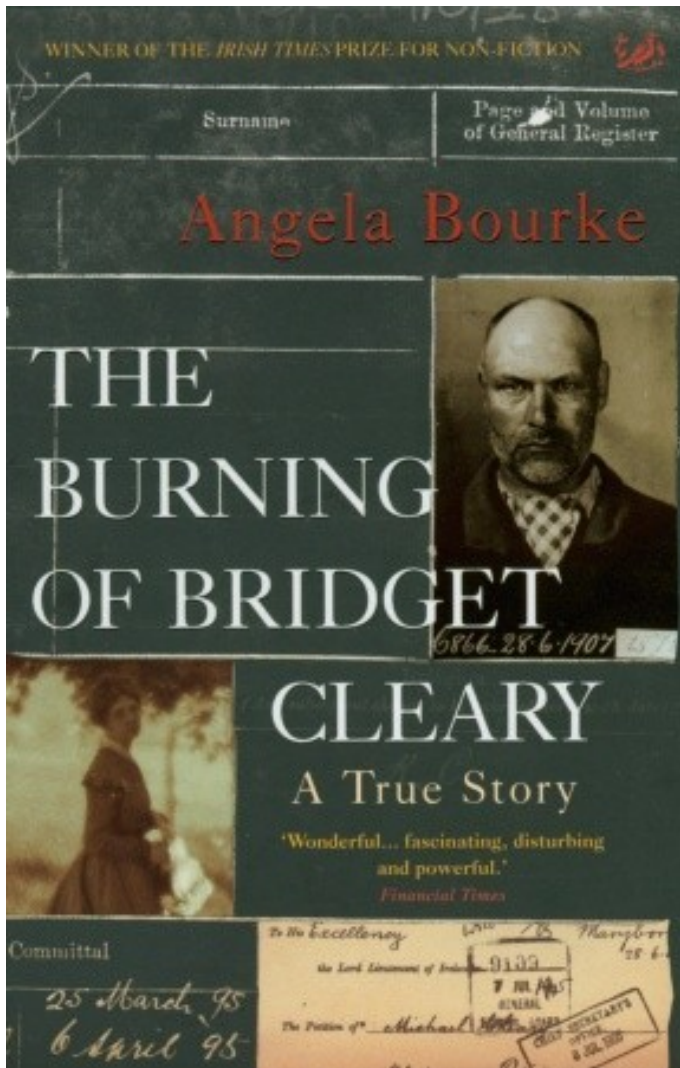

Angela Bourke

The Burning Of Bridget Cleary: A True Story



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Author: Angela Bourke

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Description

In 1895 twenty-six-year-old Bridget Cleary disappeared from her house in rural Tipperary. At first, some said that the fairies had taken her into their stronghold in a nearby hill, from where she would emerge, riding a white horse. But then her badly burned body was found in a shallow grave. Her husband, father, aunt and four cousins were arrested and charged, while newspapers in nearby Clonmel, and then in Dublin, Cork, London and further afield attempted to make sense of what had happened.

In this lurid and fascinating episode, set in the last decade of the nineteenth century, we witness the collision of town and country, of storytelling and science, of old and new. The torture and burning of Bridget Cleary caused a sensation in 1895 which continues to reverberate more than a hundred years later.

Winner of the Irish Times Prize for Non-Fiction

Insightful reviews

Kealan O'ver: Fascinating account of a horrific incident in Irish history given greater context with extensive accounts of the countries political situation of the time.

Eileen: The sections of the book that dealt with the actual crime and it's aftermath were interesting (and horrifying). However, the author frequently digresses from the actual case. Her digressions come in the form of putting the case in to the context of politics (the Homeland Act in British Parliment), race & class (poor, illiterate catholics in rural Ireland), social change (the new generation born to farmers and laborers who were now educated and learning trades), and superstition and the oral tradition. Unfortunately, many of Bourke's digressions read like they were written for an academic journal (and unfortunately, not a very interesting academic journal). I had expected that "The Burning of Bridget Cleary" would have had a lot more information about the Clearys and their family. I'm guessing that information from surviving historical documents and contemporary accounts were limited, which is why it seemed that there was so much 'filler' in this book. It probably should have been written as a chapter in a book, or a magazine article.

Sara: Goodreads readers won't like this because it's not a novel, nor is it the novelization of a crime -- we don't, in the end, get a window into individual motives and interpersonal relationships that led to the crime. In fact, Bourke's aim in writing the book is to show that our understanding and interpretation of individual motives in any given crime is always dependent on a broader cultural milieu. For Bourke, what makes the burning of Bridget Cleary important is that you can't understand it if you're going to use just one lens for thinking about it (for instance "modern justice" or "rural folkways"). The burning of the literate, financially stable, married, childless milliner in rural Ireland came out of a highly specific moment in which either lens was possible.

Which means on the one hand that Bourke has chosen a crime that's so completely WEIRD that

you'll be riveted, even if you've got no interest in Ireland at all. A husband desperately anxious about his wife's week-long illness, seeks out religious (priests), medical (doctors), and folk ("fairy doctors") help for her. And right at the moment when she seems to have turned a corner and gotten better, he burns her to death, claiming that the fairies have swapped his true wife out with a body double. Did I mention the part where 8 other people in the house look on and may or may not have assisted?

