

IMAGES AND IMAGINATIONS

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PERSPECTIVES ON BRITAIN AND SCANDINAVIA



Edited by

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The front page photo is of drying racks for fish on Ringholmen, Møre and Romsdal, Norway, taken by Brigitte Guénier.

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Foreword

THIS collection of essays is a selection of the contributions made to a seminar series run by the Scandinavian Studies department in the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures at the University of Edinburgh over the last four years. The aim of the seminar series, and indeed this book, has been to focus on aspects of the British presence in Scandinavia and, conversely, the Scandinavian presence in Britain, in factual history as well as in the mind. Thus the contributions range from concrete events such as the Scandinavian settlement of Britain during the Viking Age and how this is manifested in place-names to the chilling parallels between the 17th century witch trials in the north of Norway and those in Scotland. Another article presents the baroque Norwegian poet Petter Dass, who along with Edvard Grieg had Scots in his ancestry and possibly in his cultural ballast too. Further, we hear how the British built up an interest and a scientific presence in the Arctic as explorers, and how during the 19th century Scandinavia became quite literally a hunting ground for the British upper-classes in the early phases of modern tourism. This again both parallels and interacts with the Victorian cultural curiosity about the Norse past, which was used in a convoluted way to explain and indeed justify the contemporary prominence of Britain. In two articles we hear how, in the opposite direction, Hans Christian Andersen developed his novel writing under the inspiration of Sir Walter Scott and Scott's landscapes, and how Norwegian scholars were influential in the promotion of Celtic studies in Britain at the same time as they stimulated awareness in Norway about Norse contact with the Celtic world. The final article considers the conspicuously different philosophies that have underpinned attitudes to outdoor education and outdoor activities in Norway and Britain over the last century.

We hope that this wide range of articles will make a contribution to the developing picture of the long standing and mutually enriching relationship between Britain and Scandinavia.

Edinburgh, October 2007
Arne Kruse and Peter Graves

Witches in Scotland and Northern Norway: Two Case Studies

Liv Helene Willumsen

I Introduction

THIS article¹ will focus on historical witch trials from Scotland and from northern Norway, both areas where the witch-hunt in the 16th and 17th centuries was intense. Both the Scottish and the north Norwegian witchcraft trials form an integral part of a European phenomenon. Still, the witch trials in these areas have some characteristic features, distinguishing them from the Continental witch trials. The Scottish witch-hunt is remarkable in the British Isles for its high number of accused persons and its heavy weight of demonological confessions, as documented in *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft* (Goodare et al 2003). The witch trials in northern Norway, particularly in the northernmost district, Finnmark, are special in a national as well as international context, bringing elements of Continental demonology for the first time to the top of Europe (Willumsen 1984, 1994). The court records from both countries show an extraordinary cruelty in the persecution of witches, for instance by extensive use of torture and, in the case of Finnmark, even young children are found among the accused persons.

The source material in total is large. As my primary sources for this article I have chosen two witchcraft cases from the year 1662, one from Bute in Scotland and one from Vardø, a small town in Finnmark. By close-reading and discussion of these sources I will point out some similarities and differences between the witch-hunt in Scotland and northern Norway. By the 1660s, the witch-hunt in both countries had lasted more than fifty years and with this decade we are entering the last wave of panic both in Bute and

1 I would like to thank Julian Goodare at the School of History and Classics, University of Edinburgh and Peter Graves and Arne Kruse in Scandinavian Studies, University of Edinburgh, for fruitful comments to this chapter. Translations of Norwegian historical sources into English are by Katjana Edwardsen.

in Finnmark. I would like to pose five simple – though central – questions to the primary sources:

- a) How was a person stigmatised as a witch?
- b) What were the charges against the women?
- c) Who were the witnesses – if there were witnesses?
- d) What did the accused persons confess – if they did confess?
- e) What was the verdict – no sentence at all unless verdict guilty?

These questions concentrate on central elements within witchcraft research and might contribute to answering questions related to interrogation, legal procedures and the mentality of the period, as revealed during the confessions.

To answer these questions I will focus on the discourse as well as on the content of what is said, looking, for instance, at the images and notions of the confessions. A discourse analysis will concentrate on what was said during the hearing and how this might be interpreted. It is important to hold apart the discourse of the women, the judges and the witnesses, as these represent varying positions that we need to pay attention to. This approach connects with the last two decades' growing interest in detailed text research on witchcraft documents, for instance the studies by Diane Purkiss (1996) and Marion Gibson (1999).

My other field of interest is the content of the confessions, especially notions related to conceptions of witchcraft. This field is important in a comparative light, giving clues to a comparison of the main features found in the Scottish and north Norwegian material. For the Scottish material several historical studies discussing the witch trials in detail have been published in the last three decades: there are, for instance, the studies by Christina Lerner (2000), Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts (2000), Julian Goodare (2002), Stuart Macdonald (2002) and P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (2005). For the Finnmark material, articles in English have been published by Liv Helene Willumsen (1997) and Rune Hagen (1999). In addition, a study in Norwegian has been published by Liv Helene Willumsen (1984, 1994) and articles have been published by Kirsten Bergh (1960), Einar Niemi (1982), and Rune Hagen (1998, 2003a, 2003b). A dissertation has been written about all the witch trials in Norway by Hans Eyvind Næss (1982). With reference to the Norwegian witch-hunt as a whole Næss has published the article 'The Criminological Context' (1993) and Gunnar W. Knutsen has written the article 'Norwegian witchcraft trials: a reassessment' (2003).

II The witch-hunt in Scotland and northern Norway

The choice of Scotland and northern Norway has been made partly due to similarities in the location of the areas, the structures in the communities

and common people's way of life, partly due to striking similarities in the content of the accused women's and men's confessions. In the following I would like to give the reasons for my choice of comparable geographical areas.

Scotland has an area of 78,782 square kilometres while Finnmark has an area of 48,689 square kilometres: in comparison approximately 3:2. The population of Scotland in the 17th century was about one million, of which 10% lived in towns, while the population in Finnmark was 3,000, which was 0.8 % of Norway's population (Næss 1982:32). While at least 3,837 persons were accused of witchcraft in Scotland (Goodare et al 2003), the number in Finnmark was at least 138 persons. The number of trials *per capita* was considerably higher in Finnmark than elsewhere in Norway. Of all the 850 Norwegian witchcraft trials, 16% took place in Finnmark, together with 31% of all death sentences (Næss 1982:32). If one compares Scotland and the county of Finnmark as to death sentences, in Scotland the percentage of death sentences in the material is 67, based on 305 trials, in Finnmark, this percentage is 64, although a number based on a better source coverage. The percentage of death sentences is thus very high in both areas. Another parallel is the alternation between panics – a high number of linked trials concentrated to a couple of years – followed by some quiet years, a characteristic feature seen throughout the whole period of witch-hunt. The same pattern is documented in most European witch trials. Most of the accusations and death sentences were related to panics, concentrated series of trials lasting from some months up to a year or more. A marked predominance of women distinguishes witchcraft trials in general. In Scotland one sixth of the accused persons were men, while in Finnmark one fifth of the accused were men. This proportion is much the same as we find in witchcraft material from other European countries.

However, the main reason for choosing Scotland and Finnmark as the two geographical areas for comparison has to do with interesting similarities between the content of the witchcraft records in the two areas. The most important similarity is related to demonology, a European 'science' centred round the devil and his subjects, in particular the women who went into his service. The influence of demonology on historical witch trials is discussed *inter alia* in Liv Helene Willumsen's *Trollkvinne i nord* [Witch in the North] (Willumsen 1994: 17). Demonological traits are frequently found in Continental witch trials. In the court records the confessions of the accused women may contain demonological elements, of which the idea of the devil's pact is particularly important. In Norway, the demonological elements are not found in the southern parts of the country,

and it is an enigma how these ideas came to the very far north. In the British Isles, one finds a similar situation, as the demonological core and the notion of the devil's pact are strong elements in the Scottish witchcraft trials but rarely found further south in the English material, as shown for instance by Jim Sharpe in his study *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (2001).

