The myth that Goodwife Glover, the Irish woman executed for witchcraft in Boston in 1688, was an “Irish slave”

Tracing the origin of a mythos that is often appended to Glover’s tragic story in plaques, martyrologies, newspapers, books and blogs

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The myth that Goodwife Glover, the Irish woman executed for witchcraft in Boston in 1688, was an “Irish slave”

Woodcut depicting two witches smoking their pipes by the fire with a toad at their feet, featured in The History of Witches and Wizards (1720) — Source (Wellcome Library).

This is part seven of my series debunking/contextualising the “Irish slaves” meme. See Part One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six.
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While tracking the “Irish slaves” meme over the last few years I have frequently encountered the intriguing claim that Goodwife Glover, the Irish Catholic woman executed for witchcraft in Boston in 1688, had previously been an “Irish slave” in Barbados in the 1650s. When I eventually found the time to search for the primary sources that supposedly substantiated this aspect of her narrative I soon ran into a now familiar problem. It became apparent that an ever-growing list of secondary sources had unquestioningly reproduced an ahistorical embellishment over such an extended period of time that it had become a truism which stretched from popular culture to academia.

“A Terror to Evil-Doers”
The Goodwin family immediately suspected their laundress, an Irish slave named Ann Glover, as the person responsible for the bewitchment. Glover was a peculiar-acting older woman who


Born and raised in Ireland, Goodwife Ann Glover and her husband were captured by Oliver Cromwell during his Irish campaign of 1649-1650 and sold into slavery in Barbados. After her husband’s death there, Ann Glover made her way to Boston, where she worked as a maid. Described by a contemporary as “a despised, crazy, poor old woman,” she was charged with witchcraft when the children of her employers fell ill.

One of the saddest victims of the Irish Slave trade was Anne Glover. Originally transported as a slave to Barbados in the 1650’s, she eventually found her way to Boston in 1688 as a servant to the Goodwin family. Remaining steadfast in her Catholic faith despite being in Puritan New England, she was accused of being a witch when children of the household appeared to have a mysterious illness. Hampered in her defense by being a native Gaelic speaker unable to express herself clearly in English, she was found guilty and hanged on November 16, 1688. Three hundred years later, realizing the injustice done, the Boston City Council designated November 16th “Goody Glover Day”.


Interesting historical note: the last person killed at the Salem Witch Trials was Anne Glover. She and her husband had been shipped to Barbados as a slave in the 1650’s. Her husband was killed there for refusing to renounce catholicism.

In the 1680’s she was working as a housekeeper in Salem. After some of the children she was caring for got sick she was accused of being a witch.

At the trial they demanded she say the Lord’s Prayer. She did so, but in Gaelic, because she didn’t know English. She was then hung.

“shipped to Barbados as a slave...her husband was killed there” — Daily Kos, The slaves that time forgot, 2013. This blog not only repeats the mythical “Irish slave” narrative, it mixes up Salem (1692) and Boston (1688).

mon the Irish had a verb for it, to be “Barbadosed.” Perhaps the most famous Irish servant, or slave, in the New World was Ann Glover, the last woman hanged as a witch in Salem, Massachusetts, denounced by Cotton Mather as “a scandalous old Irishwoman, very poor, a Roman Catholic and obstinate in idolatry.” She’d been banished to Barbados as a young woman and later made her way to Boston as a servant.

“banished to Barbados as a young woman” — Joan Walsh, What’s the Matter with White People?: Finding Our Way in the Next America (2013). Walsh also mixes up Salem (1692) and Boston (1688)
1625 a law was passed mandating the sale of Irish political prisoners to English planters, mostly in the West Indies. It was under this law that Cromwell sold Ann Glover and her husband as slaves to planters in Barbados. While in Barbados, Ann Glover’s husband was allegedly executed because he would not renounce the Catholic Faith.

“sold, with her husband, as slaves and sent to Barbados” — Unam Sanctam Catholicam (2013)

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— by G John Sit – Daily Kos

“Her husband was killed [in Barbados] for refusing to renounce his Catholicism” — Daily Kos article republished by the Newport Buzz (2017)

Glover was an Irish slave, sold to Barbados by Englishman Oliver Cromwell, during the occupation of Ireland in the 1650s. Persecuted for his own religious beliefs, her husband died there. By 1680 she and her daughter were settled in Boston, employed as housekeepers by John Goodwin. In the summer of 1688, four of the five Goodwin children fell ill. Their doctor concluded “nothing but a hellish Witchcraft could be the origin of these maladies.” Martha, the 13-year-old daughter, confirmed the doctor’s diagnosis by claiming she became ill right after an argument with Glover.

“Glover was an Irish slave, sold to Barbados ” — Stair na hÉireann (2016)

Glover’s year of birth remains unclear. During Cromwell’s occupation of Ireland, she and her husband were deported to Barbados, where the husband died. Sometime around 1680, she and her daughter, Mary, were brought to work in Boston, where they became part of what then was a tiny, and largely detested, Catholic minority.

“she and her husband were deported to Barbados, where the husband died” — The Irish Times (2016)

These works of fiction range from Pádraic Ó Conaire’s acclaimed Deoraíocht (1910), set in London where Ó Conaire lived for 15 years, to Alan Titley’s An Bhean Feasa (2014), based on the life of Irish-born Ann “Goody” Glover, a native Irish speaker who was transported to Barbados as an indentured slave.
and was later burned as a witch in Boston in 1688.
“transported to Barbados as an indentured slave” — The Irish Times (2016) This version also falsely claims that Glover was “burned as a witch”.