On the other hand, if you're a reader of murder mysteries, this book won't take you where you want to go -- what was their marriage like? Can we trust what their neighbors say? Did the husband get along with his in-laws? Instead, Bourke uses the incident to paint a picture of an Ireland becoming modern under English auspices that are also destroying a specifically Irish way of life. That means that Bourke brings in a lot of what reviewers of this book find irrelevant -- the Oscar Wilde trials, the developing police system in Ireland, the impending land bill, and a host of fascinating details on fairy lore and folk culture in Ireland. For better or worse, Bourke's not going to give you an episode of "Snapped."

And while "strong independent woman burned to death for failing to conform to the patriarchy" is the back-cover gloss on this book, I don't actually think Bourke is endorsing that interpretation over and above any others. She produces much striking evidence for why no one in the community would have told anyone -- judges, police, magistrates -- what actually happened or why it happened, and she also illuminates several occasions during which everyone could have easily coordinated the story they were going to tell officials. If there's any "what really happened" available, it would be that England, after 900 years of exploiting and abusing rural Ireland, couldn't realistically expect that anyone there was going to give them the real version of what went on, no matter how gruesome the crime.

Jean Carlton: This publication is set an engaging subject - the powerful trust in fairies in eire round the flip of the twentieth century which performed a component within the burning demise of Bridget Cleary by means of her husband and several family members and group members. I felt the tale and the issues made may were extra readable if much less information have been incorporated - for my very own flavor anyway. yet for an intensive account of the testimony and courtroom complaints it's very complete. I had now not considered words like, 'she's now not herself today' reflecting the concept that of anything 'other' taking on the body. It supplied how to clarify or justify habit that used to be atypical or outdoor the norm. It gave mom and dad of a deformed baby a justification to finish their lives in the event that they believed it was once probably not that kid yet a changling. The time period 'stroke' for cerebral hemorrhage comes from 'fairy stroke' . Oral culture , folklore and fairy trust isn't a question of intelligence yet of worldwide view. Politics and faith performed a massive part.

courtney: the again of the e-book describes it as "microhistory" and that, i feel, is an ideal approach to talk about this story. angela bourke layers and layers history, economics, social mores and pressures, political movements, non secular and non secular ideals and behaviors as she tells the tale of bridget cleary, a lady whose loss of life via burning in her personal kitchen, by the hands of her husband and within the presence of her father and lots of cousins. bourke many times highlights the variations among writing and non-writing societies and this kind of aspect that may be present in the spoken tales of the illiterate defendants during this

trial. the booklet presupposes a few figuring out of the tortured historical past of the house rule bill, and a few irish history, yet supplies sufficient historical past in so much fields. bourke makes use of the cleary case as a place to begin for discussions approximately domestic rule, the irish literary revival, household perform in rural irish society, the evolving function of the catholic church, and so on. she reminds us that round the comparable time as an irish woman, suspected of being a fairy-changeling, used to be burned to loss of life in her home, oscar wilde sued the marquess of roseberry for libel, a go well with that grew to become on him and despatched him to legal for indecency. round the comparable time that the family members of bridget cleary used to be concocting and force-feeding bridget sour natural treatments combined with new milk and brushing aside the medication despatched by means of the neighborhood doctor, authors like woman gregory and w b yeats have been celebrating the whimsy and magic of rural ireland. social darwinism justified the continuing oppression of the irish throughout the advice that this event, in its backwardness and superstition, exemplified the "darkness" of the irish people. the publication additionally discusses the oppressed people's hassle of compliance with imposed legislation and the readiness of the society to "fix" its personal "problems." i like to recommend this to lovers of yeats and wilde and to an individual drawn to irish historical past -- relatively the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

Lanea: Bourke expands on an essay she wrote formerly approximately Cleary's death. She examines women's paintings within the period--Bridget Cleary used to be a milliner and dress-maker, and made loads of her personal money--and how males reacted to the adjustments in family strength therefore set in motion. Bridget Cleary's homicide was once horrific--she was once in poor health for numerous days, and her husband engaged either the drunken neighborhood doctor, who clinically determined Mrs. C with bronchitis and gave her medicine; and a "quack doctor" who claimed that Mrs. Cleary were taken by way of the fairies and that the girl in her position used to be a changeling who has to be pushed out via fire. Cleary's husband and family tortured her a bit, trying to force out the fairy spirit, after which her husband burned her to death. That, apparently, is the wages of uppity. Bourke skillfully frames the tale within the broader Irish, British, and worldwide heritage of the day. Fairy lore and Cleary's homicide have been used as arguments opposed to granting Irish domestic Rule, in want of bigotry opposed to Catholics, in assaults opposed to Oscar Wilde (hence the trendy pejorative "fairy" used opposed to homosexuals), and in an inaccurate type of Cultural anthropology arguing that the majority parents outdoors of britain have been brutes and savages, and therefore incapable of self-governance, civilization, or righteousness. The ebook is fantastic--in each feel of the word. Bourke is a cautious researcher, a talented and fascinating writer, and has larger balls than lots of the male historians outselling her through writing simply approximately men. She's no longer dismissive of folklore--just enraged by means of it is manipulation to excuse family abuse, murder, and subjugation of a complete country. i will hold interpreting her books, and i am turning into more and more drawn to egg costs within the Victorian and Georgian ages. Please, subscribe to us in our hysteria.

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