As compared to the rest of Europe, both Scotland and Finnmark have distinctive traits due to peripheral location and special ethnic conditions: a long coast line and closeness to the sea, small-holdings and fishing as livelihood in the communities along the coast, and ethnic minorities in both countries using another language than the majority. Neither of the minority languages was understood by the majority population. In Scotland the Highlanders used the the Gaelic language, in Finnmark the Sami people spoke their Sami language. In the 16th and 17th centuries the Sami had a reputation throughout Europe for being well versed in the art of magic.

In Finnmark, the marginal location of the trials in relation to legal centres gave those who enforced local law and order a free hand compared with trials held close to central authorities. However, the bottom-up view argued for by several researchers on European witchcraft, where the local angle and the pressure from the witches' neighbours solely is stressed (Briggs 2002; Barry et al. 1998), does not seem to hold true for Finnmark. In her study *Statens rolle i trolldomsprosessene i Danmark og Norge på 15- og 1600-tallet* [The role of the state in witchcraft trials in Denmark and Norway during the 16th and 17th centuries], Ellen Janette Alm concludes that the state apparently played an important role during the period 1617-1682, especially due to legislation and judicial practice within the two countries of the kingdom Denmark-Norway. While in Denmark the judges of *landting* [the local courts] slowed down the trial intensity, the Danish dominated authorities in Norway seem to have been pushing the Norwegian witch-hunt, which in the longer term created a propitious climate for continuing the witch trials throughout the 17th century (Alm 2000). This would especially have an effect in the far north of Norway, the area of Finnmark. The situation in Scotland was to a certain extent similar to that of Finnmark, as a top-down process seemed to influence what was going on locally. While Christina Larner in her book *Enemies of God* took a top-down, social-control view of witch-hunting, emphasising that the witch-hunt originated from a very high level (2000, orig. 1981), Julian Goodare in his more recent article 'Witch-hunting and the Scottish state' (2002) takes a position in between the top-down and bottom-up process. Goodare argues that witch-hunting was 'as much a top-down process as it was a bottom-up one. It is in fact wrong to see these two alternatives as mutually exclusive: rather we should

recognise the harmonious co-operation between kirk session identifying witches and privy council authorising trials' (Goodare 2002:134).

As for power structures in Finnmark during this period, Einar Niemi draws a dividing line between two 'classes': on the one hand the common people and, on the other, merchants and officialdom (Niemi 1983:220). In Bute, too, a certain tension between different socio-economical groups can be assumed.

The most interesting link, however, between the two areas is a direct personal connection, a Scottish connection that might have been important for the Finnmark witchcraft trials, namely the Scotsman John Cunningham, who was the district governor [Norwegian: *lensherre*] in Finnmark 1620-1651, appointed by the Danish king (Hagen 2003b). Cunningham held this position during three decades of witch-hunting in Finnmark and he might have been an influential person in the planting of demonological ideas among the local government and the common people living there. During his period in office 52 witch trials took place in Finnmark, of which 41 resulted death sentences.

III Source material

The Bute document from 1662, which is the basis for my Scottish case study in this article, is published as 'Papers related to witchcraft 1662-1677' (Macphail 1920). This is a verbatim transcription of records connected to charges of witchcraft in the parish of Rothesay, Bute. For Scottish witchcraft sources as a whole, *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft* (Goodare 2003) has catalogued and made information about the Scottish source material available online. In addition, Christina Larner published a source book on the Scottish witchcraft material (Larner 2005). Most of the Scottish sources are stored in the National Archives of Scotland, in particular the Books of Adjournal, the Circuit Court Minutes, the dittay rolls from Circuit Court, and boxes of process notes from judiciary proceedings.

The primary source from Finnmark 1662 is the court records of Finnmark [Norwegian: *Tingbok for Finnmark*]. The source material covering the witch-hunt in Finnmark as a whole dates back to the period 1593-1692. It comprises trial minutes gleaned from local court records and the Court of Appeal [Norwegian: *Lagting*] protocols, as well as information from the Vardøhus district accounts [Norwegian: *lensregnskap*]. The court records represent the bulk of the source material, although the length of trial records may vary. An abbreviated version of some of the trials in the court records was copied by Hans H. Lillienkiold, the district governor [Norwegian: *amtman*] in Finnmark during the period 1684 till 1701 and stored in the

National Archives in Copenhagen (RL, Thott 950, 2). A transcription of Lillienkiold's document was published in 1998 by Rune Hagen and Per Einar Sparboe (Hagen and Sparboe 1998). The Norwegian trial used in my case study is found in Lillienkiold's document but in an abbreviated form compared to the court records.

IV Margaret NcLevin, Bute 1662

The national witchcraft panic in Scotland 1661-1662 has been studied by several historians. In his article 'The great Scottish witch hunt of 1661-1662', Brian P. Levack writes: 'During 1661 and 1662 Scotland experienced one of the largest witch hunts in its history. Within the space of sixteen months no fewer than 660 persons were publicly accused of various acts of sorcery and diabolism' (Levack 1980:90). P.G. Maxwell-Stuart has recently dealt with this panic in his book *An Abundance of Witches. The Great Scottish Witch-Hunt* (2005).

Margaret NcLevin was one of six women arrested and questioned in Bute in 1662, accused of the crime of witchcraft. The original Bute document on witchcraft is kept by His Grace the Duke of Argyll and is currently unavailable to researchers. A transcribed version was published in *Highland Papers* in 1920. The Bute document on witchcraft is a pre-trial document, probably intended to be read by members of the Privy Council in order to get a commission appointed for further trial of the accused women. Appointments of such commissions made it possible to have local court meetings around the country for trying witches (Wasser 2003). In his article 'Witch-hunting and the Scottish state' Julian Goodare clarifies the general procedure for the prosecution of witch-hunting. The Witchcraft Statute of 1563 brought witchcraft within the jurisdiction of the secular criminal courts, so the governmental institutions responsible for witch-hunting were those of the criminal justice system. Goodare divides the procedure for witch-hunting into five stages. In his article he especially explores the third stage, 'a decision by those responsible for that court whether to hold a criminal trial' (Goodare 2002:123). The initial stages were, firstly the recognition that this act should be classed as a crime and the identification of a suspect, secondly that the community decided that the suspect was to receive a criminal trial. Even if governmental authorities during the first two stages had been involved with the case in the local courts of the church, the third stage was the point at which central government became involved: 'the decision to hold a criminal trial was made centrally' (Goodare 2002:124). And here is where the commissions are actualized: 'The structure of central criminal justice shifted during the early adult years of James VI, after about

1585 [...] Commissions of Justiciary grew rapidly, and would soon come to dominate the witch-hunt' (Goodare 2002:126). Such a commission had to be appointed by the Register of Privy Council in order to try Margaret NcLevin and the other women of Bute suspected of witchcraft.

In the course of one week, from 26 January till 2 February 1662, Margaret NcLevin was intensely questioned by the minister, the provost and other prominent men in Bute. She was number three in the series of six women arrested in this chain, her name being mentioned by both the two other women arrested, Janet Morison and Margret NcWilliam.

How was Margaret NcLevin stigmatised as a witch? Some witches had pre-existing reputations, others did not. To be rumoured to be a person who knows sorcery was an important element in who came into the spotlight as witches. Margaret NcLevin had such a reputation spread by neighbours, both related to healing and maleficium, the latter denoting the practice of sorcery with evil intent. When performing her skills she used physical objects in addition to formulas. It is mentioned that she had 'a pock of witchcraft', which she placed close to the person she would like to cast a spell on. It seems clear that she was a respected performer of sorcery in the community and was considered a cunning person – for instance, she knew how to cure children of dangerous diseases.

The evil eye is a charm and a folklore image known on several continents and also found in the Gaelic area, as documented in John Gregorson Campbell's *Gaelic Otherworld* (Black 2005:201-205). When Margaret NcLevin offered help to a person who had been exposed to the evil eye, this person allegedly answered, 'he would have none of the devils cures which was her quarrel with him' (Macphail 1920:24). The name of the devil was easily connected to NcLevin's person. One of the other accused women, Janet Morison, said that when Margaret NcLevin threw a spell on a man, she addressed the devil in this way, 'quhilk finley mcConochie got he is little the worse of it, it would be better to be doubled' (Macphail 1920:25). This quotation was made by a woman – Janet Morison – who was present during the questioning of Margaret NcLevin in connection with a pock of witchcraft. Morison put in the stable of Finley McConochie. The quotation was rendered as indirect speech and the utterance has to be interpreted as Janet Morison's proof that NcLevin is as much a witch as she herself is.

