conceptions about gypsies. Fairy beliefs were a means of expressing any

⁶ *Ibid.*, p193.

⁷ Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p213.

⁸ Pócs, 'Witches Sabbat', p133.

⁹ Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, p10.

fears or anxieties Welsh people may have felt about gypsies, and they offer an insight into the habits and customs of these travelling people.

Moreover, as Davies points out, gender relations is an area which could undoubtedly benefit from a wider 'temporal analysis' of witchcraft.¹⁰ Indeed gender is the most prominent theme that has emerged from this study. It is significant to the culture of prophecy that flourished in early modern Europe prior to the Reformation. Prophecy, which was communicated through dreams or visions, was a typically female domain which relates to the stereotype of female sanctity, as well as the connection between prophecy and witchcraft, which was also projected on the female. However, the visions examined in this study were experienced by male seers which brings into question the archetypal figure of the female prophet. It also conflicts with the current idea of the 'end of prophecy' which stipulates that visionary and prophetic experiences were suppressed by the forces of Reformation.¹¹ Wales, however, continued to develop this prophetic trend well into the eighteenth century, which again highlights the importance of continuity, not only with regards to witchcraft but to other conjoined beliefs. The dreamlike experiences examined in this study conveyed a variety of popular and elite beliefs about the Devil, hell, witchcraft and fairies, which demonstrates the fruits of paying closer attention to the dissemination of various kinds of witchcraft and demonological ideas 'among different socio-cultural strata.'¹² They also reveal the relevance of sleep, and sleep disorders to a study of witchcraft. Sleep as an avenue for historical inquiry is yet to be developed, yet it is extremely beneficial to an investigation of witchcraft as it helps to explain why some experiences were interpreted as acts of witchcraft, which gives them a dimension of reality which calls for more serious consideration.

Furthermore, the significance of gender to witchcraft can be better understood by adopting a broader definition of witchcraft. Taking into account only harmful or diabolical witchcraft leads to a serious deficient insight into both witchcraft beliefs and gender relations. Witchcraft in Wales is unique because of the central role it issued to cunning-folk as opposed to witches. An examination of Welsh witchcraft dynamics underlines the importance of magical practitioners in witchcraft beliefs, thus advocating a comprehensive definition of witchcraft that

¹⁰Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, p213.

¹¹Niccoli, 'End of Prophecy', p668. Oldridge, *Devil in England*, p105-6.

¹²Giswilt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate', p189.

includes counter-magic, or white magic as practised by cunning-folk, diviners, or witch-doctors, alongside various other types of magical beliefs and activities that may or may not involve demonological elements.¹³

Gender dimensions can then be placed within this broader context to gain a more accurate sense of their relation to witchcraft beliefs. This has drawn attention to numerous ‘blind spots’ in witchcraft historiography, such as the exclusion of male witches, and the marginal place of cunning-folk.¹⁴ Again this relates back to the problem of definition. Early modern understandings of witchcraft encompassed both male and female witches, and key texts like the *Malleus Maleficarum* contained masculine and feminine references to witches. This conception of witchcraft has paled into insignificance in the face of the high percentage of women executed for witchcraft offences. Yet a study of Wales, which does not comply with the general pattern of prosecutions encourages us to refer back to original definitions of witchcraft when formulating our own. This coincides with the broader implications of witchcraft as presented by early modern demonologists, which embraced conjuror, diviner, and sorcerer, in league with the Devil, in the term ‘witchcraft.’ Scrutiny of such terms is vital for a comprehensive outlook on witchcraft beliefs and practices which have proved to have involved diverse types of magical activities, harmful as well as beneficial.

The European witchcraft debate has much to gain by taking a more extended approach to witchcraft research. The findings of Welsh witchcraft research demonstrates the possibilities of an ‘inclusive view’ of witchcraft by bringing to light previously neglected and undeveloped themes. By concentrating on the Devil this dissertation has demonstrated how the Devil was central to witchcraft beliefs, which in essence were part of a much wider cultural belief system. This offers an insight into matters of ‘internal rationality’ which historians are now becoming more sensitive to. Additionally, the ‘inclusive’ perspective of witchcraft in Wales has required a study of learned demonology, and demonological texts which as Clark points out, has become relatively neglected in witchcraft research.¹⁵ T.P.’s *Cas gan Gythraul* has proved extremely insightful into contemporary demonological ideas and popular magic. Its unique discourse has offered a fresh understanding of contemporary witchcraft beliefs, most notably through the use of the wide

¹³Ibid., p185.

¹⁴Apps & Gow, *Male Witches*, p3. De Blécourt, ‘Witch-doctors’, p205.

¹⁵Gijswijt-Hofstra, ‘European Witchcraft Debate’, p189.

ranging term *Dewinitio*, which has been shown to denote masculine and feminine forms of bewitchment, alongside various types of magical practices and superstitions. All these findings strongly advocate a more integrated and comprehensive approach to studying witchcraft. Only then can we gain a clearer understanding of the nature of witchcraft beliefs. Then we may find ourselves in the position of being able to consider witchcraft beliefs as integral to the 'socio-cultural systems of which they are part.'¹⁶

¹⁶Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'European Witchcraft Debate', p191.

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