

Spiritual Wrestling: the making of demonic possession in early modern English
Protestantism

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Introduction

The intention of this work is to assist our understanding of demonic possession in early modern England. To achieve this two particular means will be employed. The first is a series of close readings of individual cases, arranged chronologically for purposes beyond the natural habits of the historian. The second is to bring these readings, and the current historiography, into conversation with areas of historiography which can enhance our understanding and which, I will show, have suffered by their detachment from studies of demonic possession and, more broadly, studies of witchcraft. Those conversations will be with the religious politics of puritanism and medical history. The common interests have been insufficiently appreciated and, as a consequence, critical engagement, lessons learned and potential elucidation have not been sufficiently taken advantage of. The third conversation is with ethnological studies of possession on a methodological level, partly as a way of raising different questions and partly as a way of heightening awareness of assumptions within the current historiography, assumptions, because they tend to be taken as given rather than made explicit, which provide almost invisible parameters to the boundaries of engagement.

The chronological framework of the first two-thirds and the close readings are seen as partly corrective, partly analytical and partly preparatory. They are corrective in that the current historiography tends to supply a particular account of the symptoms of possession, the contexts and circumstances of its occurrence and the gender, social background, age and religious temperament of those afflicted. A more detailed account will show that the actions, behaviours, physical and spiritual experienced judged to be symptomatic of possession change through time. Similarly, the nature of those possessed will be shown to be broader and more complex than the impression given in the current literature and the symptoms that receive the greatest emphasis, once placed against a more inclusive account of what was recorded, can be shown to be in danger of being perceived as a selectivity to suit particular models of explanation. The analysis will consist of an effort to make the reader more completely aware of what it is that needs explaining, consisting of an effort to generate a stronger sense of the 'unfamiliar', of the distance between the differing natures of the 'credible' in the early modern context and our own.

There is a tension between showing a certain selectivity within parts of the current historiography on possession and avoiding an overwhelming abundance of detail in response, risking losing the reader's attention in a prodigal mass of evidence. To avoid the latter but to prevent suggestions of hypocrisy, the following accounts will be selective but explicitly selective and to explicitly recognised purposes. This will involve a critical cross-referencing with the existing historiography, necessarily drawing attention to under- or unaddressed elements in these accounts. The first purpose will be to provide a more complete appreciation of the specific symptoms judged to be sufficient 'proof' of possession along with their gradual accumulation and, more rarely, their loss through different cases. This will be accompanied by suggested influence of precedents. The second selectivity is to recount each case developing on a smaller-scale temporality, as far as can be ascertained, to assess how each instance started as a variously understood anomaly, gradually conforming to an

acceptable 'possession narrative', sometimes with some form of resolution. This connects to the third selectivity which is the power relations within each account of possession, with different powers and empowerments operating to fasten meaning to the experience. These power relations were within the possessed, the family, friends and community within which the possession happened with social status playing a role, but also within the usually later arrivals of medics and clerics and sometimes judicial authorities. While they have held greater power and thereby greater influence, they were not always pulling in the same direction and it will be shown that their powers were by no means determinative.

Issues of power and control raise the benefits of conversations with other historiographies. Placing the accounts of possession in relation to the historiography of religion and the politics of religion will, in different ways, assist the apprehension of these accounts as well as the changing assessment of demonic possession. The accounts of possession and the criticisms of them which we have were recorded for a purpose and to engage with them without paying attention to why such accounts were judged worthy of recording and circulating either in print or manuscript would hamper both the assessment of their 'truth' on the particular level and also efforts to explain the temporal variation, why public attention was seen to be needed for cases of demonic possession more at some times than others. (As will be shown, this should not be taken as a direct correlation between instances of possession and their detailed recording or publication.) The purposes of such publicity vary considerably, from the larger political scene, to the regional, the local and familial. This contextualisation of the texts will be taken further in relation to the historiography of medicine in the third section. The historiography and closer attention to particular primary sources is intended to be revealing in both directions, enabling an appreciation of the more complex relationship between the understanding of natural illness, demonic possession and the inter-related diagnosis and treatment of both. Furthermore, having mentioned the development, assignation of meaning as a process within each particular case, this will need to be developed through time. It will also be shown that once the meaning of a possession narrative was 'fastened' in a text, almost detached from the individuals possessed, the meaning was far from immutable and the same case could appear in different contexts with different appraisals attached.

The remainder of this introduction, as a necessary preface to what follows, will make explicit the historiographical and methodological conversations that have shaped this study. The conversations will continue throughout but more as background noise with the emphasis much more on the proposed comprehension of the experience and understanding of diabolic possession. After the opening with the broader historiography of late medieval and early modern Europe there will be a lengthy engagement with the ethnography of possession and related phenomena. These sections are partly about how the questions which inform this study were formed and, for the first, to set out the conceptual framework within which early modern demoniacs in England were framed. This will help to set out the purposes of the successive readings, setting out the direction and cohesion of bringing these disparate studies together. That will provide the right setting in which to return to some of the broader historiography, both to acknowledge common ground but also to make clear differences in approach and intention. That will be followed by an

overview of the relevant demonological treatises relating to possession with a different temporal emphasis to existing literature and to make clear both their prime concerns but also their limitations in constructing possession events on the ground, as it were. In the course of this guide debts to existing literature on English demoniacs will be made clear but the opportunity will also be taken to make clear the distinctiveness of this particular work and the differences in intent and focus from related treatments.

I

The first conversation is with the historiography of diabolic possession and its contexts in late medieval and early modern Europe. The intent of this section is threefold. This has been useful partly as a means of encouraging different questions to be asked and partly as a lens through which to examine the English variations. This is not simply a licence to force the English material into a frame emerging from other regions, for the differences are as noteworthy as the similarities; the 'givens' in other treatments are thought-provoking when viewed with an alien eye. Alongside this is an appreciation of studies that run parallel to this study with the effort taken to show how the common grounds are far from comprehensive, that different approaches and different questions reveal lacunae, hiatuses which I hope to address. Thirdly, some space will be given to the treatment of demonic possession at the level of intellectual history, partly because that is a useful ingredient to the aim of this work but also to make it clear that that valuable work does not serve as a means on its own as a body sufficient to achieve the broader aims of this work.

An element that has appeal to current readers of possession accounts and has a prominent place in the English historiography is the occurrence of 'fraudulent' demoniacs. In particular cases (rather than in the general possibility of possession), there were 'sceptics' within Protestant churches and Roman Catholicism, but it should be remembered that each had their own agenda, sometimes in favour of reform, sometimes with fear or distrust of change.

¹ One source for the Spanish form of 'simulated possession' was a mistrust of interiorised spirituality, leading to substantial space given to guides for discriminating between divine, demonic, and fraudulent visions, with the emphasis shifting, from the late sixteenth century, from distinguishing between divine and diabolic to between sincerity and deception, from issues of spirituality to moral ones.² With the eventual emergence of a substantial literature setting out the requisite symptoms (with denominational variations) including unnatural physical strength, seizures, vomiting, fits and so on, as well as blasphemy and xenoglossia or at least apprehension of other languages, we tend to be under-appreciative of the scale

¹ Benjamin J. Kaplan, 'Possessed by the Devil? A very public dispute in Utrecht', *Renaissance Quarterly* 49 (1996), 738-41; Alison Weber, 'Between ecstasy and exorcism: religious negotiation in sixteenth-century Spain', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 (1993), 221-34.

² Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: possession, mysticism, & discernment in early modern Catholicism* (Chicago, 2007), 188, 192.

of the task. Simulation of demonic possession was not an easy choice.³ In any case, there is no straightforward contrast between genuine and fraudulent possession in most cases. Marc Duncan, a physician but with a broad intellectual palette, muddied the waters in his analysis of the possession at Loudun. Starting with the assumption that there was no fabrication, he went on to ask if the Ursuline nuns could have genuinely believed themselves to be possessed without being so and he went on to consider the possible impact of rigorous spiritual discipline, the danger of attributing 'certain evil desires' condemned by their confessor to a possessing spirit or a confessor interpreting strange behaviour as a symptom of possession and then, through his authority, convincing them of the same.⁴ Perhaps the more important point in this context is that for fraudulence to be possible, let alone attractive, then the principle of authentic possession had to be tenable: 'deceit was necessarily as culture-bound as the genuine behaviour being simulated'.⁵

The issue of deceit leads to the attractions of simulating possession or accepting such a diagnosis. At this stage I would only add a couple of points to the licence of misbehaviour and attention-seeking familiar to the English historiography. The first is that accepting, possibly reluctantly, oneself into a possession narrative offered, on the one hand, a voice without responsibility and, on the other, a termination, an escape, possibly an exoneration and, not to be underestimated, an understanding.⁶ Accepting the fact of possession elucidated the suffering, hence alleviated it, and promised relief.⁷

A note of caution also needs to be attached to what, at its worst, amounts to 'explaining away' possession. One strand of this is to portray the corruption of political propagandist interests as so prevalent as to disable any further reading, a strong part of D.P. Walker's thesis.⁸ In the Anglophone literature a stronger place is given to psychological or medical models which can be useful but less so when foisted upon the subject rather heavily-handedly, at the expense of contemporary understandings.⁹ The implicit assumptions of this are far from helpful.

³ *Idem*, 'A divine apparition or demonic possession? Female agency and Church authority in demonic possession in early modern France', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996), 1043-4. Xenoglossolia is speaking particular, recognised languages, as opposed to glossolalia, speaking in tongues which need not be comprehensible.

⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, trans. by Michael B. Smith (Chicago, 2000), 135-6.

⁵ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), 394.

⁶ Michelle Marshman, 'Exorcism as empowerment: a new idiom', *Journal of Religious History* 23 (1999), 267, 273, 280.

⁷ Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 28.

⁸ D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: possession and exorcism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries* (London, 1981); *idem*, 'Demonic possession used as propaganda in the later 16th century', in B.P. Levack (ed), *Possession and exorcism* (London, 1992).

⁹ Clark, 391-2.

Assuming that medieval and early modern people were simply not sophisticated enough to know the right meanings of the symptoms they experienced and witnessed tells us more about modern scholarly arrogance than about premodern ailments and healing techniques, or about early modern configurations of the interactions with the divine.¹⁰

What is a particularly damaging consequence of this is a less fruitful comprehension of the relationships between insanity and health, medicine and spiritual physic in the early modern period. Melancthon argued that the devil could cause or take advantage of natural diseases as an entrance for or symptom of possession. There were physicians, arguing from Scripture, on either side of the Pietist or Orthodox Lutheran dispute in 1690s Middle Germany.¹¹ Often the diagnosis was collaborative, with clerics welcoming medics and vice versa, with the identification of a natural disease not necessarily eliminating the possibility of possession. As God could send an ailment as a trial or punishment, so too, on a lesser scale, could Satan work with or through natural illnesses. Pierre de Bérulle, in his influential attempt to reinstate credible possession after the scandal around Marthe Brossier's exposure as a fraud in 1599, pressed the case for demons disguising themselves as natural infirmities such as epilepsy or madness.¹² Michel Marescot, Bérulle's opponent, may have encouraged physicians with a solely medical explanation to print their views, but this did not establish an either/or choice with medics on one side, clerics on the other.¹³ The explanatory tool of 'mental illness' can discourage contextualisation and ignores the porous boundaries between natural medicine and spiritual physic at a cost to our understanding.¹⁴ The caution against the application of psychological models drawn from later and alien fields of explanation has been very capably delivered by David Harley, primarily in engaging with the possessed in late seventeenth-century Salem. Rather than dismissing the usefulness of psychological explanations wholly, his fear is the effort to make early modern cases share psychological perceptions unavailable for internalization by the people under study as a danger of distortion, preferring to examine 'the precise conceptual apparatus of the sufferer and the diagnostician' to maintain the cultural specificity of the cases. While this is certainly a lesson to be taken on board and other parts of his work will be employed below, the particularities of Salem and the related historiography mean that the centre of his attention is more with issues of spectral evidence and questions of the guilt of the accused which were not the focus in the English cases discussed here. From this particular

¹⁰ Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 3.

¹¹ Clark, 408; Judd Stitzel, 'God, the Devil, medicine, and the Word: a controversy over ecstatic women in Protestant Middle Germany 1691-1693', *Central European History* 29 (1996), 309-11.

¹² Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 38; Stuart Clark, 'Demons and disease: the disenchantment of the sick (1500-1700)', in Marjke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Hilary Marland and Hans de Waardt (eds), *Illness and Healing Alternatives in Western Europe* (London, 1997), 38-58.

¹³ Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London, 2004), 57.

¹⁴ Sluhovsky, 'The Devil in the convent', *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 1387-89.

assessment, the main fruit is the restraint in the tools of explanation, for his concern is less with the 'reality' or the experience of the possessed and it is, ironically, a compliment to this work to, in his terms 'translate' his closer analysis to the earlier cases.¹⁵

To move in a more positive direction than expressing reservations about some modes of explanation, it is opportune to look at the discernment of spirits. As Kaplan showed, the diverse possibilities of understanding opened debate about the nature of the spirits inhabiting people, whether they were 'good' or 'bad' spirits, demonic or the Holy Ghost. That this debate involved agents beyond the elites, including the families of the 'inspired', even the 'inspired' himself, made it, from the perspective of the elite, dangerous.¹⁶ In a sense, this was nothing new. Nancy Caciola has noted that, for female medieval mystics, a great deal of historiographical attention has been paid to the internal vantage point, much less to external perceptions, in the definition of where the figure stood between divine affective spirituality and demonic possession. With this changed perspective, she notes much medieval ink spilt over the causal differences for similar symptoms. However, to identify the different internal locations of good and bad spirits brought no resolution, because interpreters had no access to the physiology that would enable certain discernment.¹⁷

Jean Gerson addressed this particular difficulty in advising the Council of Constance in 1415, weighing the advantages of the control of discernment against the Church's potential loss from misdiagnosis of diabolic possession or mystical vision. His pragmatic, if unsatisfactory, response was to wait and see, to avoid immediate diagnosis. Similarly pragmatic, albeit more active, was his suggestion that while humble laywomen *were* capable of divine inspiration, they should be kept under institutional discipline, effectively elite control. This was set out in detail in his *De probatione spirituum*, added to later editions of *Malleus Maleficarum* as a guide to inquisitors.¹⁸ As Caciola notes, this was an imposition of male control on the less trustworthy visions of women; although in the late sixteenth century the Spanish mystic Teresa of Ávila worked to place discernment of spirits regarding her nuns under the auspices of their prioresses

¹⁵ David Harley, 'Calvinist psychology and the diagnosis of possession', *American Historical Review* 101 (1996), 307-30, 308, 309-10, 328-30, 330 (quote). Part of the different issues at the centre of attention in Salem lies in the blurred boundary between possession and bewitchment, consequent upon trans-Atlantic modifications rooted in the struggle over Anne Hutchinson and applied to the contest between puritans and Quakers in the 1650s, transferred back to later New England in a new context. I have dealt with some of these influences in 'On shaky ground: Quakers, Puritans, possession and high spirits', in Michael J. Braddick and David L. Smith (eds), *The Experience of Revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2011), 178-84.

¹⁶ Kaplan, 739.

¹⁷ Nancy Caciola, 'Mystics, demoniacs, and the physiology of spirit possession in medieval Europe', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000), 268-9.

¹⁸ Brian Patrick McGuire, 'Late medieval care and control of women: Jean Gerson and his sisters', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 92 (1997), 32-6.

rather than male clerics it was still a matter of containing dangerous ambiguities with potential crises.¹⁹

The central and unavoidable difficulty is that from an external perspective the individual was an empty sign, a sign of significance but one without any transparency to its meaning. Caciola describes them as 'ciphers' that invite, in fact demand, interpretation. To assign meaning is a task placed in the hands of observers, with, beyond, and sometimes despite the individual who was the object of observation.²⁰ Sluhovsky takes this further, showing that diabolic possession 'is always a diagnosis of a behaviour of a spiritual nature' and its destination is never determined by the deportment itself.²¹ The behaviour and its interpretation preceded the arrival of clerics of whatever disposition, the more authoritative observers who were thereby one step behind. This should not, of course, blind us to the power differential, merely make us aware that the diagnosis as a process of uneven negotiation and positive or negative accounts often consist of an ex post facto explanation as much as a straightforward description. This is certainly not to dismiss clerical contribution to the script, in that they could elucidate through 'a legible vocabulary' of demonism which, in time, could shape the performance, with the possessed conforming to 'the devil's lexicon'. At least in the immediacy of the performance, with the right circumstances, the right directors, the dramaturgy is the primary force which 'enfolds the participants in its logic.'²² Within such an explanation it can be possible to trace changing behaviours relating to the progressive diagnosis and its possible internalisation.

The body as a barrier between the 'real' spirit and the observers, including the object of interpretation, means that the experience had no stable meaning. It became a linguistic construct employed to attribute meaning to that experience. Michel de Certeau suggests 'a new and dangerous weight' added to the traditional distinction between intent and act in the early modern period. The emphasis on faith and its separation from works becomes 'a sword that dangerously cleaves the objective observance of the rules of religious life and the bad instincts it may cover up'. For the zealot the demands of discipline and discernment could make the passing of the responsibility for judgement to an external authority in itself a relief, along with the possible relief of passing the responsibility of one's actions to the demon within one. While the attractions are clear, the consequences are unstable when the open sign of the body becomes an object of contest; if the 'corporeal points of reference' become a field of dispute, then the object, the site of interpretation, can become the forum for praise or opprobrium, in effect, a discursive battlefield.²³ Moreover, no individual or institution had a monopoly over that attribution and hence it was both a social

¹⁹ Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: divine and demonic possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), 296, 306; Alison Weber, 'Spiritual administration: gender and discernment in the Carmelite reform', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 124, 29-30, 137-8.