During the questioning the witnesses articulated their belief that the accused could perform sorcery in an effective way: Margaret NcLevin knew how to cast evil spells, but she also knew healing. Often these two activities were combined with one another, in that one person who had been the victim of evil spells had a desire to get rid of them by healing. This manner

of thinking by NcLevin's contemporaries is supported by examining the narrative structures of the Bute document. The narration supports, by the lack of distancing literary devices such as, for instance, irony, the kind of attitude the scribe had towards the story being told. The scribe was convinced of the effectiveness of Margaret NcLevin's sorcery and showed no scepticism. On the contrary, when she confessed that her charm 'proved effectually and did good to any she applied it to', this is rendered without any distance. She also confessed that she knew a charm that counteracted the evil eye, 'with which she charmed both men and beasts' and that this 'proved effectually and did good to any she applied it to' (Macphail 1920:5).

Quarrelling was often related to threats against neighbours and acquaintances, and when these threats came true, the common understanding was that the woman knew how to perform effective sorcery and she therefore was considered guilty in sickness and death. A connection made in retrospect in order to find a logical explanation of sickness and death. Several historians have underlined the importance neighbours' quarrels have had for the persecution of witches, among them Alan Macfarlane (1970) and Robin Briggs (2002). The combination of having a reputation as sorcerer and quarrelling with neighbours seems to be dangerous during the period of witch-hunt.

Denunciation by another accused person was a frequently used method for the authorities to get to know the names of other suspected witches. When a person was accused of witchcraft, certain standard questions related to the demonological doctrine were frequently asked. One of the questions had to do with the witches' meeting: whether they had participated at a witches' meeting and the names of the other participants. If the woman answered this question, the witch-hunters got the names of new suspects. Therefore to be mentioned by an accused person as taking part in such a meeting was a very significant piece of information and ominous for the person denounced.

The first woman arrested in Bute, Janet Morison, mentioned that Margaret NcLevin was seen in company with the devil at Bute Key at a witches' meeting. Then NcLevin was mentioned by Margaret NcWilliam as 'dancing upon the hill of Kilmory with severall other witches' (Macphail 1920:19). The same woman some days later 'added farther that at the meeting about hallowday last she saw ther Nclevine' (Macphail 1920:19). Through the questioning of the first two arrested women we see that central elements related to demonology have come to the fore, sufficient to cause the arrest of Margaret NcLevin. She has been seen together with the devil at a well-known gathering place for witches, dancing together with other

witches on another occasion, and finally seen on a calendar day when the witches traditionally made an appointment with one another (Halloween, 31st October, Eve of All Saints' Day). The women arrested in Bute were repeatedly confronted with each other during their imprisonment as a part of the questioning with the intention of extracting more information. The accused also had to convince the interrogators, as pointed out by Lyndal Roper in her study of witch trials in Germany: 'She had to provide those details which only she could know' (Roper 2004:52).

*

Margaret NcLevin was accused of charming and casting spells. Two people witnessed against her, both people she knew. The first accusation had to do with weather magic. John McFersoune, a friend, gave his testimony the same day as Margaret NcLevin was arrested. He was one of the crew of a boat which had been endangered and his narration was given after the episode had taken place. NcLevin's statement was interpreted with retroactive force and connected with an accident, or, as here, only an 'almost-accident'. John McFersoune went together with some other men on a trip first to the island of Arran on the west coast of Scotland and then on to Ireland. They were struck by a storm lasting three or four hours, 'quhich drove them to hazard of the losse of Lyfe and boat' (Macphail 1920:5). After their return from Ireland, John McFersoune was sitting one evening next to Margaret at the fire-side and she said to him, 'give me some thing Johne for ye are in my common' (Macphail 1920:5), meaning that he was indebted to her because she allegedly was the one who helped him that night out in the storm. This does not sound like a serious witness proof since, after all, the boat and the crew managed to sail to Ireland and back again without any loss. However, Scottish witchcraft law did not require actual harm to have been done, unlike English, therefore this was not an unusual charge.

The other testimony against NcLevin came after she had been imprisoned for a week. The witness was John Roy Hundman, an acquaintance, who declared that a man had received a magical formula from Margaret for the sake of his health and that he himself was offered a charm from her, an offer which he had rejected. This accusation had to do with her reputation as a cunning person. Again the charges did not seem to be serious. Nobody died as a consequence of her activity. Only one of two testimonies had to do with harmful sorcery.

*

The confessions from the accused in witchcraft trials are interesting in that they might give inside information about the conceptions of witchcraft held

by the accused person herself. Margaret NcLevin gave two short confessions in the first two days of her imprisonment, with information about her sorcery skills. The third day she gave one confession in the morning before the provost, the bailiff and the mayor, and one in the afternoon containing charms and traditional folk magic. Finally on the fourth day she gave a declaration filled with demonological elements. There is an escalating direction to her confessions, starting with folk magic and ending within the more dangerous field of demonological witchcraft, a direction no doubt initiated by the questioners. Margaret NcLevin herself must have been of the opinion that the questioners were interested in hearing the charm of the evil eye, which she used to cure, because she confessed to knowing this just after her imprisonment before any charges had been brought against her. She also repeated the formula in 'Yrlish' [Gaelic], thus strengthening the signals in the text that she possessed authority as a cunning person.

In addition to the charm for the evil eye, Margaret NcLevin knew a charm for 'wristing or brising', which she rendered in Gaelic as well. This oral charm was used together with a magic object – she spoke the words in addition to using this object. Joyce Miller says in her book *Magic and Witchcraft in Scotland*: 'The kind of advice that folk healers offered included the use of physical objects, actions and/or words' (Miller 2004:26). When Margaret NcLevin used it, 'she layd the charme in tallow or herbs and applied it' (Macphail 1920:6). She also knew a charm 'which keeps from mischance'; this too she repeated in 'Yrlish'.

According to the Bute document, NcLevin first spoke the words of the charms in Scottish and afterwards she was asked to repeat them in Gaelic. In other words, the repetition in Gaelic had nothing to do with the content of the charms since this was already known to the interrogators: it was done to underline the exotic, Gaelic as a language of magical power. Interestingly enough, the minister who was active during the interrogation had studied in Glasgow and knew Gaelic well enough to translate parts of the Scripture into Gaelic (FES, iv, 40).

The issue of otherness, which is a related issue to those mentioned above, emerges in the way Margaret NcLevin is portrayed. The question of 'us versus them' comes to the fore through the emphasis on her Gaelic language. The presence of Gaelic in her confession makes NcLevin more exotic than the other women imprisoned in Bute. This notion of otherness in the text is first established by the formulas of the charms and then reinforced by her use of the Gaelic language, a language which certainly not all the interrogators could understand. At this time Gaelic was a language used among the Highlanders in this area but not understood by the rest of the

population (Withers 1984, Bannerman 1983, Murison 1974).

Another dimension interesting to observe in the language of Margaret NcLevin's confession is the oral accent. A tendency to make persons and places recognizable to people living in a certain area, as well as the method of mentioning a specific year and a specific month when an event took place, are well known from oral tradition, not least from traditional stories. The effect is to bring a kind of 'certainty' into a fantastic story. The scribe is eager to treat all aspects of her speech as accurately as possible, to render her own words and expressions, thus giving a modern reader access to an interesting linguistic layer of the text. For instance, she used the magical number three – which is well-known from oral tradition – when she described how she made a drink from herbs: 'quhair of she administers drink to the child three severall tymes and heales it' (Macphail 1920:9). We also see examples of rhyme and repetition, e.g. in the phrase quoted below, 'eschewing speiking or meiting', where in addition the act of preparing sorcery is described in terms of a mystic, secret way of behaviour. The rhythm of oral discourse is also maintained in NcLevin's detailed explanation of picking a certain herb to be used for healing: 'takes a broch and layes upon the herbe and plucks up the samin throw the broch in the childs name and then brings it home eschewing speiking or meiting with any by the way' (ibid.). All the mentioned devices are important for oral charms, because the charms had to be memorable and learnt by heart by listening to the words alone.