Looking at the situation from Goody Glover’s point of view is an exercise in misery: deported from her homeland, sold into slavery, husband executed, making it to Boston only to find herself despised and called a witch. It’s enough to make a lady want to cast a spell on somebody. Oh, and P.S.: no one
“sold into slavery, husband executed” — Susan Fair, American Witches (2016)

In the 1650s, Ann Glover and her family, along with some 50,000 other native Irish people, were enslaved by Englishman Oliver Cromwell during the occupation of Ireland and shipped to the island of Barbados, where they were sold as indentured servants.
“enslaved....and shipped to the island of Barbados” — Catholic News Agency (2017)

It is reported that Goodwife “Goody” Ann Glover was deported to Barbados with her husband during Oliver Cromwell’s occupation of Ireland in the 1650s. Her husband died there as a result of his loyalty to the Catholic faith.
“deported to Barbados...her husband died there as a result of his loyalty to the Catholic faith” — Irish Central (2017)

and Irish slaves.In 1688, the first woman killed in Cotton Mather’s witch trials in Massachusetts was an old Irish woman named Anne Glover, who had been captured and sold as a slave in 1650.

She spoke no English. She could recite The Lord’s Prayer in Gaelic and Latin, but without English, Mather decided her Gaelic was discourse with the devil, and hung her. It was not until 1839 that a law was passed in England ending the slave trade, and thus the trade in Irish slaves. It is unfortunate that, while the descendents of black slaves have kept
“captured and sold as a slave” — YourNewsWire (2017) This version falsely claims that “she spoke no English”
Thus the ongoing propagation of this aspect of Glover’s narrative in newspapers, books, magazines, websites and on social media demonstrates the need to check its veracity and take a closer look at its origin. My research reveals that while this “Irish slave” narrative has been presented to thousands of contemporary readers as historical fact, it was only added to Glover’s story centuries after her death, first as speculation and later as absolute certainty. My research also shows that the tendency towards certainty around the “slavery” aspect of the narrative is apocryphal and primarily based on a pseudo-historical article written by Harold Dijon for *The Ave Maria* Catholic magazine in 1905. Dijon, the underlying source for so many articles about Glover, buttressed his numerous ahistorical claims about Glover’s purported enslavement in Barbados by fabricating a series of supporting “quotations”, to make it look as if they were drawn from primary sources. These falsehoods were then left unchecked for over 100 years.

To begin, let’s briefly review the extant primary sources.

**Known Primary Sources**

There are at least four extant contemporary sources which describe what happened to Goodwife Glover. Reading them not only upends the “slavery” assertion, but they also clearly show that Glover was scapegoated and murdered by Puritans on a charge of witchcraft because they fanatically believed that she was a witch in league with the devil and not because she was (a) Irish (b) a Catholic or (c) an Irish speaker.

(1) The most detailed account by far is found in Cotton Mather’s *Memorable Providences* (1689). Read it. He also included further information in *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). That we have to rely primarily on Cotton Mather’s version of events is far from ideal. He was the Puritan minister who interviewed both the accused and the accusers.
and was thus an influential individual partly responsible for the guilty verdict which led to Glover’s execution.

(2) Independent to this is Joshua Moody’s account which appears in his letter to Increase Mather dated the 4 October 1688. Increase, then residing in London “as an agent of [Massachusetts] colony”, was a Puritan minister and Cotton Mather’s father. Moody was a Congregationalist who fled New Hampshire (where he was previously imprisoned for non-conformation) and was appointed Assistant Minister of the First Church in Boston in 1684. Moody mentioned the case of the Goodwin children and the imprisonment of Goodwife Glover and her daughter.

Wee have a very strange th: among us, which we know not what to make of, except it bee Witchcraft, as we think it must needs bee. 3 or 4 children of one Goodwin, a Mason, that have been for some weeks grievously tormented, crying out of head, eyes, tongue, teeth; break their neck, back, thighs, knees, legs, feet, toes, &c. & then they roar out, Oh my head, Oh my neck, & from one part to another the pain runs almost as fast as I write it. The pain is (doubtles) very exquisite, & the cries most dolorous & affecting, & this is noteable, that two or more of them cry out of the same pain in the same part, at the same time, & as the pain shifts to another place in one, so in the other, & thus it holds them for an hour together & more; & when the pain is over they eat, drink, walk, play, laugh, as at other times. They are generally well a nights. A great many good Xtians spent a day of prayer there. M’ Morton came over, & wee each spent an hour in prayer, since which the parents suspecting an old woman & her daughter living hard by, complaint was made to the Justices, & compassion had so far, that the women were committed to prison & are there now. Yesterday I called in at the House, & was informed by the parent that since the women were confined the children have been well while out of the House, but as soon as any of them come into the House, then taken as formerly; so that now all their children keep at their neighb’r houses. If any step
home they are immediately afflicted, & while they keep out are well. I have been a little larger in this narrative, because I know you have studied these things. Wee cannot but think the devill has an hand in it by some instrumt. It is an example in all the parts of it, not to be paralleld. You may inquire further of Mr. Oaks, whose Uncle administrd Physick to them at first, & he may plbfably inform you more fully. There are also sundry in the Country that remain distracted since the measills last spring. Some have lately made away with themselves, one Red-coat & another man. I rememb' Dr. Owen on Luk. 13, 5th. They are solemn warnings & psages.