²⁰ Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 79.

²¹ Sluhovsky, 'Devil', 1381.

²² De Certeau, *Possession*, 48, 44, 28.

²³ *Ibid.*, 99-100, 44.

process, one open to change and one placed within power struggles between epistemological, spiritual, and metaphysical assumptions. As Sluhovsky put it, Thus the construction of the knowledge of possession and its meanings was a historical phenomenon, bound by shifting cultural norms and by epistemological presuppositions about what was possible and what was not, and for whom. It was both subject to change and an agent of change. Possession was never a purely individual experience. It was always experienced and analyzed within sets of cultural, gendered, institutional, political, and social norms.²⁴

This context-dependency, a central concern through this work, brought a need for control and standardisation, a contested stability of determination that can be read as parallel to, with differences, that which follows. Part of the problem was identified and established by Paul's warning of the breadth of demonic deceit, that Satan could disguise himself as an Angel of Light (II Cor.11:14). This meant that when Girolamo Menghi set down the signs of 'authentic' demonic possession he was able to give no more than a measurement of *some* diabolic possessions.²⁵ This ambiguity was taken to an extreme by Jean-Joseph Surin who served as one of the chief exorcists at Loudun and remained as both the guide to and to be guided by Jeanne des Anges afterwards. He was the exorcist, the mystic, but also the possessed. The source of his speech became utterly unidentifiable and he was the nowhere of a surplus meaning, alienated not only from the Church but from a body which was no longer his 'own': 'an "I" carried to incandescence, in-finite, because the other is not a particular, but only the signifier of a forever unlocalizable, in-finite exteriority'. This helps us to understand the careful safeguards constructed by Teresa of Ávila to provide a place of utterance, a 'castle' constituted, in her case, by the book and the convent, where the danger of deceit was lessened.²⁶ In terms of text and community, similarly 'proper places', albeit not free from danger, can be found among the English godly society.

It is worth emphasising the common ground between the mystic and the possessed, partly because it is initially surprising but also because it was a contested site in medieval and early modern religiosity. Barbara Newman has explored the porous boundaries very suggestively. Christina the Astonishing (1150-1224) showed many signs of demonic possession in self-inflicted pain, howling, and physical feats but Jacques de Vitry was capable of 'converting' these symptoms to an exemplum of vicarious suffering and the pains of purgatory. At the end of the thirteenth century there were many 'pious demoniacs', newly lucid, among the laity, both male and female, whose demons preached orthodoxy and for a time friars were confident enough to accept them as promoters of reform. While Satan is the father of lies, we should not forget that demoniacs in the New Testament often had a clearer and earlier understanding of divine truth than the Apostles.²⁷ The emphasis of Caciola is different, concentrating on the

²⁴ Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 2.

²⁵ Ibid., 61-2, 172, 193; de Certeau, *Possession*, 206-10.

²⁶ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: discourse on the Other*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN, 2000), 109-10, 96.

²⁷ Barbara Newman, 'Possessed by the spirit: devout women, demoniacs, and the Apostolic life in the thirteenth century', *Speculum* 73 (1998), 763-8, 753, 769,

contested identity of the occupying spirit. While her conclusion of a growing separation of demonic possession and mystical union may be true in the short term, it was to prove a resurgent issue.²⁸ For current purposes, there are two points of note. The first is an absence. While discernment of spirits was a developing field of interest within practical divinity, it was completely absent from the accounts of possession and their rebuttals in England in the period covered here and so is not to be a focus. In this period the contention was much more between the options of 'genuine' possession and fraudulence.²⁹ However, the second point is that there were, increasingly, 'positive' actions and visions within those accounts and attention will be duly paid to a more 'positive', almost mystical dimension to the experience of being possessed, to the gateways opened to insight and understanding by the invasion of demonic spirits, often displayed through verbal struggles with demons. Thus, rather than it being an either/or option between the mystic and the possessed, there was a space for 'positive' roles for the possessed within the 'negative' of being such.

One overarching practice to be learned from this conversation is the centrality of social praxis to the diagnosis, whatever its conclusion. There is the functionalist understanding of possession granting a voice to the voiceless, to which I will return; for now we shall merely note the underestimation of the chaos of possession events that this entails and the strategic coherence of the possessed that it requires, along with the assumed propriety of this particular strategy. Greater emphasis should be placed on the *gradual* nature of the process, the negotiated nature of the meaning assigned. This was a negotiation that began in the individual in terms of self-discernment but quickly expanded to take within its web family, friends and neighbours, and then clerics. The power structure and the cultural assumptions of those involved were both necessary and could be crucial with social status, gender, education, and institutional structure all playing an important role.³⁰ This was a hermeneutic and labelling process and the ascription of names, a designation, is as much therapeutic as diagnostic. This could be identifying the aetiology of the condition and help to explain the importance given to attaching names to the particular spirits located within the individual.³¹ What is needed is an analysis at three levels. The first is

733-4; cf. H.C. Midelfort, 'The Devil and the German people: reflections on the popularity of demon possession in sixteenth-century Germany', in B.P. Levack (ed), *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology, Vol. 9 Possession and exorcism* (London, 1992), 126-130.

²⁸ Caciola, 'Mystics', 268-9, 272-3; cf. Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 24, 137-8, 156-9; Jürgen Beyer, 'A Lübeck prophet in local and Lutheran context', in Bob Scribner and Trevor Johnson (eds), *Popular Religion in Germany and Eastern Europe, 1400-1800* (New York, 1966), 167-274.

²⁹ This shift of attention from discernment to deception at this time is given wider application by Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 190.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-9, 208.

³¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. by Tom Conley (New York, 1998), 246-8; cf. *idem*, *Possession*, 17-20, 38-40. It was drawing upon the pre-Christian tradition of naming, a context within which, of course, Jesus was operating: Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: a contribution to the study of the historical Jesus* (Tübingen, 1993). See below, 30, 33-4.

the exact cultural idioms that were available to the individual under observation, the apprehension of personal behaviours. The second is the personal context in which the behaviour was performed and how that took the understanding of these behaviours in a particular direction. The third is the religious and political dynamics which shaped the overall labelling and judgement of the process.³²

A couple of notes should be added regarding the religious and political contexts. For issues of discernment, performance, and possible exposure of fraudulence to occupy a particular forum in a particular instance, external figures of authority have to be involved. In the case of Nicole Obry in the 1560s, local clergy called in a Dominican father Pierre de la Motte. Her fate would have been very different if la Motte had not diagnosed her as possessed and also recognised the potential she carried for well-intentioned polemical purposes. With her case and that of Marthe Brossier, a more scandalous sensation, we realise the centrality of religious and social authorities in determining the veracity of individual possessions. In the French occurrence, this went with an understanding that the condition was an ongoing process, with demons coming and going semi-permanently. The determination of veracity shares common ground with England but among English Protestants the condition was seen to be, with divine agency and willingness, something that could be settled, could be closed with the expulsion of the demon(s). Consequently, the performances were different. In England there was less chance to become a 'professional demoniac'.³³

Lastly, these struggles can be seen as a recurrence, in particular contexts, of the perennial tension between individual charisma, however much disavowed by the individuals involved, and institutional hierarchical forces, between enthusiasts and moderates and between periphery and centre. While there may be some truth in this characterisation, it should be stressed that it could be as much about the *definition* of these categories rather than a pre-categorised struggle. Indeed, we will see the centre shift substantially in what follows. Furthermore, the relationship between charismatic individuals and institutional clout was much more symbiotic than the impression given by the confrontational model. The individual at the centre of an instance could be speaking for the church, indeed be partly reliant upon institutional authority, and to maintain institutional panache in reformation circumstances the institution needed a periodic sensationalist fix. However, to occupy the charismatic zone was to walk on dangerous terrain and to put oneself at risk of having the institutional rug pulled from under one's feet.³⁴

II

³² Sluhovsky, 'A divine apparition or demonic possession? Female agency and Church authority in demonic possession in sixteenth-century France'. *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996), 1044-5, 1046.

³³ Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, 30, 41-2, 46-7.

³⁴ Ibid., 67-9, 144; cf. Michael Heyd, 'The reaction to Enthusiasm in the seventeenth century: towards an integrative approach', *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981), 258-80.

The second conversation that has contributed to this study is with ethnography. To a greater degree than the first one this needs to be prefaced with reassurances and caveats. Fortunately this is less reading against the grain of anthropology than historians might once have feared. A statement of intent should lessen some concern in that the plan is to import questions from related fields of study, questions prompted by listening in on other debates. These are questions, and methodologies, to be brought in and tested rather than answers to be imposed on a different context because that would depend upon assumed similarities. In fact the differences are as illuminating as the similarities. One of the shifts in emphasis within anthropology actually makes for a better relationship. That is the shift from 'culture', with a tone of bounded homogeneity to 'cultural', a more open sense of heterogeneity and contestation, certainly a model which is closer to the reality of early modern England.³⁵

One of the first areas of attention when Morton Klass attempted a similar engagement was the troubled water of nomenclature. Klass was struck by the multiplicity of understandings of spirit possession and relations with an incorporeal being, so often hedged with protective quotation marks.³⁶ Colleen Ward warns of the danger of wrenching possession free of cultural context to impose current Western models of mental health upon the conditions.³⁷ In an instance touched upon above, Barbara Newman's generally insightful discussion of Christina the Astonishing, Newman notes the dispute over whether Christina was possessed or visionary. She then notes the similarity between her actions and those displayed by women diagnosed as 'hysterical' in nineteenth- and twentieth-century cases. As Amy Hollywood has made clear, there were medical explanations available to contemporaries but they were not the ones applied, either by Christina's spiritual mentor or Christina herself. This is, in effect, to ignore or dismiss contextual discourses and to impose other context-dependent interpretations, from a different period and mentality, upon Christina's condition.³⁸ In Erika Bourguignon's classic synthesis on the anthropology of possession, she distinguished between 'possession', the belief that a person is

³⁵ For a précis, see Paul Rabinow, George E. Marcus with James D. Faubion and Tobias Rees, *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary* (London, 2008), 105-11; cf. Lila Abu-Lughod, 'Writing against culture', in Richard G. Fox (ed), *Recapturing Capturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe, 1991). There is a pertinent dialogue with anthropology and different forms of possession in Éva Pócs, 'Possession phenomena, possession-systems. Some East-Central European examples', in Gábor Klaniczay and *eadem* (eds), *Communicating with the Spirits* (Budapest, 2005), 84-157.

³⁶ Morton Klass, *Mind Over Mind: the anthropology and psychology of spirit possession* (Lanham, 2003), 3-4, 15.

³⁷ Colleen Ward, 'Possession and exorcism: psychopathology and psychotherapy in a magico-religious context', in *eadem*, (ed), *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health: a cross-cultural perspective* (Newbury Park, 1989), 128-9.

³⁸ Newman, 'Possessed by the spirit'; Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: mysticism, sexual difference, and the demands of history* (Chicago, 2002), 242-50; Dyan Elliott, 'The physiology of rapture and female spirituality', in Peter Biller and A.J. Minnis (eds), *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body* (Woodbridge, 1997), 142, 159-60.

changed by such an intrusion, and 'possession trance', the behavioural consequences of such a belief, but as Michael Lambek warned, this splitting lessened the contextual dependence of the phenomena and risked neglecting the fact that each is reliant upon, is formed by the other.³⁹ This encourages an approach of compare and contrast and discourages one from succumbing to the temptation of generalisation. I.M. Lewis's stimulating and broad study brought many forms together under aspects of a trans-cultural 'sex-war' but I have found it more productive to take on Lambek's perception that 'attempts to smooth over the variability and complexity of the phenomena instead of giving them a central place are not particularly useful. In cultural matters, the lowest common denominator cannot tell us very much'.⁴⁰

One further negation needs to be added. I have not found it helpful to include the studies of Shamanism in this engagement as it works substantially contrary to spirit possession. When Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere studied the changing forms and nature of possession in Sri Lanka they tried Eliade's distinction between ecstasy and enstasis. In the former the subject's true self leaves the body and in the latter it is so concentrated that all external sense is lost. The second type is experienced as a journey outside the body with a complete awareness of the experience and co-operation with empowering spirits, some would say mastery of the spirits.⁴¹ As far as Shamanism can be a type taken as a type of practice found beyond Siberian and Inuit roots, it is characterised by gifts acquired either by inheritance and/or discipline and their use is active, voluntary and gnostic. It is often a form of travelling *to* the spirits rather than being occupied by them.⁴² As much as it fails to fit the experiences of Sri Lanka, it similarly fails to fit the English relations with spirits.

A more positive assessment is the intention to take the experience of possession seriously. After all, historians of many religious stripes or none are willing to take accounts of religious elevation or guilt seriously but look for ways

³⁹ Erika Bourguignon, *Possession* (San Francisco, 1976), 5-10; Michael Lambek, 'Spirits and spouses: possession as a system of communication among the Malagasy speakers of Mayotte', *American Ethnologist* 7 (1980), 329.

⁴⁰ I.M. Lewis, 'Spirit possession and deprivation cults', *Man* n.s. 1 (1966); cf. *idem*, *Ecstatic Religion: a study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (3rd ed., London, 2003); Lambek, 'From disease to discourse: remarks on the conceptualization of trance and spirit possession', in Ward (ed), *Altered States*, 37.

⁴¹ Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: religious change in Sri Lanka* (New Jersey, 1988), 453-4.

⁴² Merete Demant Jakobsen, *Shamanism: traditional and contemporary approaches to the mastery of spirits and healing* (Oxford, 1999) provides both an excellent introduction and an analysis particularly of Shamanism in Greenland. He brings in similar practices included under a deliberately broad umbrella from South America, Japan and Korea and adopted forms within western alternative religions; cf. Åke Hultkrantz, 'The place of Shamanism in the history of religions', in M. Hoppál and Otto von Sadovsky (eds), *Shamanism: Past and Present* (Los Angeles, 1989). Pócs, 'Possession phenomena', addresses this question but with geographical and cultural differences, along with a different agenda, she is more open to 'shamanistic' folk practices.

to explain possession *away*. Ethnography has been rather ahead of the game on this, with early causal explanations viewing possession either as individual hysteria or as an elaborate fraud receiving short shrift from Alfred Métraux in 1955.⁴³ That is not to say that there have been no works that discuss possession as a symptom or representation of other societal forces or as a means of dealing with local conflicts. Some of these works have been insightful and will be engaged with below, but it is recognised that 'they have also had the effect of diverting attention from the subjective content or experience of "spirit" agency'.⁴⁴ As Janice Boddy enquires, 'what do women and men themselves think possession is about? And how are we to make sense of possession forms, of spirits themselves?'⁴⁵ This is taken to its furthest by Edith Turner, accusing those unwilling to take on the 'reality' of spirits of 'religious frigidity'.⁴⁶ Boddy writes of 'a heady atmosphere where nothing is quite what it seems'. The key to understanding this atmosphere 'is not trance per se, but trance firmly situated in a meaningful cultural context'.⁴⁷ In such a context the belief that one is possessed can lead one to act in ways that correspond to that self-perception and remaining doubts may be removed by the positive appraisal of those with similar understandings. 'Behaviour in possession is bound by particular cultural rules; possession itself is a "social fact"'.⁴⁸ As Lewis put it: 'If someone is, in his own cultural milieu, generally considered to be possessed, then he (or she) is possessed'.⁴⁹

This has consequences for the 'medicalisation' of possession. Ward distinguishes between central (controlled) and peripheral (amoral) possessions, to which we'll return. She is willing to identify the latter as appropriate for psychological explanation but with the warning that such analysis should not overlook the 'cultural interpretation of the possession event'.⁵⁰ There is a danger that this will encourage the observer to concentrate on possession cults 'as group therapy, even when informants described their experiences as religious'.⁵¹ This is a line to be walked with caution, maintaining a constant attention to conceptions available to participants. For her particular field, Boddy is willing to see spirits as symbolic of symptoms and to see symptoms as idiomatic of spirit intrusion as this shares ground with her informants. She is less comfortable when spirits and symptoms are dissociated from the self of the possessed as that runs counter to their framework and encourages a (modern, Western)

⁴³ Alfred Métraux, 'Dramatic elements in ritual possession', *Diogenes* 11 (1955), 11-36.

⁴⁴ Roy Willis, *Some Spirits Heal, Others Only Dance* (Oxford, 1999), 116.

⁴⁵ Janice Boddy, 'Spirit possession revisited: beyond instrumentality', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994), 415.

⁴⁶ Edith Turner, 'The reality of spirits: a tabooed or permitted field of study?' *Anthropology of Consciousness* 4 (1993), 11.

⁴⁷ Boddy, 'Spirits and selves in northern Sudan: the cultural therapeutics of possession and trance', in Michael Lambek (ed), *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford, 2002), 404-5.