The practice of healing is given full attention in the confession of Margaret NcLevin: what kind of plants she used and how the rituals functioned. She knew for instance a recipe for curing a feared disease called 'the Claick' (Black 2005:456, Carmichael 1900, iv:249-68). She could heal a sick child by using a special herb. The scribe was eager to write down details of her ritual, for instance when picking herbs, as mentioned above. When she used the brooch in this way, her ritual falls within a general category of magic called 'protection by encirclement' (Black 2005:89, 294, 351; 2005:738). Using herbs or plants as part of healing was frequent in Scotland, as in other countries (Miller 2004:29). The 'Claick' [Glack] is probably a lung disease for which there was no medical cure and the conviction that Margaret NcLevin was able to help made her a powerful person. The detailed description of her magical practice indicates that the scribe was convinced that he is dealing with a person respected as well as feared for her skills, a person able to heal human beings and animals, but also able to do harm to them.

The section of Margaret NcLevin's confession related to folk magic is based on individual skills and traditional rituals, whereas the demonological section has a different character. Here the woman gets her

power from the Evil One. The core of the demonological doctrine is the pact between the devil and the woman, enabling her to perform evil. In addition we see a collective notion of witchcraft. During the Bute interrogation, it seems that the focus of the questioners changes between the folkloric one and the demonological one between one hearing and another. While the first questionings are focused on traditional knowledge, especially related to healing and charming, 'the real stuff' is to be found in the conclusive demonological section. Joyce Miller states: 'There was a fine line between carrying out healing rituals – sometimes called charming – and witchcraft, the consequences of which could be very serious' (Miller 2004:31). The case of Margaret NcLevin is a good example of this. One might see in NcLevin's confession a sliding borderline between folk magic and demonology. By her way of mixing traditional magic into the story about what happened at the witches' meeting, two different conceptions of witchcraft are illustrated. Traditional magic is related to a single cunning person, who by means of her own skills – frequently by using oral charms and physical objects – is capable of performing sorcery for better or for worse, charming, healing and maleficium. She performs her magic on an individual basis. Demonology is related to a pact with the devil, through which a person promises to serve the Evil One and in return receives his services. The power to perform evil is obtained through this pact. Sorcery operations are collective operations and the witches' meeting – where the devil is present – is part of the picture. Sorcery is performed on a collective basis, and this kind of sorcery often has a broad range – it might affect a group of people, i.e. the crew of a ship or a whole community. But even if one might notice a kind of 'meeting point' between traditional charming and demonology in the confession, the demonological elements clearly come to the fore in the final stages of the questioning. It seems as though the interrogators are consciously moving in the direction of demonology during the hearings. In the case of Margaret NcLevin, the concentration on demonological questions during the interrogation started only two days after she was imprisoned.

The devil's pact is a central notion within demonology. The interrogators during witchcraft trials as a whole were eager to make the accused person confess that she had entered a demonic pact. This was also the case in Bute. The ritual of the pact and especially the devil's mark on the accused person's body, which could be shown in court and thereby taken as a legal proof, were central ingredients in the women's confessions. Margaret NcLevin confessed that when she met the devil the first time, she refused to enter his service. But

he came bak and asked hir to give him hir hand quhich she refusing to doe he took hir by the middle finger of her rycht hand quhich she refusing to doe he took hir by the middle finger of her rycht hand quhich he had almost cutt off hir and therwith left hir (...) and desired hir to goe with him and she refusing he said to her I will either have thy self or thy heart (Macphail 1920:6).

She made a covenant with him and then he healed her foot and finger before he left her. The devil's mark is another notion within the demonological doctrine in this case too: 'He also left his mark on her right leg'.

Testing of the skill is frequently mentioned as part of a witchcraft confession. Margaret NcLevin confessed that she tried out her skills by casting a spell on John McFerson's boat with the intention of causing a shipwreck, an errand in which she did not succeed, 'she not being so skilful as she sould have been' (Macphail 1920:10). Performing weather magic is a common element found in witchcraft records from coastal areas, for instance it is often found in north Norwegian witchcraft sources (Sandvik 1987). This is possibly a folkloric elaboration of demonological ideas. In the Norwegian sources, about half of the accused women confess that they tested their recently learnt skills either on an animal or on a human being, for instance in the case of Solve Nilsdatter, who was brought before the court at Vardøhus on 29 January 1663. After her confession to having learnt sorcery and entered the devil's pact, she explained how she tested her skills: 'And after that she tested the power of her craft on a cat to whom she gave milk and some fish, telling it, Eat to the Devil. Whereupon it immediately burst to death' (SF, no. 10, fo. 249r). But even if NcLevin confesses to trying to cast a spell on the boat, she does not confess to any successful evil-doing.

She also confessed that she had the intention of harming the minister and the provost. Applying her skills to harm an authority, a charge not mentioned by the witnesses, might have come up as a result of leading questions. This is an element which has to do with power structures and is frequently found in other confessions of witchcraft, for instance in sources from northern Norway. In both cases, she confessed to intended harm, but nothing actually happened. Thus, as she sought to present herself, she cannot be said to be the cause of sickness or death.

An important element in a witch's confession was the witches' meeting. If the accused woman confesses to being a participant, she might know the names of several other witches. Margaret NcLevin confessed to taking part in several meetings where other witches were present and she willingly gave names of the other women and names of the sites, thus increasing her credibility. At first she mentioned just a few other women,

then the number of names increased enormously, and at the end she mentioned a great many names, probably people she hardly knew (a common pattern). The scribe is also eager to write down pieces of information about the time interval between each of the witches' meetings, thus establishing a chronology for her story. She confirmed that she was present at a witches' meeting 'betwixt Kilmachalmok and Edinmore' and mentioned the other participants. The witches' meetings often take place on memorable days such as Halloween. Margaret mentioned 'Halloday last' as the date for the meeting where the aforementioned sorcery operations took place.

Demonological based sorcery operations are frequently collective operations. Margaret NcLevin named the witches who allegedly took part in the operations and the victims who were struck by the calamity. At this stage of the confession it was important for the interrogators to get hold of suspicious persons. In addition to mentioning names, the relations between the persons were stated, whether they were family members or acquaintances: goddaughter, grandchild, wife, sister and servant. Every new questioning of Margaret had as its intention to get a little further as far as naming of others was concerned. However, not all these names were followed up by the interrogators. It came to a stop when the supposed main persons were imprisoned. Such a day by day increase in the number of names and sorcery operations are similarly found in other witch-hunting areas and are a common feature in witchcraft interrogations.

It is possible to notice that Margaret became more and more miserable. Looking at the way her story is told, it seems clear that she, in an intense and desperate situation, named persons she knew. Her confession escalated and became steadily more disrupted. Her last confession in particular is less coherent in textual structure than the former ones, which might be a signal of her distress. In her last confession, given ten days after she was apprehended, she continued telling about witchcraft operations, the participants in these operations and the victims of the operations. Elements from folk tales are woven into her narrative – for example, that NcWilliam went nine times about the house of NcCullem as part of a ritual. This might be a sign that the worse her condition became, the deeper into her knowledge from her childhood she had to reach. But when the questioners understood there was nothing more to be obtained from her, it came to a stop and no more questioning is recorded. The same pattern is known from witch trials elsewhere and may well have to do with use of torture and exhaustion, sleep deprivation being one of the methods. As a rule, the accused women at last confessed what the interrogators wanted to hear.

Margaret NcLevin also confessed the intention of other witches: 'ther irrand was to do harme to Mr. John Stewart minister and to John Glasse proveist and that they have a great pick at them' (Macphail 1920:7). This element of the confession came abruptly and unexpectedly; it had not been mentioned by any of the witnesses nor by the other accused women. It is likely leading questions have been put on this point – the minister and the provost trying to obtain confirmation that the witches were after them in particular.