Mather Papers, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. VIII, Fourth Series (1868)

(3) An interesting but unverifiable primary source is alluded to in *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, a book written by the Boston merchant Robert Calef (1700). Calef claimed that he read the notes of the Glover trial “taken in Short-hand, for the use of the Jury” and was highly critical of the role Mather played in the court’s decision to execute Glover on the basis of such weak evidence. Mather later sued for libel. These court notes, if indeed they existed to begin with, are unfortunately no longer extant. Indeed Calef could have come to his conclusions based on Mather’s published version of events as there is no new information presented about the case.

(4) The final source is the diary of Judge Samuel Sewall. Sewall mentioned Glover in passing. Despite its brevity this is an important source as it is the only one that dates her execution (16 November).

"The Widow Glover is drawn by to be hang’d." — Diary of Samuel Sewall 1674–1729. v. 1, p. 236
This lack of official sources is lamentable and quite unusual. In a paper presented by John Noble to the Colonial Society of Massachusetts in 1904 he noted that the Goodwife Glover case was not mentioned in the colonial record books: “rather curiously the last case does not appear in the Records of the Court of Assistants, 1673 to 1692, nor is it in the Massachusetts Colony Records.” Stranger still there is a Mary Glover mentioned as being a prisoner in Boston jail in November 1689, exactly one year after Goodwife Glover was reportedly executed. Who was this woman? Glover’s daughter, still imprisoned a year later? Another person unrelated to this case?

There were no newspapers printed in Boston at this time and all present-day accounts of what happened must rely in the first instance on Mather, Moody, Sewall and Calef. Thus any extra “details”, “quotations” purporting to be from those involved, or narrative leaps that aren’t present in these sources are embellishments, speculations or fabrications. It goes without saying that none of these four sources link Glover to Barbados, slavery or Cromwell. If that is the case, then where did this conjecture or embellishment come from? How did it become a present-day certainty? As it turns out, the root of the mythology is relatively easy to trace and its pattern is brought into sharp relief when set alongside so many secondary sources which discuss Glover’s case but do not include narratives of “Irish slavery” out of the ether, e.g. Francis Hutchinson (1718), Thomas Hutchinson (1768, 1760s), Charles W. Upham (1867), Samuel Gardner Drake (1869), Hezekiah Butterworth (1881), James Bernard Cullen (1889), &c.

How speculation about Goodwife Glover’s origins in the late nineteenth century became a “historical” certainty in the twentieth

I’ll now trace the development of this pseudo-historical narrative, secondary source by secondary source and show how this unfortunate victim of scapegoatism and communal superstition in Colonial New England was co-opted centuries later into Catholic martyrologies and the “Irish slaves” mythology.
1872

One of the first writers to speculate that Goodwife Glover was possibly one of the thousands forcibly transported to the Anglo-America colonies from Ireland by the Cromwellian regime was Fr. James Fitton. Fitton was a Catholic priest and missionary whose book *Sketches of the establishment of the church in New England* was published by Patrick Donahoe in Boston in 1872. Donahoe was a long-time editor and publisher of the *Boston Pilot*, a Catholic newspaper in Boston devoted to the diocese. Fr. Fitton wrote that Glover

“...was probably one of the unfortunate women whom English barbarity tore from their homes in Ireland, to sell as slaves in America.”

This conjecture was possibly influenced by the then recent publication of J. P. Prendergast’s *Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland* (1865) which described the forced transportation of Irish people to the Anglo-American colonies as being a type of “slave trade.” Fitton may have been left with the misleading impression that the only transatlantic migration of Irish Catholics to Anglo-America occurred due to Cromwell’s policies in the 1650s.
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Sketches of the establishment of the church in New England, p. 55 (1872)

1876

The next secondary source to put forward this speculation was Rev. Sherwood Healy, then the Rector of the Cathedral in Boston, who included it in a lecture he delivered in 1876. This lecture on “The Early History of Catholicity in New England” was first published in the aforementioned Boston Pilot newspaper. It was then reproduced in The historical magazine and notes and queries concerning the antiquities, history and biography of America. Fr. Fitton is cited directly by Healy on a number of occasions in this lecture and thus his book was clearly the source for the repetition of this speculation about Glover’s possible origins.

“Among the Irish brought here in this way, was, probably, Goody Glover...”
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Excerpt of Healy’s lecture in “The historical magazine and notes and queries concerning the antiquities, history and biography of America” (1876)

1891

The next writer to run with Fitton’s speculation was Bernard Corr in a volume he edited in 1891. This work included a brief history of “Catholicity in Boston” and published as a Memorial of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the consecration of John J. Williams, archbishop of Boston, March 12, 1891.
1905

This is the year when Harold Dijon changed the “Irish slave” narrative from speculation to absolute certainty via the fabrication of primary evidence. Cloaked in a confident tone and the brazen pretense of rigorous research, Dijon’s work is the central root of the presence of this myth in academic and popular works. [Postscript: He was also likely the writer at the Catholic World who made this claim in 1869].

His article about the execution of Goodwife Glover was first published in The Ave Maria Catholic magazine in 1905. According to Catholic writer Pat McNamara, The Ave Maria publication was

“started as a religious magazine for Catholic families, it was published by the Holy Cross Fathers out of Notre Dame. Its goal was to foster devotion to the Blessed Mother.”