⁴⁸ Lambek, 'Spirits and spouses', 318-9.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 40.

⁵⁰ Ward, 'Possession and exorcism', 128-9.

⁵¹ Boddy, 'Spirit possession', 410.

orientation to illness, contrary to Sudanese understandings.⁵² There are dangers from the other angle in that possession can be seen as an illness in itself while participants can see illness as 'a necessary condition for participation'. Indeed, "illness" itself is a problematic category, since it too is, at least in part, culturally constructed'.⁵³ The bottom line is that there is a fuzzy boundary between illness and possession: one may be ill but not possessed, may have the same illness and be possessed, the illness may be a *symptom* of the possession or make one more vulnerable to possession. All these options are open in a context 'where the existence of spirits... is an undisputed fact'.⁵⁴

Edward Bever attempts to restore an element of cognitive analysis to the field of early modern possessions. While accepting the advantages of the thesis of context-dependency to a degree, he cautiously wants to approach the possessed with the understanding that there is 'an altered psychological, and beneath that neurological, state involved'. He accepts that there is no trans-cultural psychodynamics but suggests that there is a universal neurophysiology.⁵⁵ This much accepted, it should be made clear that such an analysis, on a neurological level, would remove any sense of agency and risk losing the multi-levelled interpretative process in the phenomenon, a critical contribution to what actually makes an instance 'possession.' His well-intentioned goal is to use this as a way of preventing interest in semiotics or cultural systems of meaning to take us away from the immediacy of early modern religion. In response, I would suggest that, on the one hand, the former does not have to have such an impact and, on the other, that his goal is not actually met when he describes possession as 'a manifestation of cognitive processes in their own brains'.⁵⁶

The distinction between central and peripheral possessions mentioned above is part of the legacy of I.M. Lewis. His influential typology joins possession with shamanism as forms of 'ecstatic religion'. He differentiates between central morality cults where the spirits are expelled or exorcised as a means of endorsing, enacting and reinforcing the society's (masculine) moral order. Peripheral cults are seen as incidental to the society's moral system and associated with figures of marginal influence. The central figures tend to be male, are given voice and the experience is controlled and positive; the peripheral ones are more likely to be female and seen to be signifying personal or social pathology.⁵⁷ His interest is in the sorts of people undergoing possession and exorcism, bringing a sociological analysis alongside or apart from any question of

⁵² Boddy, 'Spirits and selves', 409. This ground is shared with three of the central monographs in the field: Gananath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair: an essay on personal symbols and religious experience* (Chicago, 1981), 34-5; Brian Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons: exorcism and the aesthetics of healing in Sri Lanka* (Oxford, 1991), 87; Michael Lambek, *Human Spirits: a cultural account of trance in Mayotte* (New York, 1981), 53.

⁵³ Lambek, 'From disease to discourse', 47-8.

⁵⁴ Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: women, men, and the Zār cult in northern Sudan* (Madison, Wis., 1989), 147.

⁵⁵ Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: culture, cognition, and everyday life* (Houndmills, 2008), 89, 91.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, *passim*.

the 'reality' of possession. This leads him to see possession as giving a voice to the voiceless, as a means for women to express dissatisfaction with patriarchal systems in general or particular marriages, at the same time as operating within a system that either marginalises them or reinforces the status quo in the central rites. The important note at this point is that this is a functionalist understanding, valuing the phenomena for their capacity to contribute to the maintenance of a patriarchal system.⁵⁸

The literature has not been shy of providing a critique of Lewis. For my purposes there are two primary points. When Moshe Sluhovsky came to measure this model against Christian demonic possession he found it a poor fit. The expulsion of demonic spirits has not been a central activity in the ways identified by Lewis, Kapferer and others. If this is to place Christian demonic possession in the peripheral category there are difficulties in that there has never been a 'cult' within Christianity drawing upon diabolic possession.⁵⁹ From the 'purely' anthropological perspective, problems have been identified that resonate with some of the historiography of possession. Lambek sees part of the advantage of specific cultural context as a means of avoiding 'seeing trance behaviour as a purely instrumental strategy, a product of individual self-interest'.⁶⁰ Similarly, Boddy fears that Lewis's analysis tends to 'demystify' the phenomena, making possession itself a mere adjunct to its function and therefore of little interest in itself.⁶¹ Matthew Wood is concerned that this model neglects the agency of the possessed and finds asking about 'ambiguity' more profitable than 'deprivation'.⁶² Along such lines, Boddy feels that the concentration upon women's 'instrumental efforts to assuage their subordinate status by acquiring goods or garnering attention' is unhelpful as an explanatory tool. These forms may work with specific cases but this approach fails to explain 'the taken-for-grantedness of spirits' in the particular culture; indeed, for students to employ functionalism on a causal level is to 'distort and impoverish what they propose to understand'.⁶³ She shifts the emphasis of functionalism. The process does not necessarily resolve issues of ambiguity on a social or individual level but it addresses them. Taking Ricoeur's model of the text, to which I will return, the possession event 'speaks of a possible world and of a possible way of orientating oneself in it', with possible enrichment, socially or materially but also possibly opening a new site of conflict.⁶⁴ This is to modify the functionalist analysis: it looks at consequences which may or may not be beneficial; it looks at

⁵⁸ Cf. *idem*, 'Spirit possession', 308-13.

⁵⁹ Moshe Sluhovsky, 'Spirit possession as self-transformative experience in late medieval Catholic Europe', in David Shulman and Guy G. Strousma (eds), *Self and Self-transformation in the History of Religion* (Oxford, 2002), 150-1. He goes on to muddy the waters and I will return to this below.

⁶⁰ Lambek, 'From disease to discourse', 36-7.

⁶¹ Boddy, 'Spirit possession', 408.

⁶² Matthew Wood, *Possession, Power and the New Age: ambiguities of authority in neoliberal societies* (Aldershot, 2007), 164-5.

⁶³ Boddy, 'Spirits and selves', 399.

⁶⁴ *Eadem*, *Wombs*, 193, quoting Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning* (Fort Worth, 1976), 88.

opportunities and risks but sees them as accidental results rather than determining, than explaining, why the phenomena happen.

In what has preceded, I have used the terms 'performance' and 'event' without explanation and it is both necessary and, I hope, useful to make explicit how these terms are used. In particular they are critical as models to aid the reading of the occasions studied below. It should be made clear that 'performance' is not intended to suggest any assumption of fraudulence. In an appropriate context, one 'performs' in appropriate ways according to cultural expectations, according to a cultural grammar. This performance may be driven by understandings formed by the cultural context and they *may* be a conscious effort to convince those present that one is possessed when one is not. Neither should be assumed and, as I will show, it is a rather more complex process than this suggests.

The starting point is the inter-subjective sharing of experience, through the mediation of a number of cultural constraints. It should be stressed that, for observers, this is not an experience shared in any 'pure', existential fashion, that the context and the models of perception, constructs and categories of analysis are integral to the communicated experience. The media of the performance and the directionality of the performance have structural properties that order, encourage (but do not determine) the communication. It can identify the object of observation as 'other' than the observers, creating mutual involvement or distance inviting analysis, 'a structuring perspective outside the immediacy of the experience'. In short, there is no such thing as unmediated experience.⁶⁵

The medium of presentation structures the standpoint of observers and structures the context. These boundaries are critical for understanding how perceptions are formed, potentially transformed, by the performance. Possession is actualized, is constituted through the context of ritual (or, equally, disowned or disproven). The nature and place of performance can constitute the validity of the possession for observers and, possibly, for the candidate for possession. As other participants are placed outside the experience of the possessed, their experience is constructed and they construct their experience through the cultural apprehensions available to them. The same is true for the possessed. This is not to suggest any wholly egalitarian process, as I will show, so much as a culturally bounded set of options limited through the context of the performance. As Kapferer concludes, performance 'is the structuring of structure, and it is this critical feature which makes performance essential to the analysis of ritual and other modes of symbolic action'.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Bruce Kapferer, 'Performance and the structuring of meaning and experience', in V.W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (eds), *The Anthropology of Experience* (Chicago, 1986), 190, 192-3. For a collection relating performance theory to mysticism, see Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Ziegler (eds), *Performance and Transformation: new approaches to late medieval spirituality* (Basingstoke, 1999).

⁶⁶ Kapferer, 'Performance', 194-5, 196, 202; cf. Lambek, 'From disease to discourse', 42, 52-3; Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 83-5; Kathleen Erndl, *Victory to the Mother: the Hindu Goddess of Northwest India in Myth, Ritual, and Symbol* (Oxford, 1993), 134.

To return the focus to the possessed, the context of the performance is an opportunity, in fact an expectation, that possession be articulated. Crapanzano's exegesis is still helpful and worth quoting in full:

the act of articulation constructs an event to render it meaningful. The act of articulation is more than a passive representation of the event; it is in essence the creation of an event. It separates the event from the flow of experience... gives the event structure... relates it to other similarly constructed events, and evaluates the event along both idiosyncratic and (culturally) standardized lines. Once the event is articulated, once it is rendered an event, it is cast within a world of meaning and may provide a basis for action.⁶⁷

This compact model needs teasing out a little. Articulation creates an event, an occurrence which inherently requires an interpretation or interpretations. It invites categorisation from observers, whatever their level of participation. It establishes boundaries for the object under study and in itself, contributes to the creation of the 'thing' to be interpreted. It also creates a sample to be measured against other such events (or accounts of events) considered to be in the same genre, either validating or invalidating the present event and, possibly, modifying the means of measurement, contributing to the instances used to assess similar events to come. It is given meaning and, finally, it generates a basis for action, whether that is admiration, denunciation, or an effort to cast out the spirit. This is to provide a manner of treatment for judgements about demonic possession or its absence below; it will be discussed as a context-specific condition.

The definition of a possession event creates a space for a particular conversation, the transmission of 'messages between senders and receivers along particular channels... within particular social contexts'. One element relevant to the English context and fairly common in similar contexts elsewhere, is that the host often has very little, or no, recollection of what transpires during the performance, how their body has acted or what has been said. 'If a host is to know what happened when he or she was in trance, he must have a trustworthy intermediary present who can report back to him'. This reportage is, of course, inherently an interpretation, part of the moulding of the meaning of the event. In addition, this discontinuity between consciousness and action is a major part that makes possession a *social* activity. A further consequence is that separation between spirit and host prevents the host from being implicated as accessory to the behaviour; a theme that will be encountered frequently below is that conversation happens between participants but the separation also allows conversation *within* the possessed.⁶⁸ One of the conditions of interpretation is that the spirit must make sense to those whom it encounters. One of the consequences of the often exaggerated or clichéd stereotypes acted out in the performance is that it can eliminate or suppress human motivation (although it should be added that this is dependent on the particular context as, in a different event, it can be read in the opposite direction). These circumstances can create a space in which the possessed can comment upon relationships or broader fields.

⁶⁷ Vincent Crapanzano, 'Introduction', in *idem* and V. Garrison (eds), *Case Studies of Spirit Possession* (New York, 1977), 10.

⁶⁸ Lambek, 'Spirits and spouses', 318-9, 321, 322.

This can lead to a renegotiation of relationships, possibly an exchange relationship or a refusal to negotiate but with a critique that is harder to ignore. Essentially, possession provides an idiom through which communication happens.⁶⁹

The associations of performance, possession event, interpretation, communication, and conversation plainly make negotiation and control issues of central concern. Kapferer has looked at the process of dealing with 'illness in the demonic mode' relating to the construction and negation of the individual social self, with the healing process developing behaviour 'in accordance with cultural typifications of what constitutes an "abnormal" nonsocial self', and moving through means to reconstruct the 'normal' self. Within the context of the possession event, the 'normal' self and normal relations with the individual are suspended. This is necessarily a reciprocal action and the definition of the 'abnormality' is something that develops according to participants' models of abnormality measured against the performance. This can be, at its most fruitful, a negotiation, at its extremes either a rejection or complete acceptance. Kapferer's description of the drama rings true with the English instances, with periods where the patient behaves as their normal self but 'this will on occasion be interrupted by bouts of activity, for example into trance or semi-trance states, uncontrollable violence, withdrawal, and refusal to interact, which are inconsistent with the Self of the patient as this has come to be normally or routinely conceived'.⁷⁰

In the course of this negotiation, the perspective of observers is 'mediated and legitimated by exorcists', enabling participants to enter into the subjective world of the host. This guidance or diagnosis can also contribute to the constitution of the self of the patient. Being treated as an 'Other' encourages the patient to take 'the attitude of the Other toward himself as object'. Building on G.H. Mead's classic work on the creation of the self, Kapferer suggests that the self comes through an 'I' interacting with the Other who reflexively produces a 'me' through a conversation of gestures and symbols. The 'me' is reliant upon the existence of the Other and hence the argument is that 'society is prior to the individual and that the Self can only develop in a social context'.⁷¹

The negotiation gains directionality through the identification of the cause of the abnormality. The basis for the relation of others with the patient becomes transformed, is renegotiated on the ground of the abnormality being identified and the interaction being with the demonic other that is inhabiting the residual 'normal' self. This also shifts the self-perception of the host, not least through the conversations conducted between the exorcists and the intruded spirit. 'The patient is caught within the malign and frightening world of demons and is further imprisoned in it by the attitude others adopt towards the patient'. At the same time, a 'we-relationship' is formed by the other participants in defining themselves against the possessed and through their united purpose.⁷² This can provide a process whereby the abnormality is identified, explained,

⁶⁹ Boddy, *Wombs*, 148, 190.

⁷⁰ Bruce Kapferer, 'Mind, self, and other in demonic illness: the negation and reconstruction of self', *American Ethnologist* 6 (1979), 110, 111, 113-4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 115, 116-7.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 117-8, 120, 121, 130.

separated from the normal self and, with the heightened and controlled sense of purposive normality enacted by the participants, driven out. Thus a 'successful' possession event can take the abnormal, chaotic self, explain its anomalousness, reconstitute the normal self and also provide a satisfied set of participants, defined by their opposition to the demonic and flattered by their contribution to a victory over it.

What lies implicit in this directional negotiation and reconstruction is the issue of power. Matthew Wood identifies three areas of attention that operate within and beyond the possession experience in formative religious contexts, that is, ones with an ability, or at least an ambition, to actively control and direct the experience. The first has the greatest level of control, control that lessens through the second and third although it should be stressed that, in most contexts, these are formative rather than determinative. The first is the existence of 'structures of legitimation' within institutions, discourses, and individuals which provide and attempt to enforce common standards for practice, belief, dialogue and contestation. They effectively, and often explicitly, provide the ways of identifying and measuring the experience, possibly providing an ongoing exegesis during the performance. The enactment of the structures of legitimation consists of the 'management of experiences', guiding, allowing or discouraging the way the relationship develops and intending to conduct the reconstitution of the host's self. This is related to the authorised 'careers of participation', allowing those involved to be 'classified, assessed and treated in appropriate ways'.⁷³ Institutional and related personal power can be considerable but it is open to contestation in three ways. The agency of the host should not be dismissed and negotiation or rejection can occur within the performance, possibly seeking a more positive diagnosis to which we'll return. Contestation can also occur *within* the institution over the diagnosis or the question of (often vicarious) charisma on the part of the guide. Struggles for control over the meanings of spirituality can prompt schism or at least tension within the institution. Part of the process involves the definition of insiders and outsiders but this contains the potential for internal fragmentation. Finally, the career of the participant(s) may shift over time with the temporary abnormality of the host ending with a different, more positive, lasting abnormality than the intended reconstituted normal self.⁷⁴

Regarding the contained chaos of the career of participants, it is useful to return to the text model mentioned earlier. The production of the metaphorical text of the performance opens the event to multiple interpretations with control at least threatened, at most lost.⁷⁵ This can be taken to a far greater level when the metaphorical text becomes an actual, material text. While the event is contained in the discourse of the author, it is also detached from his or her interpretative control and more open to a variety of mutations. 'Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text, which results from the dissociation of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text, of what the author meant and what the text says. The text's

⁷³ Wood, *Possession*, 158

⁷⁴ *Idem*, 'Capital possession: a comparative approach to "New Age" and control of the means of possession', *Culture and Religion* 4 (2003), 175, 176.

⁷⁵ Lambek, 'Disease to discourse', 53; Boddy, *Wombs*, 150, 193.

career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author'.⁷⁶ This is to risk losing, or recognising that one has lost, control over the dissemination of the meaning of the experience. It may almost be said that the account of the agent giving the account of the dispossession now occupies the place of the possessed. In a focussed instance, this is the experience of Jeanne des Anges, the possessed become mystic.

[She] can *speak* but she cannot *write* as a possessed woman. Possession is only a voice. As soon as Jeanne passes to writing, she tells what she used to do, she refers to a past time, she describes an object that is distant from her, about what she can utter afterward the discourse of knowledge. She writes from a place other than whence she had been speaking as a possessed woman.⁷⁷

On a related matter, there is an important point to be taken from Gombrich and Obeyesekere's analysis of the growth of 'positive' possession in Sri Lanka. When a particular form of possession is understood and experienced as positive and with positive consequences (in this case, 'increased dignity, social independence, [and] earning power') then it provides a new model; if similar instances follow it can constitute a modification of the discourse.⁷⁸ The adaptability of what constituted possession will be a central theme.