At the end, Margaret NcLevin confirmed that all her earlier confessions were true. Such a confirmation is often seen as part of a witchcraft confession, for instance in Norway, and probably had to do with use of torture during interrogation. John H. Langbein in his book *Torture and the Law of Proof* has investigated crime in European legal systems from medieval times until well into the eighteenth century and he states that torture was part of the ordinary criminal procedure 'regularly employed to investigate and prosecute routine crime before the ordinary courts. The system was one of *judicial torture*' (Langbein 2006:3). For the Danish-Norwegian kingdom in the 17th century, the law of Christian IV of 1604 was the existing basis. For witchcraft cases, the decree of 1617 was also of importance. The law stated that torture before verdict was illegal. Torture after sentence – to obtain name of accomplices – was however, legal. This legal system was based on the same foundation as the rest of western Europe: 'It is universally acknowledged that judicial torture as it existed in the national legal systems of western Europe in early modern times was the creature of the so-called statutory system of proofs – the Roman-canon law of evidence' (Langbein 2006:3). A similar use of torture was permitted in Massachusetts (Langbein, 2006: 151, note 56). In Scotland, where torture was legal during witchcraft trials, a confession made under torture had to be repeated in court without torture under the Roman-canon rules, which Scotland did not necessarily follow. In England, the use of judicial torture was not permitted during this period.

The confession of Margaret NcLevin might be interpreted as a narrative of temptation, a fragile woman's yielding to the devil's invitation and will. However, it also deals with strength. It reveals the power she and the other women show during the sorcery operations, when they are breaking earthly boundaries.

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Margaret NcLevin was executed some months later after a commission had been appointed by the Privy Council to try the accused women in Bute (RPC

1908:208). She suffered like the rest of the executed Scottish witches. Of the six women questioned in Bute, four were executed after local trial later the same year. One of them, Janet McNicoll, managed to escape prison and was tried some years later (Cameron 1949:20). The last one, Janet McNeill, was not tried before the court.

V Dorette Lauridtzdatter, Vardø 1662

The year 1662 was the beginning of the most serious panic during the whole 17th century witch-hunt in Finnmark. The chain involved 31 people, all female. Six of them were small girls, one had not even turned a year old. Seventeen of the women were married. Five were, or had been, servants. Two of these were born south of Finnmark.

The women lived scattered in the area of Varanger, where most trials were still held at Vardøhus castle. Dorette Lauridtzdatter lived in the small town Vadsø. She was brought before the local court three times: first in Vadsø in February 1657, then in Vadsø in September 1662 and finally at Vardøhus in November 1662. The first time she was released. The second time the jury stated that they could not reach a verdict but sent the case to the Court of Appeals, which held court meetings in Finnmark every third year. The third time she was imprisoned, she was taken to Vardøhus castle. Thus, her case falls into three parts: the first and second trials in Vadsø and the third trial at Vardøhus, where the verdict was delivered.

Dorette Lauridtzdatter had a reputation for knowing sorcery. This seems clear already at her first imprisonment in the autumn of 1656, after which she was brought before the court during its spring session in February 1657. She herself 'protested her innocent denial just as adamantly, although a large part of the common people indicated that she had probably called down evil on others, too, and it had come to pass, although they had no proof to the effect' (SF, no. 10, fo. 37v). Neighbours were afraid of what she could do and considered her threats able to come true.

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The case started when Nils Pedersen had Dorette Lauridtzdatter put in prison for witchcraft, behind bars and in chains in his Royal Majesty's property. Mogens Erichsenn from Vadsø, Dorette's husband, summoned Nils Pedersenn for having his wife imprisoned. Mogens Erichsenn claimed that Nils Pedersenn must prove her guilty of such evil or else face the appropriate consequences before the law.

Nils Pedersenn countered this, standing forth and calling his witness, Lauridtz Hennrichsen Brass, a merchant from Bergen living in Vadsø. He

testified that five years ago, Dorette Lauridtzdatter had cast a spell on three of his cows; 'Shortly thereafter, the mouths were shut on three of his cows so that they could not eat, and died of hunger' (SF, no. 10, fo. 37r). The reason was revenge because, after she had rented a cow from him, he took it away from her because she spoke foul language and made scenes. Afterwards she called on him, swearing and cursing, saying, amongst other things: 'You will pay for this and pay dearly' (SF, no. 10, fo. 37r).

The next testimony came from Johannes Jonsen from Vadsø. He narrated that last year his wife had a quarrel with the said Dorette who said to her: 'You will come to shame [something wrong will happen] because you cause trouble for me, amongst others' (SF, no. 10, fo. 37r). Ever since that day, neither Johannes Jonsen's wife nor her child had been well, for which he blamed Dorette.

The third testimony came from Lauridtz Bras and Axell Andersenn in Vadsø, who testified that Dorette on one occasion had been rebuking another woman, saying: 'You are a devilish witch, and can go to Kiberg and back in a jiffy when the fancy takes you' (SF, no 10, fo. 37r). It is interesting that this gave Dorette a reputation as a witch. Julian Goodare discusses in his article 'Women and the Witch-hunt in Scotland' the question which of two quarrelling women was a witch: 'Instead of attracting suspicion of witchcraft to herself, a woman could accuse others of it, claiming for herself the status of *victim* of witchcraft (Goodare 1998:298). [Author's italics.] Faced with two quarrelling women, the community tried to sort out the labels of 'witch' and 'victim'. Goodare refers to a study by David Sabeen (1984) which states that this was a question often resolved by power: 'the woman with wealth, status, respectability or family connections in the community could easily convince people that she was a victim of the other's witchcraft' (Goodare 1998:298). In the case of Dorette Lauridtzdatter, she apparently was a more marginal woman than the wife of Nils Pedersen, hence Dorette's imprisonment.

In accordance with the said testimonies, the said Niels Pedersen believed that Dorette was guilty of witchcraft and should be punished accordingly. To which Dorette Lauridtzdatter stood up in court and loudly denied having any knowledge of any witchcraft whatsoever. However, since none of the witnesses maintained the accusations the next day, but were in doubt about the validity, the court concluded that they could not 'consider the above testimonies sufficiently accurate for the said Dorette Lauridtzdatter to be punished with loss of life, but find that she must be acquitted in this case' (SF, no. 10, fo. 37v). Dorette then pledged before the court not to harm or offend, with words or acts or foul language or in any

other way, her nearest and other neighbours with whom she had day-to-day interaction.

In September 1662 Dorette Lauridtzdatter was imprisoned for the second time, 'on the grounds of the witchcraft she is said to have committed' (SF, no. 10, fo. 211r) – a general term used before the specific charges are listed. Then the same person as in 1657, the Bergen merchant Lauridtz Henrichsen Bras, came before the court and accused her of causing the death of two of his hired men. She had requested that they come and work for her, and when she realised that they did not want to, she was alleged to have said that 'Lauridtz Bras would not enjoy them any longer, after this day' (SF, no. 10, fo. 211r). The men had also testified the same on their deathbeds, something that Lauridtz Bras intended to prove to the court with legally valid testimonies and witnesses. Four men, two of them Lauridtz Henrichsen Bras' other hired men, consequently testified according to the requirements of the law, swearing their oaths and with their fingers raised. Two of the witnesses rendered the last words of the late hired men. Both of the witnesses of the late hired men said that Dorette and her husband had solicited their services, which they had refused. One of the late men, Helge Evensen, had stated on his deathbed that Dorette Lauridtzdatter had asked him to come and work there for a year, when the following dialog took place:

No, I want to stay with my master till spring, and then I shall go with him back to Bergen. And since he would not promise to work for her, Dorette allegedly replied that Braas will nevertheless not get much use out of you, whereupon he fell very ill the following morning, his waist all swollen so that they had to tie two towels around him, and afterwards he died and the cloth around his waist burst' (SF, no. 10, fo. 212v).

The other hired man allegedly said: 'I wish by God I had gone to work for her, for she will kill me anyway, and he groaned, I am bursting asunder' (SF, no. 10, fo. 212r). Then they had to tie two towels around his waist, and shortly after he died and blood issued from his nose and mouth.