Dijon’s article was then reproduced in the Journal of the American Irish Historical Society later that year. This also appears to have bestowed upon the article, at least in the eyes of future writers, a seal of authenticity. The problem is that Dijon, a former editor of Catholic World magazine, simply invented a series of supporting quotations in an effort to embellish the narrative and transform Goodwife Glover into the first Catholic martyr in Massachusetts. He is also the first author to append the name “Ann” to Goodwife Glover’s name. He does so without historical justification for she is only named in the primary sources as “Goodwife Glover”, “Goody Glover” and “Widow Glover.”

Prior to Dijon’s fabrications there is no certainty in any secondary source with regard to Glover’s origins and as I’ve mentioned before no contemporary sources make any link between her case and Barbados, transportation or indeed slavery. There is no evidence to suggest that she was an indentured servant in Barbados prior to living in Massachusetts. While it’s certainly a historical possibility, such a tale belongs in the
realm of conjecture. There is also no evidence to support the story that her husband was also a “slave” who was martyred in Barbados on account of his religion. This is a transparent piece of ahistorical Catholic martyrology and indeed the only source for this claim is the imagination of Harold Dijon.

The audacious manner by which Dijon inserted his fabricated quotes and sources into his work goes someway to explaining how they took hold. Early on in his article he included a single footnote which reads

“That there be no interruption to this narrative, let it be said that the facts relating to Mrs. Glover have been gleaned from Cotton Mather, Upham, Drake, Moore, Owens, Calef, Cartrie, and papers of the Massachusetts Historical Society.”

This clever device, which throws the appearance of legitimate historical methods on proceedings, no doubt reassured many a reader that what followed was entirely based on primary research and thus convinced them to look no further. Sadly fraudulent claims are littered throughout the article.

He writes that “she herself has stated that she and her husband were sold to the Barbadoes in the time of Cromwell” as if he had read court proceedings where Glover stated this. This is a fabrication. It simply doesn’t exist. He then “quotes” Glover as stating that her husband was “scored to death and did not give up his religion, which same I will hold to.” Likewise, this is a fabrication. There is no evidence to support it.
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He then makes the following false claims and embellishments

1. That when Glover was arrested she was “loaded with chains”
2. That prisoners were not fed in Colonial Massachusetts
3. That “the Calefs continued to succour her”
4. That “Dame Nourse…gave her some aid”
5. That “they chained the Papist till she could not move and she did spew blood”
6. That Martha Goodwin while possessed “could read Popish books, but not book against Popery”

7. That Glover’s daughter received “stonings and revilings “ that “turned her brain, and she died a lunatic, frightened to death”

8. That “the magistrates [were] long annoyed by the presence of an obstinate Papist in Boston.” Dijon attributed this to Samuel Gardner Drake’s *Annals of witchcraft in New England* (1869) but he has doctored the original in such a way as to be a micro example of the fraudulent nature of the entire article. This is the original quote

And Dijon turned that into

The goal here is obvious. To alter the evidence (or invent it) so that it fits with the Dijon’s “first Catholic martyr in Massachusetts” narrative.

9. That before her execution Glover said “I die a Catholic!”

10. That on the day of her execution

“there was a great concourse of people to see if the Papist would relent . . . Her one cat was there, fearsome to see. They would to destroy the cat, but Mr. Calef would not [permit the cat to be killed]. Before her execution she was bold and impudent [ ! ] making to forgive her accusers and those who put her off . . . She predicted that her death would not relieve the children, saying it was not she afflicted them.”
There is no evidence to support any of these claims and the purported “quotes” are either fabrications or distortions, martyrology passed off as history.

The only academic work that I could find which noted Dijon’s audacious fabrications is Shona Helen Johnson’s Georgetown University PhD dissertation *Papists in a Protestant World: The Catholic Anglo-Atlantic in the Seventeenth Century* (2011) which explores Glover’s case in some detail, see pages 137–142. In concurrence with my own findings, Johnson observed how

...later accounts rely heavily on information presented by Harold Dijon. I have been unable to verify any of his sources. Rather these accounts construct Glover’s persecution and execution in the mode of a classic martyrology including forgiveness for her persecutors and a death day testament to “die a Catholic”.

1921

The local historian George Francis O’Dwyer then reproduced Dijon’s distortions in *Historical Records and Studies*, the journal of the United States Catholic Historical Society. O’Dwyer seconded Dijon’s claims that Glover was a Catholic martyr and entitled his article “Ann Glover, First Martyr of the Faith in New England.” Around the same time this part of the narrative also appeared almost verbatim in the New Advent Catholic encyclopedia entry for Boston. Dijon’s work had now taken hold.

1937

Dijon’s work was heavily drawn upon by Michael O’Brien as he relayed the story of Goodwife Glover in *Pioneer Irish in New England* (1937). O’Brien was the historiographer of the American Irish Historical Society (AIHS) and this work would have been widely read and of great influence among the Irish American community. O’Brien reproduced
Dijon’s deliberate distortion of Drake verbatim along with the fabricated narrative that Glover told the court she had been “sold to the Barbados…in the Time of Cromwell”.

That O’Brien failed to check Dijon’s research is not that surprising considering the general lack of objective analysis in his work. Prof. Mary C. Kelly cites a president of the American Historical Association who noted that “O’Brien’s work would be more convincing…if he had sifted his evidence and not claimed as much.”