The appearance of 'positive' possession opens thought-provoking avenues for issues addressed below. Luc de Heusch noted that within some forms of Christianity as well as within other traditions, the symptoms of and routes for reaching diabolic and divine possession had much common ground. One 'possessed by Satan and the mystic both come close to the sacred (whether diabolical or divine) by paths similar to those we have just described'. In Christianity they are necessarily different phenomena in that full possession by the Holy Spirit would be at least too close to incarnation and he stressed that the relationship tended to be an absorption into God. This positive experience he entitled 'adorcism'.⁷⁹ Lewis adapted the analysis to his centre/periphery model with marginal cults arising around largely female adorcists, fitting with his causal functionalist paradigm. The central exorcisms are seen as preventing, controlling or at least marginalising adorcism.⁸⁰ This needs to be complicated and will be returned to shortly. Pamela Constantinides found a geographical range of spirits being accommodated, often in long-term relationships, and Boddy gives space to the options between expulsion and accommodation with

⁷⁶ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 29-30.

⁷⁷ De Certeau, *Writing*, 254.

⁷⁸ Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 41, 89-90.

⁷⁹ Luc de Heusch, *Why Marry Her? Society and Symbolic Structures*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, 1981), 164 and *passim*. In dealing with the specifics of English possessed and mystics I will not be employing the term as it is not part of the contemporary discourse.

⁸⁰ Lewis, *Religion in Context: cults and charisma* (Cambridge, 1986), xii-xiii, 122, 123-4, 137-8.

individuals taking the positive spirits enabling a shift in the self through a negative metaphor, defining oneself against what is within one but not *of* one.⁸¹

When Sluhovsky turned to this phenomenon he found the centre/periphery model a poor fit. However, when he moved on to divine possession, he noted initial attempts to provide methods of discernment between the good and the bad energumens moving to an increasing distrust, with the process ending in making the 'approval of divine possession by means of ecstatic techniques all but impossible'.⁸² A similar path, although with substantial contextual modifications, will be shown to be traceable in the English soil. Colleen Ward's adaptation and critique of Lewis's model is helpful, albeit with further modification. She characterises the central, controlled, negative possessions followed by the expulsion of the spirit as the symbol of order, and the peripheral, chaotic and long-lasting possession, now expanded to include adorcism, as the cultic disorder.⁸³ A modified version may prove more appropriate for the material in England. Diabolic possession, varying according to the beholder, is more confrontational, disruptive, less under control and threatening to order and stability. At the same time, its definition as both disruptive and demonic, is affirmative of the same order and stability it is defined against. The 'positive' element more directly backed moral and religious stasis and orthodoxy.⁸⁴

III

Setting out the approaches encouraged by this conversation provides an appropriate space within which to appreciate the value of some central works in the early modern historiography as well as to make explicit the differences, other than geographical focus, between their contributions and that intended by this work. While, of course, the emphasis will be on the negative, that should not be allowed to be taken as an underappreciation of their inherent value as well as their provision of analyses without which this work would have been much less conceivable. The first is Levack's enthralling analysis of possession and exorcism in the Christian West with broad temporal boundaries but a focus on the early modern period.⁸⁵ The second is Stuart Clark's tighter temporal focus but wider subject analysis of the discourse of early modern witchcraft.⁸⁶

Both Levack and Clark take on the contemporary issue of fraudulent possessions, both alleged and 'proven'. Clark accepts the possibility of fraud as well as the religious propaganda within the accounts of possession, which, as

⁸¹ Pamela Constantinides, 'Women heal women: spirit possession and sexual segregation in a Muslim society', *Social Science and Medicine* 21 (1985), 685; Boddy, *Wombs*, 142-5, 235.

⁸² Sluhovsky, 'Spirit possession', 150, 151, 156-7, 160-1, 163.

⁸³ Ward, 'Possession and exorcism', 128-9.

⁸⁴ This 'inside-out' reading shares some common ground with Caciola's engagement with the readings of de Certeau and Lewis, in *Discerning Spirits*, 82.

⁸⁵ Brian P. Levack, *The Devil Within: possession & exorcism in the Christian West* (London, 2013).

⁸⁶ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1999).

noted, Walker sees as debilitating for historians but Clark counters it in two ways. The first is that for fraudulent possession to be attempted there is a necessary framework of 'believable' possession and the second is that the presence of polemic should not be taken so far as to vitiate the genuineness of the actions of the possessed. He notes a contest for power within possession and exorcism but limits that to the struggle between the devil and the exorcist.⁸⁷ Levack's treatment of 'scepticism' is taken somewhat further. The doubt is noted in specific cases without removing the plausibility of possession in general terms; the more general, fundamental scepticism, denying demonic intervention in the natural world has a presence but beyond the temporal framework of this work. For the period covered here scepticism is limited to the particular.⁸⁸ The acceptance of a cultural context within which genuine possession is possible, is credible and is an assumed actuality is the starting point for this analysis.

What follows is not so much a rebuttal of this work as a development, a broadening of analysis and a complication of their work made possible by a tighter focus, both geographically and temporally. To begin with, Clark stresses the advantages of seeing the phenomenon through the demonologists' eyes as a means of preventing 'a less reductive account', in his account the limits of the psychological and polemical explanations. This is laudable in itself as the problems he identifies are when historians privilege some particular contemporary explanations because they are *shared* with historians' perceptions of reality, 'that is, with a reality regarded as independent of any particular conceptions of what is real.'⁸⁹ That much accepted, I hope to go beyond the eyes of demonologists and try to gain access to the contribution, to the experience of the 'possessed', the families, neighbours and onlookers. As Clark recognises, his profitably corrective contribution shows that it is 'possible to discover a great deal *about one at least* of the "languages" in which these cultural expectations were produced and transmitted' (my emphasis), this language being that of the demonologists. His effort successfully analyses this language but accepts the different selectivity of meanings that 'were not necessarily what it meant to all those who experienced it, whether as victims, therapists, or merely spectators.'⁹⁰ Part of my intention is to bring these different voices into the assessment, partly because they can be an under-accredited contribution to the formation of meanings and partly because I am interested in 'behaviours' and 'experiences' as well as discourses or 'languages.'

The linguistic model employed by Clark is one, to a considerable extent, shared but also needs examining and the particularity of its suitable application made explicit. He settles on the model at the conclusion of a useful conversation with anthropology with some common ground and some common intentions to the one above and it is apposite as a means of helping the reader to develop a critical relationship to some of the existing explanatory schemes. For his own purposes, it is useful to adopt the model of structural linguistics taken from some

⁸⁷ Ibid., 394.

⁸⁸ Levack, 22-3.

⁸⁹ Clark, 395.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 401, 402. As will become apparent, Clark's thesis of the centrality of eschatology is unconvincing with the particular sample of possession cases in England in the period under review here.

of Michael Lambek's earlier work as a preface to investigating the 'grammar', the 'language' of demonology relating to possession.⁹¹ For this analysis to be taken further in a different context, I have found the later work of Lambek and like-minded colleagues to be more profitable. One of the consequences of Clark employing the lens of structural linguistics from ethnography is that it emphasises stasis, a rule-governed, fixedly rigid language which serves his purposes but is less helpful for an analysis of the more labile particular cases as they are negotiated, competed over and, at least temporarily, resolved. This contingent, conditional establishment of meaning is also more useful where the attention is on change through time on the larger scale, beyond the individual cases to the discourse, the conceptualisation, understanding and experience of possession over approximately eighty years. As neither of these is at the heart of his analysis, it is best read as parallel to this piece as much contrary to it.

Similar pursuit of contingency is involved in adding to Levack's cultural account of demonic possession. In a manner complementary to Clark's attention to the demonological perspective, Levack profitably draws attention to the theatricality of possession events, with similar intent to overcome 'the limitations of the medical and counterfeit interpretations while still relying on those theories in some cases.' The 'theatricality' applies regardless of the 'reality' of the event in that each event was enacted according to 'scripts that were encoded in their religious cultures'. Whether duplicitous or genuine, particular behaviours, actions and performances articulated the beliefs and practices available from those on offer within a framework of credibility. He takes the 'performance' common among suggestions of fraudulence but takes it further to include all possessions. This is certainly beneficial to our understanding of possession, not least in accepting the roles allotted to the possessed, ministers, physicians, family members and neighbours. Within these 'religious dramas', while there are hints of direction, primarily from exorcists, and of reaction from the possessed, with a degree of 'ad-libbing', the emphasis is upon assigned roles and assumed scripts; while stating that the culture 'did not determine what they said or did while under the devil's influence; rather they offered them a set of beliefs and practices that they acted out, often at the prompting of others', this is accompanied by the stronger statements that '[a]ll these participants in the drama of possession acted in the way that members of their religious communities expected them to act.'⁹² In a way parallel to Clark's acknowledgement of power struggles within cases of possession but limiting his interest to the struggle between the demons and the exorcist,⁹³ Levack's theatricality model can be taken further. Within the particular possession events there are, in differing degrees, struggles over the script, indeed sometimes over which genre the script should be drawn from, and the focus is, I suggest, better placed on the process through which it *becomes* one of possession. With a less tight sense of script, attention can be paid to power relations, sometimes in cohort, sometimes in negotiated directions, sometimes running in contrary directions. Adding the further, more literal, competition over scripts, the meaning or meanings assigned to particular events once they have become

⁹¹ Ibid., 396-400.

⁹² Levack, *The Devil Within*, 30, 140-1.

⁹³ Clark, 394.

textualised and when they are re-claimed, modified or disowned substantially enhances an appreciation of the development of the understandings and expectations of possession events through time, an area outside Levack's remit within the treatment of generically 'early modern' possessions.

This more open, fluid engagement will allow for a reading more sensitive to the actual experience of being possessed in early modern England. This is not to ignore the more academic treatments of possession and I will turn to them shortly, merely to add that it is worthwhile to take on the contribution of the possessed, to try to gain, as Erik Midelfort attempted 'some impressions of how they understood their troubles, as distinguished from the theological and polemical interpretation to which they were immediately subjected'. This will certainly require taking into account the demonological lenses through which they were represented and it is not to seek for some 'pure', culture-free experience for these experiences were as culture-bound as any other, merely being 'able to say something of what demon possession was like to the demon-possessed'. These events were too open to be completely arranged to text-book requirements and, as he adds, these 'afflicted souls may have been using the cultural idiom of demon possession, but they were surely extending it well beyond what the theological wisdom of the sixteenth century had led anyone to expect'.⁹⁴

IV

Turning to the demonological treatments of demonic possession requires a few prefatorial notes to make clear the limited usefulness of a 'top-down' model in terms of the measurement and constructions of the cases discussed below. The first point is the relatively late arrival of the most canonical treatises on possession and its treatment. Here there is a somewhat surprising supporter in Samuel Harsnet. In drawing attention to the different means of judgement employed by John Darrell and his predecessor, John Foxe, Harsnet suggested that one answer Darrell might give to 'excuse' the latter was, 'that *M. Fox*, and others, *might easily be deceyved therein by Sathan*, as not having read (as hee supposeth,) *Bodinus, Wierus, Mingus, and Thyraeus*, that write of devils, as hee himselfe, *M. Darrell*, and the rest of that Crue have done'.⁹⁵ The suggestion, with satirical intent, is that the demonological treatises, and specifically treatments of possession by Johann Weyer, Jean Bodin, Girolamo Menghi and Petrus Thyraeus were not available to the previous generation and in particular to John Foxe's assistance with the possession of Robert Brigges in 1573. While there is an element of hyperbole to the suggestion, it is true that there was a late flowering of treatises dealing with possession at any length and they came at the same time as, and after, the blossoming of demoniacs.⁹⁶ *Daemonicus, Hoc Est* first appeared

⁹⁴ Midelfort, 'The Devil and the German People', 199, 128.

⁹⁵ [Samuel Harsnet,] *A Discovery of the Fraudulent practises of Iohn Darrel* (London, 1599), 28.

⁹⁶ In the context of the Italian peninsula, Sluhovsky notes that the combination of possessed individuals and Menghi's success 'inspired a minor publishing boom in exorcismal manuals at the end of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth': *Believe Not*, 85.

in 1598 and Menghi's contributions started in the late 1570s, culminating in 1602.⁹⁷ The first edition of Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum* appeared in 1563 with numerous expanded editions following down to 1583, with Latin, German and French versions.⁹⁸ Bodin's *Démonomanie*, in part a refutation of Weyer, first appeared in 1580.⁹⁹ A more complete canon of early modern possession literature would include Martín Del Rio's *Disquisitiones magicae*, a substantial survey which was to gain authoritative status, which appeared in two volumes between 1599 and 1600.¹⁰⁰ This would be joined by Henri Boguet's *Discours execrable des sorciers* and Nicholas Remy's *Demonolatry*, both appearing in print around the same time.¹⁰¹ This late efflorescence of demonological literature at the turn of the century came with greater attention to demonic possession, perhaps epitomised by the second edition of Boguet's work revised to open with a detailed treatment of the case of Loyse Maillat, an eight-year-old Burgundian bewitched by Françoise Secretain in 1598.¹⁰² The second point is that while, as will be made clear, this is not to suggest that no literature existed to set the parameters for the experience of demonic possession, it is merely to note that, at the systematic level, it tended to be reactive rather than preemptive. Furthermore, they tended to be focussed on explanation, credibility, treatment, agency and cause rather more than the experience and the symptoms of the demoniac.

There are two aspects that are noteworthy in contextual terms and explanatory in terms of what follows. The efflorescence of demonological literature and specifically that relating to demonic possession is linked to a

⁹⁷ Petrus Thyraeus, *Daemonicus, Hoc Est: de obsessis a spiritibus daemoniorum hominibus liber unus* (Cologne, 1598); Girolamo Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica et possibilità delle mirabilis: e stupende operationi delli demoni e de' malefici* (Bologna, 1579); *idem*, *Flagellum daemonum seu exorcismi terribiles potentissimi et efficaces in malignos spiritus expellandos* (Venice, 1593); *idem*, *Fustis daemonum ad virationes formidabiles et potentissimos ad malignos spiritus effigandos de oppressis corporibus humanis complectens* (Venice, 1602). These works were drawn together, with additions by Zacharia Visconti and Valerio Polidori, in *Thesaurus exorcismorum atque conjurationum cum practica probatissima* (Cologne, 1608).

⁹⁸ Johann Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum, et incantationibus, ac veneficiis* (Basle, 1563). A detailed bibliography is provided in Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils and Doctors in the Renaissance: De praestigiis daemonum*, ed. George Mora (Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 73) (Tempe, Arizona, 1998), xliii-xliv, lviii-lx, lxxxvii-xc, xlv. This is the text I will refer to.

⁹⁹ Jean Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (Paris, 1580).

¹⁰⁰ Martín Del Rio, *Disquisitionum magicae libri sex* (Louvain, 1599-1600). A helpful selection is provided in Martín Del Rio, *Investigations Into Magic*, ed and trans. by P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester, 2000).

¹⁰¹ The former has a confusing publication history which is set out in Henri Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, trans. E. Allen Ashwin, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1929), xii-xv. This translates the 1602 edition. Nicolas Remy, *Demonolatry*, trans. E. Allen Ashwin, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1930). This was first published in 1595.

¹⁰² Boguet, 1-9.

concern to define and eliminate formerly tolerable practices as ‘superstition.’ While ‘superstition’ is clearly a relational and judgemental aphorism it is also indicative of a desire, a need, for control and order which can be seen as such in different forms, to different degrees, at different times, according to different circumstances but regardless of religious allegiances. This helps to explain the focus of a great deal of the literature on constructing a system judged to be appropriate to govern the response to possession. As Sluhovsky rather crushingly assesses the considerable work of Girolamo Menghi, ‘it is difficult to find anything original in his writings’, difficult, that is, apart from his painstaking efforts to set in order the response of both clerics and laypeople to demoniacs.¹⁰³ This links to the second aspect. In the late fifteenth century, Heinrich Kramer could draw upon Johannes Nider’s open-ended set of responses to possession without concern despite them including many traditional healing practices. This can be taken as an indication that exorcism or dispossession was considered relatively unimportant.¹⁰⁴ While it is plain from the earlier discussion that demonic possession was far from an early modern invention, it is a commonplace of the historiography that, despite medieval precedents the early modern period was, in Monter’s early catchphrase, ‘the golden age of the demoniac’.¹⁰⁵ There can be disputes over the exact chronology, and the nature of the phenomenon leaves, as we will see specifically in the English context, an inestimable number of unrecorded, under-reported and unreported possessions, the impression in itself is undisputed.¹⁰⁶ What is as important is that this was a perception shared by the demonologists. There may have been little common ground for Girolamo Menghi and George Gifford but on this they agreed. For the former, in ‘our tempestuous times, in which our cruel Enemy has become more powerful than ever against our human bodies... by means of his wicked deeds, which he uses to insult the divine authority and to murder the souls who have been saved through the precious blood of the immaculate Lamb Jesus Christ’ the threat needed to be addressed; for the latter, ‘daylie it is seene, that the devill is driven out of some possessed, that where he did vexe and torment men in their bodies, and in their cattle, they have remedie against him.’¹⁰⁷ Such were the

¹⁰³ Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 68-9; Michael Bailey, ‘The disenchantment of magic: spells, charms, and superstition in early European witchcraft literature’, *American Historical Review* 3 (2006), 383-404; for earlier movements in this direction and a useful overview of the definition and work against ‘supersition’, see Caciola, 239 and Bailey, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies: the boundaries of superstition in late medieval Europe* (London, 2013), *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: the Borderland during the Reformation* (London, 1976), 60.