However, in spite of the testimonies given, it turned out that Lauridtz Brass did not want to accuse her nor have any more dealings in the matter. This is an example of a witness presenting a forceful quarrel-plus-misfortune case, but drawing back from saying '...and this was witchcraft'. Witnesses often left it to the court to make that connection. He was not saying that Dorette Lauridtzdatter was innocent. Addressed by the bailiff the public attending the hearing all answered that none of them knew

anything about her except what was good in every way. Dorette Lauridtzdatter came to answer for herself and the charges against her and declared before the court, 'upon the strongest of oaths, upon whatever part, allotment or share she may expect to enjoy in the Kingdom of the Lord, that she never was the cause of the late persons' death' (SF 10, fol. 213v). The matter then was referred to the court of appeals.

Dorette Lauridtzdatter was brought before the court third time in the matter concerning witchcraft, 'for which she was denounced most recently 27 September in the aforementioned Wadtzøe District Court' (SF, no. 10, fo. 227v).

Now our merciful district governor, according to what has been recorded earlier, had her brought from the said Wadtzøe and imprisoned at the Waardøehuus Castle and *has subsequently had her examined often [to obtain] a correct truthful confession*, and has had her brought in person before the court today; and she was asked by our merciful district governor whether she would confess the full truth about the alleged witchcraft for which she has often previously been brought to court and denounced' (SF, no. 10, fo. 228r) [my italics].

After this, Dorette said that she would willingly oblige him and gave her full confession. When it is recorded that the district governor 'had her examined', this is most likely a way of describing torture. The Finnmark witchcraft trial chain of 1662-63 was an extremely cruel one with extensive use of torture, and there is no doubt that there is a connection between use of torture over time and her final confession (Willumsen 1994:39; 1997:212-213).

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As Dorette's inferred motives are related to conflicts between individuals as well as antagonism against the establishment, the witnesses will mirror this situation. The Bergen trade, where fishermen from the north of Norway sailed with small cargo boats called *jekter* to Bergen to sell stock fish in exchange of flour and other types of food, was common from the 12th century onwards and an important source of income for the whole northern part of Norway (Kiil 1993). The transport of fish to Bergen was based on the agreement that the owner of a *jekt* should let the other fishermen in the parish transport their goods to Bergen, an arrangement called *bygdefar*. The Bergen merchants, with roots back to the Hanseatic League established in Bergen from the middle of the 14th century, had during the 17th century a monopoly on the Finnmark trade. This trade was based on the triangle –

Bergen merchant, peasant fisherman and land owners in Finnmark. In the local communities there was an arrangement where outfitters [in Norwegian *utredere*] were necessary to supply the fishermen with equipment for fishing. Lauridtz Henrichsen Bras was such an outfitter. He played a central role during Dorette's first and second imprisonment and was a person mentioned in relation to economic conflicts by several of the accused women also during the chained trial 1652-53 (Willumsen 1994:34-36).

We have seen that during Dorette's first imprisonment Lauridtz Bras accused her of casting deadly spells on his cows and on his men. He brought as witnesses two of his living men, who allegedly had been sent for by the two dying lads. The witnesses rendered what Bras's two lads had uttered on their deathbeds. Two men from Vadsø also brought charges against Dorette on behalf of the dead men. Conflicts between individuals were most overt during Dorette Lauridtzdatter's first imprisonment, when charges were made against her that had to do with neighbour's quarrels and her threats against other persons. The men brought before the court witnessed either on behalf of their wives or because they happened to overhear a conversation in which Dorette had made threats. During her last imprisonment at Vardøhus no witnesses were brought before the court. The charges brought earlier against her were referred to as reasons for her imprisonment and the interrogators started immediately with questions related to demonology.

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Dorette Lauridtzdatter's change from absolute denial to full confession seems to characterize many of the witchcraft trials in Finnmark. Apparently Dorette was a strong woman. During her first and second imprisonment she managed to hold her own but suddenly, after being sent to Vardøhus, all her resistance was broken. She answered all the questions from the interrogators and confessed to what they wanted to hear, thus sealing her own death sentence. There is evidence that a fixed set of questions was asked during interrogation in Finnmark, similar to the question catalogues [*Fragenkatalogen*] used on the continent (Vollmer 2001). Six years had passed after her first imprisonment before she came to the point that she would 'willingly oblige' the district governor and confess. The 'willingness' might obviously be questioned. Still, it seems that having a reputation for sorcery for an extended period of time made her more vulnerable to new accusations and to being imprisoned time after time. On the first occasion, the charges against her – causing death of animals and sickness of human beings – were not considered to be very serious and she was released. This

is rather surprising if we take the contemporary legal climate in Europe into consideration. It might be mentioned, however, that in England this would have meant one year's imprisonment on a first offence, death on a second. Her second time before the court resulted in her case being referred to the superior judge. The charges this time were considered to be of a more serious type – casting lethal spells on human beings. However, only after she came to Vardøhus did she confess to witchcraft, a confession containing all the important demonological elements that were necessary to have her sentenced as a witch.

One of the standard questions was where and from whom the accused persons had learnt sorcery. Dorette confessed to have learnt her craft from a beggar woman. The woman gave her a pipe and told her to blow into it, 'for then she would be able to bring about any evil against people or animals, or anything else, if she cared to practise [the craft]. And after that, she had (unfortunately) forsworn her Almighty Lord and God, at the old woman's advice and command, which she obeyed' (SF, no. 10, fo. 228r). She also confessed that she had first tried her art on one of her own sheep in Vadsø, 'spitting into some soup in the Devil's name and giving it this soup to eat, and a day or so later, it died' (SF, no. 10, fo. 228v). She also confessed to having cast spells on Lauridtz Bras's two cows and two boys 'and that she blew into the pipe in the Devil's name, that he should enter them, and in this [matter] she was alone' (SF, no. 10, fo. 228v): the latter part of the sentence is her response to a request for names. In addition she confessed to weather magic:

She confessed that Maren Sigvaldsdatter from Wadtzøe and a Sami woman by the name of Ragnilde, and Solwe from Andersbye, were here in an effort to cast a spell on Captain Jens Ottesen's ship last autumn when he sailed off, and that Dorette was in the likeness and body of an eagle, that Maren was in the likeness of a swan and that Ragnild was in the likeness of a cow, and that they were all sitting atop an overturned barrel when they tried to do this, but they could not overpower the ship (SF, no. 10, fo. 228v-229r).

Thus her full confession contained five items related to the accusations against her from the two first imprisonments. The next woman to be questioned in this chain, Maren Sigvaldsdatter, reinforced the assumption that Dorette Lauridtzdatter was a witch by confessing that Dorette was her mentor and that Dorette had participated in a witches' meeting at Domen, the 'witch mountain' in Finnmark, as well as in a sorcery operation aimed at destroying a ship. Another of the imprisoned women, Ragnild

Clemmidsdatter, also confessed to the same. Both Maren and Ragnild claimed that Dorette had urged them to help her cast a spell on Jens Ottesen's ship 'because Dorette was angry with Lauridtz Brass from Wadtzøe because he had loaded his fish there' [on Captain Ottesen's ship] (SF, no. 10, fo. 231r). On 6 November, after the hearing, 'as well as each person's voluntary confession' (SF, no. 10, fo. 231r),

His Royal Majesty's bailiff puts before the court whether they, for such unchristian and unethical [immoral] committed deeds should not be punished by loss of life in fire at the stake. So, after indictment and responses, and in view of the circumstances of the case, and since each of the three said witches have now personally made their itemised confessions about exactly what has been said and what happened, we [the jury] have no other course, in view of the seriousness, than to decide and to judge that they for such committed misdeeds shall be punished in fire at the stake' (SF, no 10, fo. 231r).

The three women mentioned above were sentenced at the same day. Other women were next in the queue to be brought before the local court during these dark months in Vardø before Christmas 1662.