1962

The narrative appeared in a different form in John Henry Cutler’s biography of John Francis “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald. In this volume the Catholic martyrology is stepped up to another level when Cutler erroneously claims that Glover was executed for

“…saying the Rosary in Gaelic while kneeling before a statue of the Virgin. She had also been charged with making the sign of the cross and of saying her prayers in Latin.”

Cutler’s myth-making also includes the false claim that Cotton Mather requested that “Irish youths be brought over by England” in 1654. Since Mather was not born until 1663 this is quite impossible. Cutler also mis-attributed this falsehood to Drake’s History of Antiquities of Boston.
1988–1990

This narrative was consolidated and given official imprimatur in the late 1980s mainly thanks to work of the Jesuit priest and historian Rev. Vincent A. Lapomarda, S.J. Lapomarda was the Chairman of the Committee on Historical Memorials for the International Order of Alhambra and an influential individual regarding the immortalisation of the myth on a commemorative plaque in Boston. This plaque dedicated to “Goodwife Ann Glover” was erected at Our Lady of Victories Shrine in 1988 and according to the Catholic News Agency “it was placed Church on the tercentennial anniversary of her death in 1988 by the Order of Alhambra, a Catholic fraternity whose mission includes commemorating Catholic historical persons, places and events.”

It is commendable that any group would take it upon themselves publicly highlight and commemorate the injustice done to Goodwife Glover in Boston, but unfortunately much of the biographical details on this plaque (which as far I know is the only public marker of this event) are at best speculation and at worst fiction, including, but not limited to, the following claims;

- That Goodwife Glover had been shipped to Barbados from Ireland during the Cromwellian period as a “slave”.

- That her husband, who in this narrative was also enslaved in Barbados, was murdered there by Puritans for refusing to renounce his Catholicism. The plaque narrates Glover’s fate as follows.
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But how did this bogus history à la Dijon make it all the way through to a piece of public commemoration without anyone questioning the absence of primary evidence? It’s likely the answer centrally lies with aforementioned Vincent A. Lapomarda. He was the most influential driver behind a campaign to memorialise Glover’s execution in Boston as a case of Catholic martyrdom in 1988 as according to the American Benedictine Review Boston City Council passed the resolution designating November 16 as Goody Glover Day “at the instigation of Fr. Lapomarda”. While the City Council resolution does not mention the slavery narrative that I focus on here, it does propagate a number of other myths used by the authors to frame the scapegoating of Glover as being an open and shut case of anti-Catholic bigotry and sectarianism, including the fantastical claim that “she refused to save herself by recanting her faith.” On the 17 November 1988 a Boston Globe editorial repeated Lapomarda’s narrative, but instead of mentioning him by name falsely claimed it was “generally acknowledged that Glover was hanged because she was Catholic and refused to renounce her religion.” This coordinated campaign was an exercise in Catholic martyrrology being presented as history.
RESOLUTION OF COUNCILLOR O'NEILL DESIGNATING NOVEMBER 16 AS "GOODY" GLOVER DAY IN BOSTON, COMMEMORATING THE TRICENTENARY OF HER RELIGIOUS MARTYRDOM HERE

WHEREAS: Three hundred years ago this day in Boston, on November 16, 1688, Goodwife Ann Glover, a penniless Irish laundress, was hanged, refusing to renounce her Catholic religion; and

"Goody" Glover thus became one of the early Puritan Colony martyrs to the witchcraft mania which was to spread to Salem four years later; and

She was executed one day after her trial in Boston amidst an atmosphere unsympathetic to her Gaelic speech and disapproving of religious relics found in a search of meagre living quarters the widow and her daughter had; and

At her trial, without benefit of counsel, inarticulate in her defense, she was convicted of witchcraft based on charges stemming from the tantrums of a young girl;

The eve of her execution, she refused to save herself by recanting her faith, then failed to recite the "Our Father" in the version approved by the Rev. Cotton Mather when he visited her cell;

Goody Glover's martyrdom has been recognized by scholars although her name never has been cleared on the records;

This past Sunday, a plaque to Goodwife Ann Glover was dedicated in Our Lady of Victories Shrine in Boston as a donation by the Order of Alhambra; therefore be it:

RESOLVED: The Boston City Council on this anniversary of Goodwife Ann Glover's death and as a token of redemption of her name, declares November 16, 1988, as "Goody Glover Day" in Boston.

My sincere thanks to archivists Kayla Skillin and John McColgan of the City of Boston Archives for their prompt assistance in digging out the Glover resolution sponsored by Albert "Dapper" O'Neill. Image courtesy of City of Boston Archives.
I cannot proceed without saying a little about the sponsor of this resolution, a certain Mr. Albert “Dapper” O’Neil. O’Neil was an Irish-American Democrat and an avid supporter of the pro-segregation Governor of Alabama George Wallace since 1968. O’Neil promoted Wallace’s presidential campaign in the Boston area in 1976 and was also involved with segregationist White Citizens’ Councils at this time. He was an overt racist and a prominent ROAR campaigner against the desegregation of school buses in Boston. He once referred to Boston’s Asian community as “g**ks” and during a visit to the troubled Hyde Park High School in 1972 he told reporters that he was not “going to stand by and let those n*****s take over this school.” On the far-right John Birch Society “a lot of the things they said are coming true” and in 1999 he openly expressed his support for the segregationist Council of Conservative Citizens “I’m not a member of it, but they are a good group…they are concerned about this country and what goes on in it.” O’Neil’s long standing links to these far-right segregationist groups came to the fore in 1999 when he was the only Boston City Councilor to vote ‘nay’ on a resolution to construct a statue of Martin Luther King Jr. near City Hall.