¹⁰⁶ Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 389-90; Midelfort, ‘The Devil and the German People’, 121-2; *idem*, ‘Catholic and Lutheran reactions to demon possession in the late seventeenth century: two case studies’, in Levack (ed), *Articles on Witchcraft*, 136-7; Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, *passim*.

¹⁰⁷ Girolamo Menghi, *Compendio dell’arte essorcistica* (Bologna, 1579), 2-3; George Gifford, *A dialogue concerning witches and witchcraftes* (London, 1593), sig. F3v; cf. Andreas Celichius, *Notwendige Erinnerung Von des Sathans letzten*

circumstances, both perceived and actual, assisted by the availability of printed accounts, that called for greater control, a tighter discourse and harder lines drawn in practice. This both explains the focuses of the contemporary literature and justifies the minimal attention paid to their predecessors.

It is worthwhile giving a necessarily brief introduction to the major works, partly as a preface to the Anglophone treatments and partly to give a sense of the breadth of the parameters set thereby and the distance of the concerns from the more visceral accounts treated below as well as the differences in the treatments of the demoniacs. Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum* may seem a slightly odd treatise to start with, given his reputation as a 'sceptic' regarding witchcraft. However, in addition to the caution expressed about the category of 'sceptic' noted above, in Weyer's case his scepticism in his treatment of possession did not extend to the reality of possession itself, merely the responsibility of witches.¹⁰⁸ He paid some attention to the unmasking of fraudulence and was concerned to prevent individuals who were solely melancholic from the additional diagnosis of possession but such concerns were to encourage correct diagnosis rather than to refute the possibility. The first area of attention is a discussion of the items vomited during possession, covering hair, bones and needles. The focus is not on the reality so much as whether their expulsion is possible after they have actually been in the stomach or whether their appearance in the material is a demonic illusion of them having been swallowed, weighing the trickery alleged by the Paduan physician Cardano against the earlier forensic work of Antonio Benivieni.¹⁰⁹ Later he turns to the efficacy of prayer and fasting in dispossession. Some credence is given to fasting by the demoniac as a means of renewing spiritual discipline, lessening the space allowed for the demon because 'the flesh has grown insolent by its excessive self-indulgence' but the potential of communal fasting and prayer, drawing on Gospel sources and adding the guidance of Raphael to Tobit to support prayer, places the agency in God's hands with the requisite of sufficient faith within the company. For prayer he draws primarily upon Scripture with the approval of Origen, Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom.¹¹⁰ His treatment of exorcism primarily refers to the models from the Apostles, assuming clerical involvement and adding, with the grounding of Eph. 6:17, the necessity of the minister being 'guided of true zeal, relying on the testimony of a good conscience, and possessed of this special gift of the Holy Spirit (namely the casting out demons)' while carefully stopping short of granting him agency.¹¹¹

Zornsturm, *Und was es auff sich habe un bedeute, das nu zu dieser zeit so viel Menschen an Leib und Seel vom Teuffel besessen werden* (Wittenberg, 1995), f. B2.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Levack, *The Devil Within*, 75-6.

¹⁰⁹ Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum*, 286-90, citing Girolamo Cardano, *De rerum varietate* (Basel, 1558); Antonio Benivieni, *De abditis nonnullis ac mirandis morborum et sanitationum causis* (Florence, 1507).

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 453-5, 457. Weyer ignores the further instructions of Raphael to drive away demons by burning the heart and liver of a fish, a means that had been a concern for earlier writers against superstition: Bailey, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies*, 87-8, 166; Tobit 6:6-7, 16-7. From an exacting Protestant perspective, the use of an Apocryphal book would not have enhanced its chances.

¹¹¹ Weyer, 464-5.

What may have been of greater significance for his Protestant readers was the space he gave to the advice and experience of Philipp Melancthon, the colleague and interpreter of Luther, regarding possession, taken from his correspondence. Weyer gives a short instance of Melancthon having 'fooled the Devil' by revealing a fraudulent demoniac with demons supposedly averse to holy water but responding with the same torments to normal water used as a test. He gave accounts of two women in Saxony who were possessed. The only symptoms he mentions is that the first spoke in Latin and Greek of the forthcoming war and the second stole hair which was changed into coins which she swallowed. The means of release is briefly mentioned for the latter. 'Many prayers were offered for her by the pious; [all] other ceremonies were purposely omitted.' He goes on to mention women possessed in Rome, judging them to be a sign of punishment, a warning ahead of a final judgement. He doubts not that they can be rescued 'by the sincere prayers of pious men', and that the use of the Eucharist, holy water and invocation of Saints should not be used, ending with the general statement that 'I know of many cases in which the prayer of pious men has definitely helped.'¹¹²

While the influence of Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie* should certainly not be under-estimated in terms of arguments for culpability, the necessity of rigorous judicial examination and punishment of witches, in terms of the specifics of demonic possession there is less contribution than might be expected. He was certainly interested in correcting Weyer's dismissal of attributing any agency to witches in causing possession; while accepting the primary agency of God in allowing Satan the opportunity for possession and accepting the absence of actual causal responsibility of witches, the desire for possession and the collusion of witches with Satan in making the call for possession was, for Bodin, sufficient for their punishment on the grounds of the betrayal of proper loyalty to God. Dependent upon divine permission, Satan was willing to give the impression that humans had the agency to send the demons into people and such ambition and impression, however inaccurate, warranted punishment. On the possibility of fraudulent cases of possession, in logical terms there is less difference between Weyer and Bodin but greater space in terms of emphasis. Bodin took on the possibility of misdiscernment of melancholy for possession, pointing out that it was not too great a concern as melancholy was not capable of teaching people to speak Greek, Latin or Hebrew.¹¹³

The substantial contribution of Petrus Thyraeus was very far from the judicial and punitive concerns of Bodin. His concerns were primarily academic, in the negative sense of the term. He was interested in spirits, apparitions and ghosts, inhabiting people and places. That obviously includes demonic possession but under a broad umbrella that includes fields far from the interests of Protestant demoniacs or those hoping to assist them. He spends time aiding the distinction between ghosts and evil spirits, between lesser evil spirits infesting places and the greater harassing humans, and on whether some places are more likely to be infested than others. Some of the spirits identified are those languishing in purgatory, returning as warning or merely as trouble, clearly not part of the Protestant mindset. Indeed, part of his analysis was to consider

¹¹² Ibid., 469-70.

¹¹³ Bodin, *Démonomanie*, ff. 76r, 160v, 76r.

whether heretics, such as Protestants, were all possessed, or merely obsessed. He fills substantial space with the importance of identifying particular types of spirit in order to employ the 'proper' exorcism and, what will become a familiar theme, whether it was permissible to use countermagic to alleviate possession, but he is more concerned with, first, the limitations of what demons could do to humans and, second, with the explanation of incorporeal entities achieving physical impacts and to interact physically with humans, an issue central to the wider question of the nature of the reality of Satanic intercourse.¹¹⁴

The sections of Remy's *Demonolatry* which address possession are concentrated on the proper responses and within the broader category of responses to *maleficia*, effectively taking the potential for some form of culpability if not agency on the part of witches as a given. Opposition to Satanic assault should employ 'the sword of the spirit, the helmet of salvation, and our other reserves of protection (so to speak), such as temperance, integrity, vigilance, fasting, prayers, and constant supplication'; if that offers little by way of vengeance he offers the reassurance that 'the witches themselves confess, that they are thwarted and balked in their attempts by such means'. He spends more time warning against 'an old and pernicious custom', of eating or drinking something obtained from the house of the witch as a means of the restoration of health. He does not deny that, at a superficial level, this may be successful but it is the plan of the 'crafty Arch-schemer' to give the impression that this is more effective than turning to God, 'and thus turns us from the Creator to the creature, which is an intolerable blasphemy'. While witches may be initially annoyed with such means of resistance, they become more confident and vindictive when their victims look to them for mercy and, as far as the sufferer is concerned, they 'purchase a brief and uncertain bodily health at the price of sure and eternal damnation to our souls'.¹¹⁵ A little space is given to the symptom of vomiting, where he offers a report from an English doctor, Lang, witnessing a demoniac in 1539 when he was working 'in the train of the Princes Palatine' who, 'after long and acute pains in the belly, vomited out of her mouth some long curved iron nails, and some brass pins wrapped around with wax and hairs'. Having added a couple of Classical preternatural examples, he simply concludes that 'in our own time there have been books enough published which abound in examples of this sort of prodigy', a subject to which I'll return. Beyond this, in terms of symptoms, discernment and treatment, he offers nothing.¹¹⁶

There is greater treatment and analysis of possession in Boguet's *Discours execrable des sorciers* with some elements closer to the concerns below. It was noted above that he opens with the case of Loyse Maillat, an eight-year-old possessed at the behest of Françoise Secretain in July 1598. The initial reported symptoms are that she was 'struck helpless in all her limbs so that she had to go on all-fours; also she kept twisting her mouth about in a very strange manner'. After a few days, her parents were convinced she was possessed and took her to the priest to be exorcised. The priest interrogated the devils and found that there were five of them and that they were called Wolf, Cat, Dog, Jolly and Griffon and identified Secretain as the individual who had cast the spell. She returned home

¹¹⁴ Thyraeus, *Daemonicus*, *Hoc Est*, *passim*.

¹¹⁵ Remy, *Demonolatry*, 132, 142-3.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

with the parents instructed to pray for her delivery but the following morning the symptoms were worse with Loyse foaming at the mouth until she was 'thrown to the ground' before the demons emerged.¹¹⁷ Boguet returns to symptoms in the abstract later with a chapter on how some of the bewitched are caused to 'void, sometimes from the mouth and sometimes from the bottom parts, needles, hair, iron tools, stones and papers'. Boguet himself has seen 'an infinite number of such articles, among other things stones and balls and locks of hair and pigs' bristles'. Here his main concern is less the credibility of such phenomena but whether they are 'real' objects or illusory, whether Satan is giving the impression of such vomiting, that he 'brings them from elsewhere and mingles them with that which the bewitched person vomits or voids', concluding that it is mainly the former but sometimes both.¹¹⁸

Further attention is paid to the symptoms of possession when he gives a lengthy account of the case of Rollande du Vernois who was initially imprisoned as a suspected witch upon the accusations of two other witches, one of them Secretain, that they had seen her at a Satanic Sabbat. She became possessed while she was in prison. She eventually showed willing to confess and, taken from her cell, she told the judge that she had indeed attended one Sabbat but upon being asked what they did there she was struck dumb and could only say that 'she was prevented from telling the truth by the evil spirit which was possessing her, and which she felt like a big lump in her stomach'. At that she 'fell to the ground and began to bark like a dog at the Judge, rolling her eyes in her head with a frightful and horrifying look'. This led to a diagnosis of possession although the immediate attention stayed on further interrogation about the Sabbat. These questions were again interrupted by further unspecified torments and the same followed after her admission of Satanic carnal relations the following morning, with her mouth closed; in response to further questions 'she made signs with her head and two fingers that Satan had twice known her carnally, and then began to yelp and howl like a dog, upon which they let her be'. A little more was gained by further interrogation but 'the evil spirit began to torment her with such violence' that it was decided she should be exorcised the following day.¹¹⁹ As with Maillat, the first effort was to find the names of the demons of which there were two, Cat and Devil, and the instigator, another suspect of witchcraft called Groz-Jacques. The priest entered into a struggle with Satan, the priest using 'prayers and conjurations' while 'the Devil defended himself with blasphemy and mockery'. Further symptoms were identified showing 'how the Evil One made use of the body and limbs of the possessed woman; for sometimes she squinted at the priest frowningly, sometimes she shook her head at him, sometimes she made grimaces at him and twisted her mouth, mocking at him'. Boguet was more impressed with the strength shown in preventing Rollande from kissing the cross and when they brought the cross to her for her to sign herself with it, 'she was at once deprived of all use of her arms and hands, so that she could not even take hold of it'. There were similar responses to Holy Water, with various physical efforts to avoid contact. 'But it was an extraordinary sight when she was made to drink some of it; for it took

¹¹⁷ Henry Boguet, *Examen of Witches*, 1-2, 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-4.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 171-4.

two or three men to get her mouth open, and as soon as she had swallowed one drop the demon barked like a dog and cried, "You are burning me, you are burning me." The torments brought by continued efforts 'made her so weary and worn out that she could hardly breathe, and at other times she was as one dead'.¹²⁰

As the priest continued his efforts, with the demon admitting he was near to leaving Rollande, she put her hand on her belly, 'and with her hand followed some object up as far as her throat, which in the end appeared as a lump in her throat'. This spirit, Devil, did not leave until later that evening but similar symptoms came with the expulsion of Cat. Rollande was struck dumb for three days and resistance continued, with Rollande 'looking terrible and twisting her mouth and making horrible grimaces, and shaking her head in mockery as she threw herself to the ground, so that at times it took four or five men to hold her'. With Cat making promises that he was near to leaving, her 'throat was seen to swell as before' but he remained. The priest prepared a fire, upon which he cast 'certain perfumes' and then burnt a piece of paper with the demon's name written upon it. 'At this the demon howled and barked furiously, so that our hair stood on end to hear him, and to see Rollande so exhausted that she could hardly draw breath'. One last effort was made in responding to Cat's requests for bread by giving Rollande the Host with predictable results. As with Devil, Cat departed after the priest and magistrates had left and like Devil, this was as a 'black slug, which crept along the ground a little and then disappeared'.¹²¹ Boguet felt the need to give a little attention to the manner of departure. Loyse saw the last of her demons when they emerged from her mouth 'in the shape of balls as big as the fist and red as fire, except the Cat, which was black'. When they emerged, each 'danced three or four times round the fire and then vanished'. The reader is reassured that this is not 'abnormal' and neither are the swellings. The devil 'usually gives some sign of his departure from a person's body' and this is often for the place of departure to 'become swollen and big beyond measure', citing Petrus Thyraeus and the example of Catherine of Siena. Similarly, demons leaving in the form of animals is to be expected, 'such as flies, spiders, ants, lizards and other such beasts' also with Thyraeus as the authority.¹²²

The rest of Boguet's treatment of possession is less closely related to the experience and the particularities of the event. He addresses whether it is possible for one to send a demon into another, countering Weyer with Bodin, stressing the necessity of the permission of God and, after examples from Scripture and saints' lives concludes that there is no need for such examples, given that '[e]very day in our own town we continually meet with large numbers of people who, for the most part, impute their possession to certain Vaudios or sorcerers'. He touches upon the practical means by which the demons are introduced into the body of the possessed with the norm being through food carrying demons, with the common ground with the temptation of Eve stressed.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 175-6.

¹²¹ Ibid., 176-9. This means of control and destruction was commended in Menghi, *Flagellum*, 316 and *Thesaurus exorcismorum*, 414, 415, 870.

¹²² Ibid., 2-3, 192-3.

Agency is completely unaddressed. He notes the incapacity of demons to assault magistrates, citing both Bodin and Remy and adding his own experience.¹²³

He responds to the demand for explanation of why such torments can happen to innocent people in three ways. The first is the model of punishment for parental sins, even to the fourth generation. The second is for the justice and mercy of God to be seen more clearly, not least through the exposure and punishment of witches. The third slightly ducks the issue; while 'theologians' offer five causes Boguet prefers not to explore the issue further but to rest on his trust in God. It is of greater interest to him to explain how demons can take on material form from the elements and he does so as much as from examples from Scripture, from Classics and from history as from actual explanation. He gives similar treatment to the means by which demons can speak through demoniacs. On one level it is simply a matter of employing the lungs and tongue of the possessed but for the greater challenge of speaking 'through the shameful parts of a woman, or when the person's mouth is shut, or when the person's tongue is thrust six inches out of the mouth' he merely cites the example of the Delphic Oracle, an established source for the condemnation of 'superstition', quackery and demonic activity since the Fathers, for she was able to speak 'through the lower and shameful parts'.¹²⁴

Finally, some didactic opportunities are taken. Those who dismiss the use of exorcism are given short shrift. In addition to Loyse and Rollande, the gift to the Apostles is extended beyond the primitive Church as is shown by numerous saints, the most recent of whom is Bernard of Clairvaux, and then a particularly pointed instance when a Huguenot gentleman in the 1590s knew that his own ministers were incapable of expelling demons and so was willing to compromise his own faith for the reliability of Roman Catholic exorcisms to rescue his son. This lesson is completed by a lengthy treatment of the power of the Cross in fighting demons and a shorter one on their frailty against Holy Water, two of 'the flails of the Devil'.¹²⁵

There is much common ground in Martín Del Río's *Disquisitionum magicarum* with slightly different emphases. His work is rich in anecdotal evidence, employed either as sources to analyse or as illustrations of a particular thesis. This is, for instance, the way into his explanation of the distinction between obsession and possession, as a preface to the examination of agency when witches are involved with demoniacs. He is willing to stress the culpability of the 'apparent' agency of witches, but also concerned to stress the reality of such agency being merely apparent, with demons either pretending to be submissive or being so within the hierarchy of demons rather than under the rule of any human.¹²⁶ When he moves on to discuss the medical remedies and responses, he distinguishes between medicine as a means of investigation and as a cure and putting the emphasis very much on the former, relying upon the work of Giovan Battista Codronchi, the Italian demonologist who had warned against physicians

¹²³ Ibid., 8-9, 10, 11-12, 116.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 13-14, 16-21, 26-8. On the shifting use of the Delphic Oracle as demonic, fraudulent or superstitious, see Anthony Ossa-Richardson, *The Devil's Tabernacle: the Pagan Oracles in early modern thought* (Oxford, 2013), *passim*.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 180-2, 182-7, 188-9.