VI Comparison

The chained cases referred to in this article – from Bute in Scotland and from Vardø in Norway – deal only with women. The predominance of women is a characteristic feature of most of the European witch-hunts and the important question of why women were the victims to a greater extent than men has been discussed by several historians, among others Christina Lerner (2000), Julian Goodare (1998) and Robin Briggs (2002). Even if in this article we are discussing the fate of only two women, they are representatives of the majority of accused fellow sisters 350 years ago.

Both Margaret McLevin and Dorette Lauridtzdatter had specific charges related to accidents and sickness in the local community brought against them. In addition they were accused of knowing witchcraft, a less specific accusation but still a very dangerous one at the time.

The charges that had to do with weather magic were related to causing storms and casting spells on boats in order to overturn them. This type of sorcery was connected to their place of living: small communities along the coast where boat traffic was important for communication and fishing. The knowledge of casting spells in order to cause strong winds was supposed to be held by the Sami people in northern Norway: they even 'sold' winds to boats sailing along the coast by tying knots on a rope and then, when the

knots were untied, the wind came (Magnus 1982:158; Friis 1881:400; Schefferus 1673). We thus see that the range of sorcery operations often has connection to the landscape in which it is practised. Practising weather magic is otherwise widely known in maritime communities throughout Europe (Briggs 2002:77-78; Behringer 2004:88-89; Behringer 1995).

Casting spells that cause sickness in human beings and animals is frequently seen practiced among folk magicians and often used as the basis for accusations during witchcraft trials all over Europe. Again we see that accidents causing anxiety in local communities are seen as the work of witches. Losing a cow is a serious loss in rural areas where people lived on smallholdings and were dependant on milk from the cows and meat from the sheep. We see that the cases of Margaret and Dorette reflect the sources of income in the countryside, where daily food is of great importance.

Sickness and death afflicting human beings were frequently ascribed to the work of witches. People were powerless when they faced sudden deaths and they needed an explanation and a scapegoat. At this time there was no medicine for the treatment of serious diseases and a sickness like the *Claick* in Scotland was feared. The work of witches was considered to be a probable reason why a person fell ill and died.

In addition to charges connected to daily life, we often see the general accusation of witchcraft used. The first time Dorette Lauridtzdatter was imprisoned, she was accused 'of witchcraft' in addition to casting lethal spells on animals and spells resulting in sickness on people. The second time she was imprisoned, the charge was that of casting lethal spells on people. The third time she was only asked to confess the alleged witchcraft she had earlier been denounced for. The interrogation of Margaret McLevin initially went through a long phase dealing with charms and healing and was as a whole more concrete in its approach. Witchcraft is a 'crime' impossible to prove. Both in Norway and in Scotland the accusations against witches were treated differently from other types of crime brought before the courts. Whatever the charges and accusations against the alleged witches, they could never be more than assertions (Lerner 2000).

A similar feature in the cases mentioned above has to do with the testimonies. The witnesses who gave their testimonies in these cases were all persons from the community, acquaintances and neighbours to those who were allegedly being exposed for sorcery. The witnesses were friends of persons allegedly killed by sorcery or they were related to persons who had become sick in an unnatural way. Both the accused women were involved in quarrels with their neighbours and they had made threats against others as part of the quarrel. When these threats come true, this is used against the

women. In both cases, the women are reputed to be persons with knowledge of charming and healing, something which is well-known in their communities. A connection is established between the sickness and death of human beings and animals and the threats set forth by the women.

The Bergen merchant Lauridtz Brass, who was living in Vadsø, played a special role in the case of Dorette Lauridtzdatter. He was the active accuser during Dorette's first two imprisonments, accusing her of casting spells. He was also implicated in the case because he was the master of the dead hired men who had allegedly been killed by witchcraft. His function seems to be central to the fate of Dorette. Still, he refused to accuse her completely for witchcraft in front of the court on the first two occasions, something which resulted in her release. Why she was taken to the castle of Vardøhus the third time, we do not know. But this was the crucial point and the turning point of her trial, as torture was used and there was no way she could escape her fate. As for the Bute Case, the provost and the minister thought there was a plot against them and that the witches were responsible. During the same chained trial in Finnmark an alleged plot against the district governor was part of the accusations. In both cases we see conflicts between powerful persons in the community and the accused women. In the case of Margaret NcLevin a conflict with clerics and governmental authority is suggested since she participated at a witches' meeting where the collective intention was to harm the minister and the provost. In the case of Dorette Lauridtzdatter conflicts rooted in socio-economic factors came to the fore, as common people like Dorette and her husband were dependant upon supplies from the Bergen merchant Lauridtz Bras, who also was the one who brought charges against her in the first place. Power structures seem to play a part in the imprisonment and the accusations against the women.

So far I have pointed to similarities that have to do with the structure of the communities in which they live and the local context of their livelihood. More important still are similarities related to an international doctrine.

Margaret NcLevin and Dorette Lauridtzdatter are living in different countries, with different political and religious conditions (Willumsen 1984, Larner 1984, Goodare et al. 2003). Scotland of 1662 had politically been through a difficult period after the protectorate of the Cromwells and the recent restoration of the House of Stuart by Charles II (1660-1685). Norway was at this time in the middle of the '400 years night' when the Danish king ruled both Denmark and Norway; and the district of Finnmark bordered on Russia, something which required strong government officials in the north. After the Reformation in 1537, the protestant church of Denmark-Norway

was still struggling to implement a new religious era throughout the kingdom. Nevertheless, the two women's confessions to witchcraft contain essentially similar points, especially when it comes to the doctrine of demonology (Levack 1980; Levack 1995; Willumsen 1997). In my view, one has to give priority to central demonological elements in the confessions when witchcraft cases from different European countries are compared. When witchcraft panics had so many parallels in different areas, it had to do with the demonological doctrine that had spread successfully all over Europe, including the extreme north, as has been pointed out by, for example, Christina Larner (2000). An essential pillar of demonology was a covenant between Satan and the witch, enabling the witch to obtain power from the Evil One and thus become capable of performing the worst harm to animals and human beings. The authorities cared about the ungodliness of the demonic pact and their fear of what the witches were able to accomplish was tremendous: there is no doubt that government officials and civil servants were convinced that the witches were dangerous and had to be exterminated.

Traditional folk magic, with a wide spectre of rituals and beliefs, has existed in some form or other at all times and in all cultures. The witch-hunt, however, was a limited historical phenomenon. Both before and after the historical witch trials in the 16th and 17th centuries individuals have been practising sorcery, both healing and maleficium. It is rather doubtful whether the two women dealt with in this chapter did intend to harm anyone. Margaret NcLevin participated in a witches' meeting, where the purpose of some other witches was to do harm against the minister and the provost, so it might be said that she was an accomplice in a collective act of sorcery. Dorette Lauridtzdatter denied having any knowledge of witchcraft the first two occasions she was imprisoned and confessed to evil-doing only after she was sent to Vardøhus and interrogated there. For both of them the dangerous point of their confession was the demonic pact and the witches' meeting. Being an individual art of sorcery, maleficium – intentional harm – in itself could not possibly have obtained the same consequences as the historical witch-hunt. What led to many people ending their lives at the stake, being burned as witches, was the notion of the devil's pact and collective sorcery operations and witches' meetings. The art of effective sorcery was no longer considered individual knowledge, even if the pact as such was individual. What was obtainable through the devil's pact was the ability to perform evil by gaining access to the power of the Evil One. In historical witchcraft sources one often sees that elements of folk magic and demonology are intertwined, as we saw in the Bute document. Several

historians have been discussing this central point, among others Briggs (2002) and Kieckhefer in his study *European Witch Trials* (1976:5-8). The interrogation frequently starts with the performance of folk magic but then changes to demonology, because this is the dangerous area in which a witch might be recognized and sentenced. Use of torture is found documented both in Bute and in Finnmark. In the case of Dorette Lauridtzdatter this was certainly the reason why she finally confessed.