Asked why he voted against it, he said: “Because I don’t make deals at the City Council. I vote any way I want.” O’Neil went on to say he had placed a call to Chicago Mayor Richard Daley because “Martin Luther King made a speech there [in Chicago] and they nearly burned it down the next day.”
Lapomarda published an article arguing for Glover’s martyrdom in the *American Benedictine Review* in 1990 and once again he appears not to have questioned the validity of a source which he so heavily relied on for these aspects of the narrative, i.e. Harold Dijon and his inventions. This piece of work has two major problems. Lapomarda’s approach forsakes context and massages evidence as it attempts to present Glover as a Catholic Martyr and its uncritically adopts the martyrdom work of Harold Dijon in what is a textbook case of confirmation bias. For example

As for the details of Glover’s life, very little is known prior to her arrival in Boston, where she lived for at least six years prior to her death. Although she was born in Ireland, the year and the place are not known. However, she and her husband, like many Catholics, were deported to the Barbados in the time of Oliver Cromwell (1653-58). Apparently, after her husband died, she and her daughter were shipped to Boston, where both worked as servants.6

No prizes for guessing what footnote number 6 refers to...
This claim that “according to Dijon, the Puritans has been after her since 1682, when they had failed to convert her from Roman Catholicism” is, once again, an utter fantasy as there is just no historical evidence to support it. In summary, Lapomarda, along with a number of journalists, authors and politicians in Boston at this time simply failed and/or declined to cross-reference the sensational claims made in a dubious secondary source with the available primary sources.

1990

A genealogical work by Margaret E. Fitzgerald and Joseph A. King entitled *The Uncounted Irish in Canada and the United States* claimed that

Ann Glover was a double casualty of the Puritans. As recounted by Cotton Mather, she testified that she and her husband had been sent from Ireland to Barbadoes [sic] in the time of Cromwell. After her husband died, she was brought to Boston...

It is clear that despite citing him Fitzgerald and King did not read Cotton Mather’s account as they falsely attribute the “Glover was an Irish slave” mythos to his recollection of events.

2008

A more recent work to propagate the narrative that Goodwife Glover was an “Irish slave” is *White Cargo*, a deeply flawed work of popular history which I’ve reviewed in detail here. The author’s claim that Glover’s story opened “a strange window into the world endured by enslaved Irish men and women.”
2011–’14

In 2011 the myth appeared in contemporary academia when Alan Titley (Professor of Modern Irish in UCC) published Nailing Theses, a collection of his work which included ‘Craz’d in Her Intellectuals’: The Case of Goody Glover, the Irish-speaking Witch. In this essay Titley gives the impression that the tale of Glover had been an “Irish slave” in Barbados as being one based on irrefutable historical evidence. He also added some mythology of his own into the mix by claiming that Glover’s surname was “obviously her slave name”.

“We can be certain, however, that it was not Ann Glover, because Glover is obviously her slave name, or the name of her master.”

This is a curious claim to make with such confidence. Unlike slaves, indentured servants did not inherit the names of their masters. They were not forced to alter their names. There is simply no evidence to support Titley’s statement. A servant’s identity and surname were independent of their masters and remained their own. Instead this bogus claim, of Irish servants taking their English master’s names, amounts to a casual co-option of one of the most enduring aspects of the history of racialised chattel slavery in the Americas.

It is also a mistake to arbitrarily demark a surname as being inherently “English” and forced upon this individual, when the evidence tells us that this surname was present in Ireland centuries prior to Goodwife Glover’s birth. It’s a needless sensationalism which comes about by ahistorically conflating presentism and ethnocentrism with patronymic and monoglot purity. Genealogists know all too well that surnames are notorious in this regard. While the semantic origin of a surname may be narrowed down geographically, the nationality/identity of its bearer can never be assumed. According to master genealogist Edward McLysaght (The Surnames of Ireland, 6th edition) the surname
Glover is an English occupational name that was found in Ireland since medieval times. Thus the Glover surname had been present in Ireland going all the way back to the Anglo-Norman conquest. In *Sloinnte Uile Éireann* (All Ireland Surnames), Seán de Bhlubh dates it slightly later as an “English occupational name which has been in Ireland since [the] 15th century” but I’m inclined to agree with McLysaght as there are references to Glovers, likely Anglo-Normans, who were living in Medieval Limerick in the 13th and 14th centuries; Maurice Le Glover in 1295 and William Glover (Le Glovere) in 1313.

“How many there are of the children of Oliver’s soldiers in Ireland who cannot speak one word of English”

Titley’s generalisation also works both ways, e.g. see an early marriage in Saint Giles-without-Cripplegate Church in London between Annes Glover and Daniel Connell in 1566. Did Annes adopt a “slave name” upon marrying a man with a Gaelic Irish surname? Likewise Titley also fails to discuss how Cromwellian soldiers began marrying Irish Catholics soon after they arrived. Anticipation of this lead Henry Ireton to “forbade all officers and soldiers under his command to marry catholic Irish women who could not satisfactorily prove the sincerity of their conversion to protestantism” (*Dictionary of National Biography*, 1885–1900, Vol. 29)