¹²⁶ Del Río, *Investigations Into Magic*, 129-30.

contributing more than diagnosis to demoniacs, and Del Rio similarly concentrates on the contribution of physicians to identifying the cause of the condition rather than its cure.¹²⁷ He devotes some space to enabling the distinction between demonic possession and ordinary *maleficia*, finding substantial overlap and concluding that the most reliable signs are the ability to speak a foreign language, to answer abstruse questions beyond their level of education and the revelation of secret information. Perhaps partly reflective of the more anecdotal evidence, he explicitly refuses to dwell upon the more spectacular forms of possession drawn from Scripture.¹²⁸ There is an openness but with caution regarding treatment. He does not limit the possibilities for the means of expulsion to exorcism completely, allowing the efficacy of fumigants, various relics and a waxen Agnus Dei as part of the diagnosis.¹²⁹ That much accepted, he is very concerned about the dangers of any collaboration between the exorcist and the devil, fearing that an unreliable agent is in danger of either being tempted by the glamour or beguiled into serving demonic purposes. Part of the answer is to rely upon a trustworthy cleric and he is harsh on the prospect of inadequate clergy as well as laity performing exorcisms. It is the danger of seduction, rather than judicial concerns, that lie behind his reservations about the interrogation of the possessing demons. The relationship should be one of command, for even good intentions can be the first step on a slippery slope, let alone interrogation for the sake of curiosity.¹³⁰

The publication of *Thesaurus exorcismorum* signaled an effort to establish a standard and systematic guide to the treatment of demoniacs, effectively to replace the older work of Gerson attached to *Malleus Maleficarius* and Nider's influential but eclectic *Formicarius*. Indeed, the *Thesaurus* should be seen as the climax of a gradual effort to bring an order, a system and a propriety to the much more open, informal and heterogenous responses to possession that had been inherited but was regarded as inadequate for dealing with the increased 'popularity' of possession and dispossession.¹³¹ It consisted of six treatises, dominated by the work of Girolamo Menghi but including more recent work by Valerio Polidori, Pietro Antonio Stampa and Zacharia Visconti. It is much more than the painstaking collection of exorcisms, adapted to prevent the demonic machinations evading the command to depart the possessed, providing a detailed means of distinction and engagement with a sub-text of control (as much of unorthodox practice as of demons) and ecclesiastical authority. While exorcism per se is not part of the concern for English protestant demoniacs or

¹²⁷ Ibid., 257-8; cf. Giovan Battista Codronchi, *De morbis veneficis ac veneficiis* (Venice, 1595), 213.

¹²⁸ Del Rio, *Investigations Into Magic*, 258-60.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 260-1.

¹³⁰ Del Rio, *Disquisitionum magicarum*, Book 4, 'Anacephalaecosis', 333-4.

¹³¹ A lengthy and stimulating treatment is provided by Armando Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric: a study of Renaissance Demonology* (Chicago, 2001), 96-136. For the seminal nature and structural laxity of *Formicarius*, see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 315-9. His continuing influence is attested to, for instance, by his frequent citation in Del Rio (*Investigations Into Magic*, 53, 104, 133, 136, 232, 264-5) but also by a new edition published in Douai in 1602. The thesis on a gradual imposition of order shares space with Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 33-5.

their assistants, there are two elements that are of particular interest for what is covered below. The first is the formalisation and exegesis of the interrogation of the demons and especially the interest in their names and whether they had any human accomplices, two elements which will be encountered in English cases and prove difficult in judicial terms. Finding the name of the occupying spirit is seen as an important step towards control both enhancing the power of the commandments to depart and drawing contrast with the infinitely more powerful divine names.¹³² The second is the greater attention to the symptoms of possession. While each of the treatises provide something more than the cumulative impression of symptoms mentioned in the exorcisms, the most influential was that provided by Visconti, intended to provide the means to distinguish between a demoniac and one 'merely' bewitched. The twenty-two symptoms identified are a mixture of physical manifestations, such as the tongue swollen and extruded, behaviours such as the imitation of animal voices, and either refusal to answer questions or to do so with a combative voice or in an indecipherable language, sometimes moving from a sense of heavy exhaustion to energetic efforts at self-harm, finishing with a revulsion for relics, blessed objects, sacred words and priests.¹³³ When Del Rio came to address the signs and indications of possession he simply referred his reader to Visconti's treatment.¹³⁴ Similarly, when Francesco Maria Guazzo provided a similar albeit expanded list of symptoms for the same purpose, the foundation was the symptoms listed by Visconti. What is, however, equally revealing is the additions and enhancements Guazzo makes. He shares Visconti's list of sensations such as the sense of ants crawling under the demoniac's skin or a cold vapour running through the body but takes the physical manifestations further as in inflated stomachs, mobile lumps, especially in the throat, noting that the head and face 'and sometimes the whole body, swells as it were filled with hot vapour' or that the head 'swells to an enormous size'. Similarly, while Visconti mentioned an unwillingness to eat, for Guazzo it is abstinence from food for a week and while Visconti mentions a heavy torpor, for Guazzo, 'they become as if they were stupid, blind, lame, deaf, dumb, lunatic, and almost incapable of movement'. While Visconti makes no mention of speaking in foreign tongues, Guazzo adds the devil's voice to the swelling of the tongue, the capacity of the unlearned to understand and respond to languages other than their own, the hearing of internal voices and having an access to 'hidden and long-forgotten matters', the secrets of observers and being able to 'argue about high and difficult questions'.¹³⁵ The point is not that these

¹³² Menghi, *Thesaurus exorcismorum*, especially, 336-7; cf. de Certeau, *Possession at Loudun*, 85-100. Visconti's *Complementum artis exorcistae* was published in Venice in 1600.

¹³³ Ibid., 777-8; cf. 9-10, 201-2, 295.

¹³⁴ Del Rio, *Investigations Into Magic*, 257.

¹³⁵ Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, ed. Montague Summers, trans. E.A. Ashwin (London, 1929, first published Milan, 1608), Book II, Chap. II, 167-9. Guazzo lists 47 symptoms but some of them are repetitions or modifications of elements he includes among the others. Some of the additions are taken from Del Rio, for instance acquiring the complexion of 'cedar wood'; cf. Del Rio, *Investigations Into Magic*, 257.

phenomena were without precedent in cases of possession but that they were not among those identified at the end of the sixteenth century.

To turn to the demonology in English is not to find demonic possession wholly ignored so much as to find different interests and emphases to those which might be seen to give a detailed account of what constituted possession as an experience or as a set of behaviours. Putting Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* to one side, partly as it is a text which will be discussed below, it is a commonplace of witchcraft historiography that guides to witchcraft came late to the press and the same is even more the case with treatments of demonic possession of any length. The work of Pierre Lavater, frequently cited by later demonologists, was translated in 1572 but his *Of ghostes and spirites walking by night*, is more concerned with prodigies, phantoms and omens than demonic possession.¹³⁶ Some hope may be raised by the translation of Pierre Viret's *World Possessed With Devils*, as the French preacher was converted by William Farel and a close colleague of John Calvin's but, while his treatment discusses the possessed in Scripture and cites Nider, its dominant topos is possession as an allegory, the worse state of the reprobate than the temporarily possessed, the allegorical possession of the church by Roman Catholicism and the opponents to 'true' reformation.¹³⁷

In George Gifford's first brief treatment he wholly accepts the reality of contemporary demonic possession but the focus is mainly on the ill-advised nature of turning to cunning folk or, in Gifford's terms, other witches, for relief rather than embracing 'ye wholsome remedy which the Lord hath prescribed'. In these cases the devil is not driven out, merely the weaker devil seemingly driven out but actually replaced by a stronger one.¹³⁸ This concern, which will become familiar, is developed in his later treatment when the enquirer asks for clarification about how the devil is driven out 'in these that are cured by cunning men' if it is done neither by the power of God or Satan. He is informed that there is not a third means, but that the situation is made worse on two grounds. The first is that the possessed has sought succour from conjurations that are devised by Satan and therefore blasphemous; the second is that 'Satan doth not give place as forced, but ceaseth to do those bodilie harmes, that he may fullie win unto himselfe both bodie and soule'. Gifford sets out in brief the proper means of

¹³⁶ Lewes Lavater, *Of ghostes and spirites walking by night, and of strange noyses, crackes and sundry forewarnynges, whiche commonly happen before the death of menne, great slaughters, & alterations of kyngdomes*, trans by R.H. (London, 1572); this was a speedy translation as *De Spectris, lemuribus et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus* was first published in Cologne in 1570. The later critique of Lavater, Pierre Le Loyer's *III Livres des Spectres ou Apparitions et Visions d'Esprits, Anges et Demons se monstrans sensiblement aux hommes* (1586) was only partly translated as *A Treatise of Spectres or straunge Sights, Visions, and Apparitions appearing sensibly unto men* in 1605.

¹³⁷ [Pierre Viret,] *The Worlde possessed with Devils, conteinyng three Dialogues* (London, 1583), Ev for the citation of Nider. The Henry E. Huntingdon Library copy has, at the start of the second part, under the note 'Translated out of French by T.S. Gentleman' a handwritten note identifying him as 'Thomas Stocker'.

¹³⁸ George Gifford, *A Discourse of the subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* (London, 1587), J3.

expulsion. 'If a man be vexed & tormented by a devil, & men seek by fasting and prayer to cast him forth, even instantly intreating the Lord, then he goeth out with much ado, and unwillingly, as overcome & expelled by the power of God.' He is willing to give much more space warning against interrogating the possessing devil in order to identify the individual who (mistakenly) thinks they instigated the possession as of course the devil is an inherently untrustworthy witness, and stressing that the agency allowed to the Apostles 'and others in the Primitive Church' to cast out devils was extraordinary and that agency accrued by fasting and prayer remains wholly in God's hands.¹³⁹ What, for our purposes, is as important, are the absences: the text is silent on the symptoms, the duration of possession and of the means of discernment. The same is true to an even greater extent of Henry Holland's more substantial tome. A short appendix appeared which promised an assessment of 'by what meanes all uncleane spirits are driven out of naturall men' but opens with the means of regeneration, of casting out sin, Satan's rule in a general sense rather than the particularity of demonic possession. This provides a call for a powerful ministry based on the Word and the Holy Spirit. This moves on to the possessed maid at Philippi in Acts 16 and how she displayed a familiarity with the truth of the Gospel but this is used as a way into dismissing the theatricalities of 'those wicked exorcists' as an abuse of Scripture, employing the outward letter of the Word alongside 'their characters, signes, crosses, figures, &c.' in order to keep observers from escaping to the 'graces of true religion'. Paul's action is taken as the proper model in bidding the devil to silence to prevent his perversion of the Word.¹⁴⁰

James VI of Scotland, shortly before he became James VI & I of England, Scotland and Ireland gave rather more of substance on the theoretical side and a little more on the practicalities, albeit with a similar set of priorities. His opening interest is establishing the reality of contemporary possession and the necessity of divine permission for possession to happen. In response to the question of whether God will allow such torments to be inflicted upon believers, he sets out three targets, each with its explanation: 'the wicked for their horrible sinnes, to punish them in the like measure; The godlie that are sleeping in anie great sinnes or infirmities and weakenesse in faith, to waken them up the faster by such an uncouth forme: and even some of the best, that their patience may bee tried before the world', with the last illustrated by a figure who will appear frequently below, Job. God's purpose is set out in slightly more detail later, with those most guilty being punished 'by that horrible kinde of scourdge'. The possession of the godly serves two purposes. It is 'for the tryall of their patience, and wakening up of their zeale' while onlookers may be admonished 'not to trust over much in themselves, since they are made of no better stuffe, and peradventure blotted with no smaller sinnes'. The positive outcome is that this will give them 'matter to prayse GOD, that they meriting no better, are yet spared from being corrected

¹³⁹ *Idem, A Dialogue*, F4-G, G, J2-3. The warnings about the dangerous and duplicitous nature of counter-magic is an element in the campaign against 'superstition': cf. Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*, 40-1.

¹⁴⁰ Henry Holland, *A Short Discourse Shewing The Most Certen And Principal Meanes Ordeined of God to discover, expell, and to confound all the Sathanicall inventions of witchcraft and Sorcerie*, appended to *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1590), separate pagination, 3-4, 5-6.

in that fearefull forme'. Since these are not, of course, Satan's priorities, his participation is duly given explanation. He hopes to push them to suicide or at least inflict the worst diseases God will allow and thus weaken them. At best he will make them mistrust God and even blaspheme, perhaps winning their allegiance with a promise of relief, 'as he assayed to have done with IOB'. He adds the warning against any attempt to seek succour via another witch: granted, 'it may wel serve for a shorte time, but at the last, it will doubtleslie tend to the utter perdition of the patient, both in bodie and soule'.¹⁴¹ The last discussion is in response to two queries. The first is why Roman Catholics should have the power to cure demoniacs. James hedges his bets. He doubts that any outside the true religion would be able to. For those that are said to be cured, the first caveat is 'that it is knowen so manie of them to be counterfite' and the second is that Satan is willing to respond to the attempts to cast him out, 'thereby to obtaine the perpetual hurt of the soules of so many that by these false miracles may be induced or confirmed in the profession of that erroneous Religion'. Finally James is willing to grant the possibility of genuine dispossession but with the least possible credit. He notes the commission given to the Apostles to cast out devils along with the means to do so and stresses the validity of the means while using the illustration that makes the lack of individual agency or credit stark. 'The rules he bad them observe in that action, was fasting and praier: & the action it selfe to be done in his name. The power of theirs proceeded not then of anie vertue in them, but onely in him who directed them. As was clearly proved by Iudas his having as greate power in that commission, as anie of the reste. It is easie then to be understand that the casting out of Devilles, is by the vertue of fasting and prayer, and in-calling of the name of God, suppose manie imperfectiones be in the person that is the instrumente, as CHRIST himselfe teacheth us of the power that false Prophets shall have to caste out Devils.'

In addition to the stress on the use of fasting and prayer as the proper means to request the dispossession, James responds to the second query, as to how demoniacs can be discerned from 'them that ar ruled with a natural Phrensie or Manie' with some account of distinguishing symptoms. Given that it is the first in an Anglophone demonological tract, it is worth quoting at length. He dismisses the 'divers vaine signes that the *Papistes*' use, such as holy water, the sign of the cross and such useful propagandist items for their Church.

But to come to these three symptomes then, whereof I spake, I account the one of them to be the incredible strength of the possessed creature, which will farre exceede the strength of six of the wightest and wodest of any other men that are not so troubled. The next is the boldning up so far of the patients breast and bellie, with such an unnaturall sturring and vehement agitation within them: And such an ironie hardnes of his sinnowes so stiffelie bended out, that it were not possible to prick out as it were the skinne of anie other person so far: so mighteily works the Devill in all the members and senses of his body, he being locallie within the same, suppose of his soule and affections thereof, hee have no more power then of any other mans. The last is, the speaking of sundrie languages, which the patient is knowen by them that were acquainte with him never to have learned, and al the time of his speaking, a greater motion being in his breast

¹⁴¹ James I, *Dæmonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597), 47, 62-4, 48-9.

then in his mouth. But fra this last symptome is excepted such, as are altogether in the time of their possessing bereft of al their senses being possessed with a dumme and blynde spirit, whereof Christ relieved one, in the 12. of *Mathew*.¹⁴²

There are two elements to note. The first is the concern to identify symptoms which go beyond the limited possibilities of natural disease and hence allowing only some preternatural force enabling them. The second is the relative breadth of both the particular symptoms and the use of the means of dispossession identified as appropriate. It is not made clear that these are all the symptoms, the requisite ones or if there could be others, not noted as they would not serve as a litmus test for a 'definite' possession. Even at this late stage in the development of the growing number of reported possessions, there is a great deal of room for negotiation, for creativity and for improvisation.