The pact with the devil and the witches' meeting were central elements in the demonological doctrine and they are what tie together the witch-hunt on the European continent, in Scotland and in northern Norway. The belief that witches were accomplices of the devil led to the worst persecution of women ever seen in history. I agree with the emphasis laid by several scholars on the importance of demonology when explaining the historical witch-hunt (see, for instance, Larner 2000; Levack 1995; Behringer 2004:83-93). The confessions of both Margaret NcLevin and Dorette Lauridtzdatter have the covenant with the devil as the basic element. The narrative about how this pact was sealed is an important section of their confessions since it is seen as a story illustrating the decisive struggle between God and Satan. In renouncing her baptism, the accused woman leaves behind her ties to Christianity and enters the army of evil.

The witches' meeting was the second central element of the confession, as may be seen both in the Margaret NcLevin and the Dorette Lauridtzdatter cases. Margaret mentioned the location of the witches' meetings she had attended. However, specific mountains as meeting-places, as on the continent, are not common in Scotland. Dorette confessed to participation at Sabbaths at a well-known witches' place, the mountain Domen in Finnmark, thus making possible the performance of collective sorcery. In addition, Dorette Lauridtzdatter mentioned that she and the other witches took the shape of birds when trying to cast a spell on a ship. Being denounced as participants at witches' meetings often was the initial step that brought a woman to the notice of the witch-hunters. In addition, the witches' meetings made collective sorcery operations possible, as seen in the case of Dorette Lauridtzdatter.

In addition to the pact with the devil the witches' mark is here mentioned – another idea found within demonological doctrine: this is a special mark found on the body of the accused women and seen as proof that they were witches. The witches' mark was also known in Norway and is documented in the sources from Finnmark. Furthermore, in Scotland professional witch-prickers travelled the country trying to prove that accused women were guilty of witchcraft because they had spots on their

body where they did not bleed and were insensitive to the pricking of needles. Witch-pricking is not explicitly mentioned in the Bute document but was common in Scotland. This activity was not practised in Finnmark.

We see several similar demonological notions documented in the sources from Bute and Finnmark. It seems that the doctrine of demonology at this time was not only knowledge owned by the clergy and the judges but had been assimilated into the mentality of the common people. When the women in 1662 include demonological elements in their confessions, this is something which is internalized and comes naturally as part of their witchcraft narrative in court.

Both Margaret NcLevin and Dorette Lauridtzdatter bring to the fore ideas of a dualistic character in which two decisive powers are fighting for supremacy – good against evil. The devil's pact was looked upon as part of an ongoing struggle between God and the Evil One. The covenant between the woman and the Devil is part of a great and decisive undertaking, an element in the fundamental struggle going on between God and Satan. Frighteningly enough Satan, through the horde of persons entering his service, might gain the upper hand. However, according to orthodox Christianity, God was always bound to win in the end and thus Christianity was not strictly 'dualist'. But for the witch-hunters, dualism was a reality.

In the Scottish document Margaret NcLevin says she did not succeed in casting a spell on the boat because she was not skilful enough, the implication being that God prevented her. Similarly Dorette said that she and her associates could not gain power over the ship they intended to overturn. Things did not fall out as they expected because another power which they were unable to master was stronger than the Evil One, namely God. A variant of the same idea is expressed elsewhere in the court records from Finnmark: an accused woman, Karen Jonsdatter, confessed to trying to overturn a boat during a sorcery operation but they were unable to gain control of the boat because the people on board prayed too powerfully to God (the trial of Karen Jonsdatter, SF, no. 8, fo. 135r). This is an interesting formulation which, via an image, brings us close to the common people's way of understanding the world in simple and easily intelligible terms.

The similarities between the two cases above are more conspicuous than the differences, though some differences may be observed. One difference is that in the case of Dorette Lauridtzdatter, income-related conflicts seem to play a striking role. The merchant Lauridz Brass had provoked several of the women living in Vadsø because he had refused to supply and give credit to their relatives. This is clearly rooted in a division of power that allows one party to exploit the other, a topic also discussed by

Briggs (2002). When the women seek to harm those who hold power, they are giving vent to the typical frustrations and resentment generated by such a power structure. The women are actually talking about circumstances that underlie some of the difficulties they face in life. The fact that authorities and wealthy people play such a prominent part in this picture must be seen against the backdrop of the supplier-system whereby Finnmark fishermen are kept in absolute dependence on the merchants and Bergen traders.

The practice of healing is given more weight in the Scottish than the Norwegian case. To cure disease and take away the effects of evil magic, which is stressed in the case of Margaret McLevin, is not emphasised in the case of Dorette Lauridtzdatter. Folk tradition about elves and fairies seems to be related to Scottish folklore, in particular, and these traits are not documented in the Finnmark court records.

Preliminary questioning focused on folklore seems to be more conspicuous in the Scottish than in the Norwegian case, where the interrogators ask about matters of demonology straight away. The important thing during the interrogation in Finnmark is to get the demonological confession and no time is wasted on other matters. But in the Scottish case also, the interrogators end up with questions of a demonological character, and get their answers accordingly. In Scotland, it was possible to convict on neighbours' testimony alone (e.g. the trial of Janet Wishart, 1597). In Norway, without a confession from the mouth of the accused, no verdict of guilty could be delivered. Therefore it was important for the interrogators to have an effective strategy in order to get hold of the necessary elements. However, when they had achieved this, they did not want to spend more time on the interrogation. Other alleged witches were waiting.

VII Conclusion

Margaret McLevin and Dorette Lauridtzdatter are victims of a tremendous fear of witchcraft on the part of both the authorities and the common people. However, their cases belong to the late phase of the European witch-hunt, which ended around 1750, but was declining, at least in the German heartland after c.1630. Demonology was utterly rational, as Stuart Clark shows (1999; 2001), so arguing for a new rational way of thinking is not convincing as an explanation for the cessation of the witch-hunt. In his article 'The decline and end of Scottish witch-hunt' (2002), Brian P. Levack mentions several reasons for the cessation of witchcraft, among which are the reduction in the use of torture and more careful evaluation of evidence in witchcraft cases as expressions of the new judicial scepticism after 1662.

But he argues that 'Even when the government stopped authorising local prosecutions and when local magistrates stopped asking them to do so, pressure from the local community, especially from the clergy, continued' (Levack 2002:180). Levack concludes that witch-hunting in Scotland remained a local affair 'which the central government tried to control, regulate and eventually eliminate, but not always with complete success' (Levack 2002:181).

What also needs to be taken into account is the growing scepticism among the legal authorities as to whether what the witches confessed to really could have taken place. Both in Scotland and northern Norway, sceptics among the judges seem to be important for the termination of the witch-hunt: in Scotland George Mackenzie and in northern Norway Mandrup Schønnebøl (Levack 1980; LF 1647-1683). Both of them had been involved in witch trials. And strangely enough, Dorette Lauridtzdatter herself gave a clear statement as early as 1657 as to whether it was possible to be accused and sentenced for a 'crime' she could not possibly have committed: 'She protested, although a large part of the common people indicated that she had probably called down evil on others, too, and it had come to pass, *although they had no proof to the effect*' (SF, no. 10, fo. 37v) [My italics.]. The proof Dorette Lauridtzdatter had in mind was something that could convince the jury about the causal relation between performing sorcery and the effect of sorcery. And she knew such a proof would never be found.

No doubt the witchcraft cases from Bute and Finnmark show clear parallels – especially the demonological confessions given by these two women in the same period in two different northern European countries. The convergence of several lines seems to put a distinctive stamp on the witchcraft phenomenon in the two areas: they are meeting-places for forces from inside and outside the northern area, between the local and the European, the regional and the continental – and ultimately between mythological and intellectual currents affecting human life.

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Abbreviations

- [...] Editor's comments
- FES – Fasti Ecclesiae Scotanae
- LF – Court of Appeal Finnmark [Lagtingsprotokoll for Finnmark]
- RL – The Royal Library, Copenhagen
- RPC – The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland
- SF – Finnmark District Magistrate, Records of Court Proceedings [Sorenskriveren i Finnmarks arkiv]

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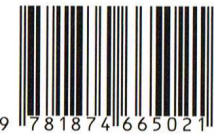
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This collection of essays investigates British expectations about Scandinavia and Scandinavian images about Britain and how they were sometimes manifested in actual findings. Scholars from Britain and Scandinavia approach this topic within their respective fields of research: literary studies, history, history of science, place-name studies and out-door activities.

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