I therefore thinke fit to let all know that if any officer or souldier of this army shall marry with any of the women of this nation that are Papists or have lately been such, and whose change of religion is not or cannot be judged by fit persons, such as shall be appointed for that end, to flow from a reall worke of God upon their hearts convincing them of the falshood and evill of their owne waies and goodnesse and truth of that way they turne unto; or that (from any circumstances accompanying their action) it shall be judged to be but from corrupt and carnall ends that they have made this change, I say that any officer who marries any such shall thereby be judged and held uncapable of command or trust in this army; and for any souldier that marries any such, if he be a horseman he shall be dismounted and cashiered from horse service to serve only in foote service (if at all), and a footeman so married shall be cashiered from his foote service and to serve onely as a pionier and neither of them be held capable of preferment for the future unlesse God doe by a change wrought upon them (with those whom they have married) take off this reproach and so give us ground to restore them.
The myth that Goodwife Glover, the Irish woman executed for witchcraft in Boston in 1688, was an “Irish slave”

Given at Waterford the first day of May 1651,
H. Ireton

This was followed in 1652 by an order of the Commissioners of the Council of State who promised land, pay, position, &c. to their soldiers but only if they did not marry Irish women.

Dunlop, Ireland under the Commonwealth: being a selection of documents relating to the government of Ireland from 1651 to 1659, p. 121

These measures failed. By the close of the 17th century a contemporary lamented that many of the children of Cromwell’s adventurers were Irish speakers.

“How many there are of the children of Oliver’s soldiers in Ireland who cannot speak one word of English...”

Titley’s essay makes other dubious arguments and claims which simply do not stand up to scrutiny.

“After the Irish were defeated the English parliament did not know what to do with the 35–40,000 Irish political prisoners they had on their hands. Cromwell himself wanted them transported, basically as slaves to Barbados.”

Most of the Irish soldiers who left Ireland after the war voluntarily transported themselves to Spain or Flanders as agreed to in the terms of their surrender. Some were also sent, sporadically, to the West Indies and to Virginia.
An indentured servant is not a “fancy word” for a slave. Slavery and servitude were legally and socially distinct colonial institutions. For an exploration of the differences between indentured servitude and slavery in the Anglo-Caribbean, see this article that I co-authored with Laura McAtackney and Matt Reilly in *History Ireland* magazine.

“There is some ambiguity about whether [Glover] knew any English at all, although this is improbable.”

There is no ambiguity and it is not improbable at all. It’s right there in the primary sources. Here’s Cotton Mather: “she understood the English very well, and had accustomed her whole Family to none but that Language in her former Conversation.”

Thro’ the Efficacy of a Charm, I suppose, used upon her, by one or some of her Crue, the Court could receive Answers from her in none but the Irish, which was her Native Language; altho she understood the English very well, and had accustomed her whole Family to none but that Language in her former Conversation; and therefore the Communication between the Bench and the Bar, was now cheefly convey’d by two honest and faithful men that were Interpreters. It was long before she could with any direct Answers plead unto her Indictment; and when she did plead, it was with Confession, rather than Denial of her Guilt.
Mather also recalled that she spoke English to him on at least one occasion during their conversations.

As for those Four, She told who they were; and for her Prince, her account plainly was, that he was the Devil. She entertained me with nothing but Irish, which Language I had not Learning enough to understand without an Interpreter; only one time, when I was representing unto her That and How her Prince had cheated her, as her self would quickly find; she reply’d, I think in English, and with passion too, “If it be so, I am for that.”

But by far the most troubling part of Titley’s essay is a long section where he falsely claims that Irish servants were “commercially branded”, “regularly” raped and “it may well have been that the treatment was worse” than that experienced by enslaved Africans. He goes on to say that “there are many accounts of how the fate of an ‘indentured servant’ was more savage than that of a slave” while on the other hand “no difference was made between Irish and Africans.”

I’ll now quote this entire section to show just how influential Sean O’Callaghan’s To Hell or Barbados has been on the cultural consciousness and collective memory of this event in Ireland. Each of the false claims in this section of Titley’s essay were likely drawn from O’Callaghan’s victimology (a book which I’ve critiqued here)

“There is no doubt but that Irish women were rounded up and seized for transportation abroad. Gangs of Cromwellian soldiers roamed the countryside and drove them to Cork where they were taken to Bristol, sometimes commercially branded, regularly violated, but ultimately put on board a ship and wended to their final solution or destination.
We then have to imagine that she was shipped in one of those ships that were exactly the same as those used for the burgeoning and beginning African slave trade. As we have no original extant descriptions of the Irish slave trade, we must presume that it did not differ hugely in kind from the African one. **The intention was certainly the same, and it may well have been that the treatment was worse.**

**There are many accounts of how the fate of an ‘indentured servant’ was more savage than that of a slave.** A slave was, after all a possession, whereas an indentured servant was somebody you could use for a number of years and then discard. A bit like owning a house that you will take care of, or renting one that you can abuse, or minding your own car, while being less than careful about one that you hire. This was certainly the opinion of many of the slave owners.

The life of the Irish slaves, or servants was not pretty but pretty appalling. Men, of course, worked in the fields, but so did women. The initial economy of the islands was based on tobacco, but as the growing of sugar grew in importance **more slaves from Africa were imported, in the belief that their skins were tougher.**

**Black hide was used to the sun, and could suffer more whipping than the pale blanched skin of poor white trash.** Growing racism also contended that blacks did not suffer as much pain as whites, or it may have been that the grunts of their language were indistinguishable from the grunts of pain to the untutored ear. Doubt was cast on the fullness of their humanity, and evidence was never difficult to find for somebody versed in the debating stratagems of the universal enlightenment."