It is worth moving a little further forward to consider the treatment given to possession by William Perkins in print, partly because it was a central demonological work but also because it was an edition of lectures given in Cambridge in the 1580s and 90s. There is some detailed treatment and certainly an assumption that there is a reality to contemporary possession, but the accent is on the negative and the theoretical, rather than on experience or discernment. He is quick to dismiss exorcism, the use of 'certaine set formes of words used in way of adjuration' and it is immediately plain that this refers to the Roman Catholic rituals. The combination of oil, holy water, salt and spittle is dismissed as 'meere enchantements'. He is willing to accept that some system and some uniformity has been imposed by the Council of Trent, 'yet they have in them no power or abilitie of blessing or cursing, either by nature, of Gods appoyntment'. This moves into a general disapproval of turning to cunning folk for aid, offering, at this point, limited alternatives: 'Use good meanes allowed of God, and when they have beene used often without successe, proceede not to other courses, but referre your selves to God, and say with Iob: *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*, Iob.1.21.'¹⁴³

Having set out in detail a set of preemptive strategies to prevent the assaults of witches in general, he rather pulls the rug from under the godly feet by making it clear that the most pious life is not exempt. It might be much less in danger than that of the unrepentant sinner but 'there is onely one case, and no more, wherein the devill hath any power to hurt him, and that it, when it pleaseth God by that kind of crosse, to make triall of his faith and patience'. Having opened the possibility of assault, he offers some guide to remedial action albeit under the banner of restoratives for particular persons, to which I will return, but the greater space is given to the refutation of 'the false and superstitious Remedies, prescribed and used by them of the popish Church'. The grounds of rejection are worth examining, as much for their silences, their absences and their unanswered questions, because a careless reading would be in danger of making Perkins more of a sceptic than would be persuasive. While the 'most learned Papists' teach that 'there is in Gods Church an ordinarie gift & power, whereby some men may cast out devills, ... the Protestants is of a

¹⁴² Ibid., 70-3.

¹⁴³ William Perkins, *A Discourse Of The Damned Art Of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1608), 150, 156-7.

contrarie judgement, and holdeth according to truth, that there is now no such ordinarie gift lent to the Church of God, since the daies of the Apostles'.¹⁴⁴ This is explained by comparing such actions with xenolalia and the gift of healing by the putting on of hands and handling serpents with no fear of hurt, lesser works, as gifts given to the Apostles and operative in the Primitive Church 'as a meanes to confirme the doctrine of the Gospel to unbeleevvers, that never heard of Christ before'. Now that the doctrine had been established, the gift had ceased; indeed, for it to be still available would be a slur on the success of the Apostolic mission. Now that the promise had been rescinded, the gift had been withdrawn. 'Therefore if Ministers now should lay their hands on the sicke, they should not recover them: if they should annoint them with Oyle, it should doe them no good, because they have no promise'.¹⁴⁵ The exact target of Perkins' rejection of the efficacy of exorcism becomes clearer when he proceeds to address the five remedies against the consequences of witchcraft. Having spent some pages explaining the presumption or superstition in assigning automatic efficacy to the name of Jesus, relics of Saints, the sign of the cross and hallowed creatures, he turns to the fifth, exorcism. He defines it as 'an adjuring and commanding of the Devill in the name of God, to depart from the partie of the possessed, and cease to molest him any more'. He reiterates the former argument and concludes that 'for an ordinarie man now to commaund the Devill in such sort, is meere presumption, and a practise of Sorcerie'. The presumption is in the claim of human means to agency, the crucial term being 'command' in the same way that the simple use of the terms, gestures or remnants of humans to drive out the devil (or to generally counter-act witchcraft) without addressing the reasons for God authorising the actions of Satan. The superstition is in assuming that such human actions possessed the gift of driving the devil out. Where he is silent, where he chooses to not provide an answer, is in the 'proper' means to dispossess, at least where he is dealing solely with demonic possession. To get some sense of the proper response, it is necessary to return to the general restoratives.

Following a lengthy section on preemptive actions, labelled general restoratives to lessen the dangers of witchcraft at a social level, which echoes Viret in the emphasis on a fully reformed church, an able ministry and a godly magistracy, he turns to 'the cure of particular persons'. Despite the loss of the gift of driving out demons by adjuration, 'yet there may be meanes used, and that effectually, for the easing of any person that is bewitched by Satans instruments'. The first action is self-examination in order to explore why God was pleased 'to suffer Satan to exercise them with that kinde of crosse'. Done diligently, this will show that the trial was merited by their sins. The second is that they should show their faith, their dependence upon God's free favour and mercy. This should be done 'by heartie praier unto God, ioyned with fasting that the same may be more earnest'. The focus should be on forgiveness for their sins and, provisionally, for lessening of their torments, with the provisionality being that such relief should come second to the glory of God and their own good. Thirdly, they should bear the 'present annoyance', finding comfort in the triple assurance that the ultimate determining agent is God, that he will not test them beyond

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 156-7, 232.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 232-4.

their capacity to cope and that 'in his good time' God 'will grant a ioyfull issue', either in this life or 'by death they shall be eternally delivered'.¹⁴⁶ It is a demanding form of comfort, which pays no attention to any effort to seek the immediate (illusory) cause in the witch and there is no suggestion for any interrogation of the occupying devils but such is the consequence of placing all the agency, power and mercy in the hands of the divine. Perkins might approve of the possibilities of fasting and prayer but the symptoms and the external signs of possession are far from his interest.

Given the late appearance of substantive literature on possession and its noted selectivity of focus, the question that needs addressing is the means of identifying the symptoms by which to measure an 'authentic' demoniac. The first port of call for a Protestant diagnostician was Scripture. Protestants, of course, did not have a monopoly on Scripture and the limitations of, for instance, Visconti's list of symptoms relates to Scripture being his primary source. As Levack has noted, Scripture is not sufficient as a source for all the symptoms attached to early modern possessions.¹⁴⁷ There is the loss of sight (Matt. 12:22), of hearing (Mark 9:25), being struck dumb (Mark 9:17; Matt. 12:22), extraordinary strength (Luke 8:29; Mark 5:3-4), a form of mania or proneness to suicide attempts (Mark 9:17-22) and falling 'as if dead' (Mark 9:26-7), with a certain clairvoyance in the demons' unusual familiarity with the status of Jesus, but the focus was much more on the actions of Jesus as an exorcist and on the abilities given to the Apostles to dispossess. There is a far greater debt owed to contemporary accounts, sometimes, as will emerge, in creative tension with successive instances. In the particularly contestatory circumstances of the religious politics of Europe, there was a degree of public competition over the successful battles with demons and although this was far from always the case and far from the starting point of the behaviour of the vast majority of demoniacs, some could be adopted for political purposes and there was substantial overlap between politico-religious accounts and straightforward 'sensation' literature. Within the analysis of the possessed in England, serious caution will be exercised in terms of influence, drawing on direct evidence and identifying possibilities and overlaps with appropriate caveats in order to avoid the temptation of suppositious genealogy. Given the greater distance between the demoniacs in England, both geographically and linguistically, it would run contrary to such restraint to make assumed connections with contemporary accounts from other parts of Europe so I will merely outline the growth of the material in the second half of the sixteenth century.

In Germany there were fewer possessions and dispossessions than further south, but they received plenty of attention through the growing *Teufelbücher* industry and the prodigy press.¹⁴⁸ There was a relatively early account, partly drawing attention from the contribution of Melanchthon but not

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 229-32.

¹⁴⁷ Levack, *The Devil Within*, 38.

¹⁴⁸ On *Teufelbücher*, possession and its treatment, see Midelfort, *A History of Madness in Germany* (Stanford, California, 1999) esp. 49-79 and David Lederer, *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe: A Bavarian Beacon* (Cambridge, 2006).

an immediate surge in the literature.¹⁴⁹ Numbers grew from the 1560s, tending to be individuals possessed more than the communal possessions that are more familiar from seventeenth-century France.¹⁵⁰ The greatest sensation was the possession of Anna Bernhausen of Altötting in 1570, not least due to her position as a maid-in-waiting to the Fugger family but mainly due to the contribution of Peter Canisius and the following controversy between Catholics and Lutherans.¹⁵¹

The religio-political conditions, tensions and conflicts in late sixteenth-century France provided for three of the most famous, contested and well-documented cases of possession. The greatest opportunistic performance was the exorcism of Nicole Obry, a possessed sixteen-year-old in Picardy. Partly as a means of rebuttal of the Huguenot threat, the exorcism was held in the cathedral of Notre-Dame-de-Liesse at Laon and produced a great deal of literature setting out the events and making claims for the 'miracle of Laon' as well as responses making claims for fraudulence.¹⁵² The next possession to enter the limelight was in Soissons in 1582, shortly after the city had been recaptured from the Calvinists. This was on a slightly lesser scale in terms of the public drama and less disputed but produced two roughly similar substantial accounts and drew upon Obry's model, even sharing one of the demons. The possessed ranged from a thirteen-year-old boy to a fifty-year-old man, who was possessed twice and a newly married young woman.¹⁵³ The third and most contentious possession was

¹⁴⁹ Johannes Bügenhagen and Philipp Melanchthon, *Zwo wunderbarlich Hystorien, zu bestettigung der Iere des Evangelii* (n.p., n.d. [1530]).

¹⁵⁰ For instance, see Sebastian Khueller, *Kurtze unnd warhafftige Historia, von einer Junckfrawen, wölche mit etlich unnd dreissig bösen Geistern leibhafftig besessen* (Munich, 1574); Sixtus Agricola and Georg Witmer, *Erschröckliche gantz warhafftige Geschicht welche sich mit Apolonia, Hannsen Geisslbrechts... Haussfrawen, so... von dem bösen Feind gar hart besessen* (Ingolstadt, 1584); Johann Schnabel and Simon Marius, *Warhafftige und erschrockliche Geschicht welche sich newlicher Zeit zugretragen hat, mit einem Jungen Handtwercks und Schmidtsgesselen, Hansen Schmidt genandt* (Würzburg, 1589); Melchior Newkirch, *Andechtige Christliche gebete, wider die Teuffel in dem armen besessen leuten* (Helmstedt, 1596). There were many possessions among the wider collection of sensations and wonders in Job Wincel, *Wunderzeichen: Der dritte Teil, so von der zeit an, da Gottes wort in Deudschland, Rein und lauter geprediget worden, geschehen und ergangen sind* (Jena, 1562).

¹⁵¹ Martin Eisengrein, *Unser liebe Fraw zu Alten Oetting* (Ingolstadt, 1571).

¹⁵² The most substantial account was the collection compiled and edited by Jean Boulaese, *Le Thresor et entiere histoire de la triomphante victoire du corops de Dieu sur l'Esprit maling Beelzebub, obtenuë a Laon l'am mil cinq cens soixante six* (Paris, 1578) but Boulaese produced a pamphlet in 1566 in Latin, French, Spanish, German and Italian and worked hard to attach prominent patrons. Cf. Barthélemy Faye, *Energumenicus* (Paris, 1571). Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, 23-39 provides a contextual analysis while Sluhovsky, 'Divine apparition' concentrates on Nicole herself.

¹⁵³ Charles Blendec, *Cinq Histoires admirables, esquelles est monstré comme miraculeusement par la vertu et puissance du S. sacrement de l'autel a esté chassé Beelzebub* (Paris, 1582); Gervasius Tornacensis, *Divina quator energumenorum*

that of Marthe Brossier between 1598 and 1599, with the young woman becoming a mixture of possessed, self-publicist and instrument of the Holy Catholic League in its efforts to oppose Henry IV's attempts at a rapprochement with the Huguenots. This produced a very public struggle among the rival parts of the intelligensia over the reality of Marthe's possession but not one between medical 'sceptics' and religious zealots so much as the relations between physiological conditions and the mutually accepted reality of possession.¹⁵⁴

V

What has gone before will hopefully make the perceived coherence of what follows clear. The opening chapter will trace the development of the discourse of possession through instances from the 1560s onwards with the best efforts to prevent this from serving solely as a preface to the better-known contestation at the end of the century. More importantly each case will be contextualised and analysed in its own terms as far as the differing amounts of record allow with notes laid down for a more cumulative, broader temporal analysis to be delivered later on.¹⁵⁵ The following section will be devoted to the controversy over the exploits of John Darrell and his treatment of various possessed individuals and groups. The former treatments have had a primary focus on the judicial and political issues and while these aspects will, of course, play a part, one of the consequences of this emphasis on the punchline, as it were, has drawn attention away from the developmental nature of these cases, underestimated the late arrival of Darrell in the proceedings and, surprisingly, paid limited attention to the formation of the possession event. This is not so much a correction of previous accounts as one with different interests, a different reading. It will, of course, entail an account of the current historiography, partly as a foundation and partly as an engagement and, as far as

liberatio... In qua sacrasanctae Eucharistiae vis & veritas planè elucet (Paris, 1583). An account is provided in Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, 28-33 and touched upon in Sluhovsky, 'Divine apparition'.

¹⁵⁴ The two immediate rival accounts are 'Léon d'Alexis,' [Pierre Bérulle] *Traicté des energumenes, Suivy d'un discours sur la possession de Marthé Brossier: contre les calomnies d'un medecin de Paris* (Troyes, 1599) and [Michel Marescot] *Discours veritable sur le fait de Marthe Brossier de Romorantin, pretendue demoniaque* (Paris, 1599). The latter was quickly translated into English as *A true discourse, upon the matter of Martha Brossier of Romorantin, pretended to be possessed by a devill*, by Abraham Hartwel (London, 1599). There is a full treatment in Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, 40-59 and Anita M. Walker and Edmund H. Dickerman, ' "A woman under the influence": a case of alleged possession in sixteenth-century France', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991), 534-54.

¹⁵⁵ An absence will be noted: the Roman Catholic exorcisms of the possessed at Denham appear only as they pertain to the literature relating to Protestant cases of dispossession. This is not because they were 'fraudulent' per se but because they were, without exception, judged to be so by English Protestants and hence were not part of the shifting discourse of 'real' possession: see F.W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham* (London, 1993).

different interests allow, a contraction of the coverage. The focus will be fourfold, each focus having consequences for later studies. The first question will be on possession itself. Taking the experience seriously as an experience and as a discourse means asking what 'possession' was. That requires an engagement with the discourse, the means of measurement, but also the social practice, of what sets of symptoms, circumstances, social criteria and exchanges created a space in which diabolic possession is judged to have occurred. The passivity of 'judged' should not be allowed to be unquestioned in that individuals can judge themselves to be possessed (or not) and that diagnosis accepted or rejected by the surrounding society whether it be immediate, in family, friends and neighbours, medics or clerics; similarly, responses to the reports of (in)valid possession can run counter. At which point is a truth accredited?

The second focus returns to symptoms, to behaviour. Attention tends to concentrate on the more sensationalist, aberrant activities of self-harm, physical contortions, abuse and misbehaviour. While the attraction is understood (and shared) and these elements need to be discussed, there is another side that also requires due attention. There are elements in possessed behaviour that involve denunciation of sins, identification of virtues, preaching, giving lessons and visions. In other circumstances these symptoms might receive very different readings and this will prove to be an opening of an interpretation which will take us into surprising places.

The third and fourth focusses have common targets but different intentions. Samuel Harsnet's work, along with the representation of the trials brings more familiar texts ut also a complementary reading. Re-examining Harsnet's means of engagement shifts the ground for the undstanding of the discourse of possession after the sharp debates over Darrell and over Mary Glover.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, as the contributions of John Deacon and John Walker have come to be recognised less as further strings to the Bancroftian bow and more as representative of internal strains of *fin de siècle* puritanism,¹⁵⁷ it needs to be considered how far their work is leakage within the urge for greater reform within the Church of England. A greater sense of the immediate religious and political along with a modified understanding of what needs to be explained and the power relations present in every dispute but particularly prevelant in these exchanges, so much so that Harsnet's efforts have given a particular tinge to the historiography down to the present day.

This is intended to encourage reading of the dispute in a broader context. Seeing the puritan movement in the context of the new regime of John Whitgift and Richard Bancroft, recovering from the failure of the efforts for ecclesiological reform and especially after the intra- and supra-divisive experience of the Marprelate controversy, this encourages the perception of different priorities. Reading Darrell et al. alongside the flashpoints of Hacket and the 'penny dreadfuls' from the godly to which we have become more sensitive, changes the priorities for our attention. With a newly acquired sense of the substantial ground shift in the political and religious establishment from recent historiography, a better sense of the fears, insecurities and goals of the godly, I

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Marion Gibson, *Possession, Puritanism and Print: Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy* (London, 2006), 64-5.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 147-8, 150.

hope, will aid our comprehension of the often counter-productive tensions within the godly camp which produced the texts and actions under examination. This amounts to seeing, among some of the figures of the new generation, many of them close to Darrell, looking for a less confrontational effort for reform. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, there was a desire to conduct the campaign not in a toothless manner but shifting grounds for engagement and empowerment onto a field which displayed responsibility and respectability rather than the tinctures of populism and subversion remaining from the 1590s.

This different context leads to two separate but complementary studies. The immediate focus is on a reassessment of the discourse of possession in Jacobean and Caroline. Alongside the dominant historiographical model of the 'scepticism' of Harsnet and Jorden with the fascinating fraudulence of Anne Gunter, we need to be aware that diabolic possession did not disappear; it merely shifted. This requires a reappraisal of the discourse, partly in terms of the implied dichotomy between medical and theological explanations, but also in the means by which possession happened and was or was not credited. This will entail a reading in the seventh chapter of the guidelines set out by John Cotta and Richard Bernard, evincing diffidence about diabolic possession but also a willingness to take the reality of it seriously as is evinced by their own involvement and less publicity-hungry possession events of the same period. Similar yes-buts apply to actual occurrences of possession in both medical and religious treatments. This adjusted reading will provide the context for a reading of the possession of members of the Fairfax and Jeffray families in Fewston, Yorkshire, in the 1620s, part of the purpose of which is to modify its place in the current historiography as illustrative of a 'decline' in possession. This will, in turn, provide a preface for a detailed appraisal of the realities of demonic possession, its symptoms, the means of discernment and assessment and proposed ways of understanding the meanings generated, fought over, adjusted and contested by both contemporaries and historians. This will draw together the broader temporal development of what constituted 'being possessed', engage with the complexities of understanding the 'truth' or 'truths' regarding demonic possession with a reflection upon what that means ethically for a historian, that is, me, coming to these conclusions in the twenty-first century.