“We do know, however, that she was married in Barbados, probably to another Irishman. There is an account that he was flogged to death for insubordination, or for participation in one of the many slave rebellions that were common enough throughout the Caribbean. There was a big revolt in Barbados in November 1656 where the Irish and the Africans joined forces, but it was a rebellion that was brutally crushed. It may have been after this rebellion that he was flogged, as **no difference was made between Irish and Africans, no matter what was thought about their thickness of skin.** It is also reported that while he was dying, he accused Ann of being a witch.

The punishments for attempted escape or for rebellion were severe. **They were nailed to the ground with sticks on every extremity and burned limb by limb, and**
ultimately executed and other pleasant things like that what taught them manners. Sometimes molten wax was poured over their skins along with some salt and pepper to better induce understanding and civility. We cannot be sure if this is how Ann Glover’s husband died but it has the sting and the rack of truth about it.”

Titley expanded on this work in 2014 by publishing an epic Irish language poem about Glover entitled An Bhean Feasa, but unfortunately much of the same inaccuracies and conjecture about Glover were repeated anew.

2014

In a YouTube video about the Glover case, Prof. Robert Allison of Suffolk University, Boston repeated the popular myth that Glover “came to Boston by way of Barbados” and that “her husband had died in Barbados.”
The myth that Goodwife Glover, the Irish woman executed for witchcraft in Boston in 1688, was an “Irish slave”

The only comment beneath this video was left two months ago and it accuses Allison of being “incorrect” for not regurgitating the myth in full.

Sleeping Lioness 2 months ago
This is incorrect and fabricating the original story. Goodwife Glover (Ann ‘Goody’ Glover) and her husband (along with thousands of other Irish) were deported by Oliver Cromwell to Barbados as slaves. Her husband was killed because he would not denounce his Catholic faith. Ann was hanged because she could not recite the ‘Our Father’ in English. Gaelic was her first language. Ann Goody Glover was Catholic.

The myth is thus alive and well online.

This is part seven of my series debunking and/or contextualising the “Irish slaves” meme. See Part One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six.

If you wish to support my work, you can make a donation here.

Postscript

The following abstract is from English Adventurers and Emigrants, 1609–1660: Abstracts of Examinations in the High Court of Admiralty with Reference to Colonial America which was compiled and published by Peter Wilson Coldham in 1984. It is the most detailed account we have of an individual voyage that formed part of the Cromwellian policy to forcibly transport Irish people to the West Indies. It just so happens that there was a “witch” put on board who was quickly “put ashore by the general consent of the passengers and crew because they feared she would be dangerous to the voyage.”

ENGLISH ADVENTURERS
VOLUME 72

JOHN JEFFERYS & ROBERT LLEWELLYN v. JACOB MOULSON, --- SMITH & -----FRANKLYN.
18 to 23 November 1657

Robert Oldfield of Spalding, Lincolnshire, gent aged 22. He went passenger in the Unity, Mr. Jacob Moulson, which sailed from Gravesend in June 1654, in order to reside in Maryland in Virginia with Mr. Cornwallis. The ship was detained in the Downs by contrary winds until August 1654 when she went to Dublin. There White, a factor for the plaintiffs, had promised to provide a full loading of servants but only 30 could be found though others were obtained by Jacob Moulson. After loading, 2 servants escaped in the ship's skiff and another, a woman who was suspected of being a witch, was put ashore by the general consent of the passengers and crew because they feared she would be dangerous to the voyage.

The Unity sailed from Dublin in September 1654 but was detained at Courtrai, France, by contrary winds and then encountered a tempest before meeting the Matthew of London, Mr. Fox, and the Hopeful Luke at sea. They met with further storms in November and December during which the ship was holed but she was able to continue her voyage while the passengers manned the pumps continuously. Under threat from the passengers Moulson agreed to steer the ship for Barbados but missed his course and arrived at Antigua in January 1654/5 where the ship was viewed and declared unfit to continue her voyage. Before the Unity's passengers were disposed of the deponent went to Nevis and St. Christopher's where he heard that the Hopeful Luke had been cast away at Bermuda.

Samuel Church of Writtle, Essex, mariner aged 26. He was a private mariner on the Unity. The plaintiffs had agreed with the defendants, who were owners of the ship, to pay Jacob Moulson for the transportation of 200 servants from Ireland to Virginia but the ship was delayed in Dublin because of the small number
available. It was reported in Dublin that the witch put aboard the Unity had been turned off another vessel bound for Virginia or Barbados. Moulson laid out his own money to procure a further 39 passengers but only 53 were put aboard in Ireland. After the ship had arrived in Antigua 2 servants escaped in a canoe while 13 died there and the deponent helped to bury them. 35 were sold at the best rates obtainable. The ship, which carried 24 mariners, remained for 18 months at Antigua awaiting repairs but these were never carried out.

Abraham Clarke of Deptford, Kent, shipwright aged 25. He was carpenter of the Unity. In Dublin Jacob Moule employed a local joiner to help procure 53 men and women to be shipped aboard as servants for Virginia. The witch who had been shipped prophesied that the Unity would never get away from Dublin while there was a whole block in her and, as soon as they had weighed anchor, the main Jew block, though strongly bound with iron, broke in pieces causing the mainyard to fall down. The witch also prophesied that the ship would not reach Virginia or Barbados and would suffer great extremities before reaching land without loss of life. The deponent took a woman servant aboard whom he sold at Antigua for 550 lbs of sugar.