Controlled Sensation: demonic possession and its treatment from 1563 to the 1580s

In order to provide the means for a fruitful understanding of the phenomenon of demonic possession in early modern England, as well as to provide a (somewhat belated) engagement with the historiography, the ingredients must be provided. This will be done in three ways which need some justification. What immediately follows is a chronologically arranged survey of the occurrences of demonic possession about which we know anything. The first two chapters will cover the recorded cases of demonic possession from 1563 to 1597 and be driven by the respective narratives of the different instances. The first examines the cases that were, with a couple of exceptions, relatively uncontested, at least when they happened, from Anne Mylner to the Throckmorton family. The second contains an account of the second and third possessions attended to by John Darrell towards their end, those of Thomas Darling and the possessed of Cleworth, Lancashire, the first to become a matter of controversy, the second to pass without the same dispute. This narrative frame reflects something more than the temporal instincts of the discipline; despite the generic lists of symptoms taken as given through the period frequently provided in the historiography, what was taken as the manifestation of demonic intrusion shifted, grew, and modified between the 1560s and the 1620s. Secondly this encourages the tracing of influence, following the ways in which what counted as validation in one case sometimes reappeared in a later case with the precedent acting as fuel to the fire of diagnosis. Thus what might have been an innovative symptom for one person, because it appeared among established symptoms it became itself an established symptom and, upon its next occurrence could be part of the orthodox tradition of manifestations. The flipside of this is that some symptoms became less fashionable, although the tendency, overall, was for the demands of possession to become greater in terms of the length of the possession, the variety of symptoms, and the activity of the possessed as the decades

passed. Thirdly, the chronological survey also provides space to take in a rather broader number of cases, some of which have tended to be ignored or neglected in most of the historiography. It would certainly not be fair to suggest that the examples that get the focus have been selected to fit the explanatory thesis of the historians, but the presence of a familiarity with the number of cases (alongside a stronger sense of how much we don't know) can provide the means to test such theses and to suggest adaptations. One consequence of this breadth is that the surviving evidence for some cases is very short, little more than a sentence, while others provide a surviving pamphlet while still others provide hundreds of pages of controversy so the length of treatment different cases get below will vary accordingly. However, documentary survival, or publication, does not always give a reflection of their lasting impact upon the discourse. It is also hoped that this will give a better sense of who the possessed were.

An initial absence or neglect should be explained, not least because it would be noticed and cause concern if not disgust. In this survey I keep questions of 'truth' and 'fraud' to a minimum, attempting as far as context allows to avoid measuring any claims or diagnoses of 'genuine' possession, misapprehended natural illnesses whether physical or mental, counterfeit possession whether or not such counterfeits were aided by others. This is not, I should stress, evidence of an absence of interest in truth. On the contrary, this is evidence of the issue being taken very seriously and being of much greater interest and complexity, for contemporaries and historians alike. I will return to the construction of claims to truth later, with the emphasis being on the process and on the powers involved in establishing truths and counter-truths, often using epistemological criteria unlikely to appeal now. One reason this is worth exploring is because we have a tendency to trust educated, respectable witnesses to employ elucidatory, exegetical techniques which we would regard as reasonable. While historians may reach similar conclusions to contemporaries they may follow different routes, and making explicit the means

contemporaries used may serve to lessen the temptation to ground our conclusions in the fact that early modern critics shared them. This will constitute the second interrogation of the phenomenon and will consist of an examination of some of the more 'blurred' cases, including the vitriolic tracts around the cases involving John Darrell.

The re-evaluation of the means of validation or dismissal of cases of possession will muddy the waters of appraisal and open the space for a new understanding of the complexities of their diagnosis once the Stuarts had arrived in England. It will help to understand the caution among ecclesiastical and judicial authorities regarding the phenomenon. However, it will also encourage sensitivity to the fact that demonic possession was not abolished by the hard hand of Harsnet, his patrons and colleagues. This encourages a modified reading of the legal advice and medical guidance given by such luminaries as Richard Bernard and John Cotta, a rather more 'positive' reading than has been furnished by the current historiography.

I

In October 1563 Anne Mylner, the eighteen-year-old daughter of Randulphe Mylner, citizen of middling rank of Chester, was sent to round up his cattle. Upon her return she was suddenly afraid and 'thoughte that she saw a whyte thing compassing her round about'. The following day she 'was sore in all the partes of her body,' and became bedridden, eating only a little bread and cheese. Almost from hour to hour, she had 'her fyt and traunce' and many came to see her. Her condition was of sufficient concern for John Pierce, lecturer and canon of the cathedral, having visited her 'with divers persons of reputacion', to get his listeners to kneel and pray for her deliverance after his lecture in

December.¹ Shortly after, John Lane, apparently renowned for his pastoral skills, was invited to preach at Toperley and was approached by two men, one a neighbour of Mylner's, who told him of Anne's troubles over the past sixteen weeks and asked him to visit her. About four weeks later Lane visited Chester and along with his hosts, Sir William and Lady Calverley, with Sir William Sneyd and others, he arrived, finding her 'in her traunce after her accustomed maner'. She lay on the bed with her eyes half open, passive but looking shocked, 'her teeth somthing open, with her tounge doublyng betwene'. After a quarter of an hour, 'her bellye began to move, swelling up & down, sometime beneath her chest, sometyme up to the throte'. Then she lifted herself up, bending over backwards so that 'almost her head and fete met', fell from side to side and 'cast herselfe (her belly being upwarde) into the fourme of a hoope'.

Lane asked the woman who was tending Anne if she could be kept down and was told that she had tried but almost been cast into the fire. Lane estimated that he was stronger and after Anne's fifth adoption of the posture pulled her feet from under her, sat on her legs and held her hands, and in response to her strength announced that 'he was fully perswaded she was possessed'. Despite the bystanders expressing concern, Lane told them to be quiet and ordered them to pray to God 'as in him onely consisteth her deliverance from that payne'. He silently said Psalm 50 while they prayed then spent two hours restraining her, sometimes with the aid of others till he sweated profusely, praying while he tried to keep her flat and press the swelling in her belly down.

Having almost given up, Lane called for vinegar and, despite being told that this established means to drive out demons had been tried and failed, insisted 'that God might do that then, which he did not before'. He took a mouthful of vinegar and blew it into her nostrils to which she responded by crying 'a Lady, Lady', calling upon the Virgin Mary.

¹ All quotes are from [John Fisher,] The Copy of a Letter Describing the wonderful woorke of God in delivering a Mayden within the City of Chester, from an horrible kinde of torment and sicknes 16. of February 1564 (London, 1565) n.p. There is an account in Kathleen R. Sands, Demon Possession in Elizabethan England (London, 2004), 13-28, although, as will emerge our accounts and interpretations of this and other cases differ substantially so I cannot commend it as an authoritative version.

Lane, of course, saw the popish call as inappropriate and told her to call upon God and the blood of Christ. Anne's initial reaction was simply shock but when he called for more vinegar, 'She cried, No, no, no more', a plea which, to modern eyes, appears perfectly reasonable. This, effectively, was the end of her troubles; the company said the Lord's Prayer and the Te Deum with Anne repeating after them. Her recovery was complete and she appeared at St Mary's the following day when Lane preached to the assembled great and good of the city and county. Lane wrote an account which was passed to Archdeacon Rogers who made it the subject of a sermon to the bishop, the mayor and 'a great multitude of the Citizens' in early March. When the published account was written on 7th March, Anne 'remayned at this present (praysed by God) in perfit good health and lyking'.²

The next case, two years later, requires a substantial contextual shift both geographically and in terms of piety. The intent of the surviving account of Mistress Kingesfielde was to act as a caution against the consequences of impiety and the unnamed author was given good sources in the Kingesfielde family.³ Edmund Kingesfielde was an innkeeper in London who took pride in the amusing sign he designed to draw customers in which included an image of the devil and claimed that the devil paid the malt man. His wife's guilt was partly by association; she was 'not the worste of that familie yet infected as it commeth to passe with the diseases of the reste', although attention was drawn to her 'greate negligence' of the means of 'servinge of god' through 'publick prayer

² Fisher felt that this was of sufficient merit to be put in print 'to the avauncement of Gods glory', and 'least the same should be misreported, or the wicked suffred to wrest thinges, to abuse Gods preachers', as he put it in the letter prefacing the pamphlet. This was to his friend 'Maister J.D. to see it through the press'. Stephen Bowd has raised the possibility that this might be John Dee who, as we will see, was interested in possession, intellectually and actually. Stephen has identified a link to a 'Mr Lane' during Dee's time in Manchester and in the transcription of the pamphlet in the contemporary commonplace book CUL Ee.II.12. no. 22 ff. 66-67 has the addressee as 'M^r John D'; it may have appeared in this more complete version in other prints or editions. I am rather more cautious in my appraisal of it being Dee as he only returned to London from Antwerp in the summer of 1564 and the first statement of his residence in Mortlake is not until 1565. The manuscript is printed in T. Hughes, 'Mr. Lane's Chester miracle,' The Cheshire Sheaf May-June 1881, 296-7, 299-300, 317-18, 327-28. This also gives some details of Lane's career, having been a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, going on to act as Queen's Preacher for Lancashire from 1570 and then prebend at Chester Cathedral. John Fisher went on to be a freeman and an official in the Bishop's Court. I am grateful to Stephen for having passed on his 'In the labyrinth: John Dee and Reformation Manchester', Manchester Region History Review 42 (2005) prior to publication.

³ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 69; cf. Sands, Demon Possession, 29-40.

preachinge and recevinge of the communion'. She was evidently troubled for what came to be understood as demonic possession was instigated by attending church. During the service she 'cried oute in the hearinge of all the people that she was damned' and, once she had calmed down, she explained that this declaration had been prompted by a smoke or mist before her eyes and an 'extreme aire of brimstone in her nose', 'w^{ch} bothe she and hir husbände especially seinge what followeth, did interprete, that she was possessed wth a devill', the mist echoing Anne Mylner's first fears, the scent the adoption of a familiar vocabulary.⁴

Her experience following this trauma was a broader sense of misery and temptation, with several suicide attempts, trying to cast herself into a sewer, along with general indolence and lethargy including the anti-maternal sense that she now 'lothed and abhorred the children which she bare of hir owne bodie'. Possibly the crucial element among the 'strange things befallinge hir' which brought the conglomeration to be understood as possession was when she and Edmund saw her headscarf floating above her head, with Mistress Kingsfielde struggling to keep it down; presumably this was the action of a spirit visible to neither of them. This disconsolation took her to bed (and at least at some distance from the sewers) and their identification of the trouble as possession made Edmund accept the error of his ways, spending much of the nights kneeling in prayer by her bedside. He sought unidentified help and he was joined in prayer as Mistress Kingsfielde lay in bed, constantly perspiring. This met with little success, not least because prayer was often interrupted because of its adverse effects on Mistress Kingsfielde, an impact that would have encouraged John Lane or a more established devout team to plough to the end of the row as it would be seen as evidence that the devil was troubled. Edmund's response was more practical and equally effectual in that 'at the length he wthout all compulsion pulled doune his signe'. Mistress Kingsfielde 'by liteell

⁴ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 69.

and litell recovered', with no dramatic exsufflation of demons, and the couple returned to selling ale but with less impious or at least not blasphemous advertising.⁵

There is a lull in recorded possessions until the early 1570s when there was a brief blossoming. The first is the one we know least about. A 23-year-old Dutch man attached to the émigré church in Maidstone was taken by ten devils in January 1573. He was dispossessed communally but primarily by John Stickelbow under the eye of the minister, Nicasius van der Schuere, an activist from the Dutch revolt in 1566 and later an important political theorist when the Calvinists took over the abbey in Ghent later in the 1570s. Apparently an account was published and subscribed by the six men involved along with the mayor and his colleagues; if so, it is not extant.⁶ Dutch immigrants seem to have had the attention of Satan this year, as a young woman from the Netherlands, aged about eighteen and servant to the minister of the Dutch church in Norwich was 'miserably vexed' by Satan around the same time. Despite a year of 'temptations' and 'dilacerations', that is, of being torn in pieces, she stood fast in her faith and the spirit left her only to enter a fourteen-year-old boy, the son of one of the councillors. The boy was 'tormented in a most incredible manner for some weeks together'. At this point John Parkhurst, the bishop of Norwich, called for public prayers in the city and proclaimed a fast until the evening. The boy was 'well versed in the scriptures' and 'boldly launched forth against the enemy' and overcame his adversary.⁷

We know more about the experience of Alexander Nyndge, possessed in his house in Herringswell, Suffolk in January 1573, but the accounts need to be treated with caution.

⁵ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 69.

⁶ Reginald Scot, The discoverie of witchcraft (London, 1584) Book 7, Chap. 3, 132-3; John Strype, Annals of the Reformation (Oxford, 1824) Vol. I, part I, 484; Martin van der Gelderen, The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555-1590 (Cambridge, 2002), 238-9. Strype states that it was counterfeit with greater confidence than Scot who merely writes that 'suspicion' was raised. This may indicate an additional source or, more likely, greater confidence to express incredulity from the context in which Strype was writing.

⁷ The Zurich Letters, ed. Hastings Robinson, Parker Society (Cambridge, 1842) Vol. I, 303. There is no explanation why a fast was considered appropriate for him rather than her; perhaps his troubles were worse than hers but I cannot help but note the differing social status. It is indicative of the changed humour of the Church of England that when Henry Soames mentioned Parkhurst's letter to Bullinger relating these cases that he felt the need to 'excuse' him by suggesting that he was probably in his dotage by this point: Henry Soames, Elizabethan Religious History (London, 1839), 203.

The first account was published shortly after and a second edition, now with Alexander's brother, Edward, named as author, appeared in 1615. The second edition contains the text of the first but with substantial additions and crucial changes.⁸ Here I will treat the first account on its own and return to the second in its place in the chronology, as a text in its own right, as a representation, as it is evident of changes in the discourse of possession.

Alexander's father, Sir William Nyndge, was the wealthiest inhabitant of Herringswell and his brother, aged 30 at the time, graduated MA from Christ's College, Cambridge. On 20 January, about 7 p.m., Alexander had his first fit, 'his chest and bodie swellinge, with his eyes staringe, & his backe bendinge inward to his bellie'. Edward immediately diagnosed the molestation of an evil spirit, comforted Alexander with Scripture and asked the spirit for the cause of the torment. After a further fit, Alexander told his brother that the devil was afraid of Edward and pleaded that he should stay with him. Alexander was taken downstairs and placed on a chair while his father gathered the neighbours to pray for his son. Then the spirit started 'vexing him monstrouslie transforming his body, pluckyng his mouth awrye [and] moving him by vyolence out of the Chayer' while the company prayed and Edward 'chargyng the Spirit with thise wordes Thou foule Feinde, I coniure thee, in the name of Ihesus our saviour the sonne of almightie God, that thou speake unto us'. The spirit sent a swelling through Alexander's chest and upward to his throat, drawing his belly in and was then quiet for a time.

A little rested, Alexander told the company that the spirit wanted to speak with him, which frightened him. Prayer resumed whereupon the spirit began to strain him, swelled his chest 'and then uttered in a base soundinge or hollowe voyce these wordes I woll I woll

⁸ Anon., *A Booke Declaringe the Fearfull Vexasion, of one Alexander Nyndge: Beynge Moste Horriblye Tormented wyth an Evyll Spirit. The xx. Daie of Januarie. In the Yere of our Lorde, 1573. At Lyerinswell [sic] in Suffolke* (London, 1573); Edward Nyndge, *A True and Fearefull Vexation of One Alexander Nyndge* (London, 1615); Philip Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2004) notes and annotates some of the differences but makes no attempt to explain or assess the changes other than to describe the latter as 'a much elaborated version': 43-56, quoted, 43. The account in Sands, *Demon Possession*, 41-56, notes and cites the earlier version but includes symptoms which only appear in the 1616 version without noting the difference. The questions of the author and the differences are discussed more usefully in Andrew Cambers, 'Demonic Possession, literacy and "superstition" in early modern England', *Past and Present* 202 (2009), 3-5 although it is not the centre of his attention.

I woll', the first appearance of a spirit with a voice so far. Edward told him he would not and ordered him to speak to all rather than solely to Alexander. He inquired of his purpose and the spirit said he came for Alexander's soul, leading Edward to reply that a repentant sinner was not his and that Christ was his redeemer. Somewhat annoyed, the spirit 'begane to racke the same Alexander, and disfigure more horribly, then he did before & heved y^e same Alexander from the ground by force invincible'.

Six men restrained Alexander while the company of forty people delivered the Lord's Prayer. One 'of the Company uttered words, Ioining God and the blessed Virgin Mary together, whom the said Edward rebuked, and sayde ye offende God', thus echoing Lane in his correction of Mylner. Edward asked the curate, Peter Bencham, to interrogate the spirit, asking his name and where he was from. After mumbling, the spirit gave his name as Aubon and claimed to be from Ireland, the former unidentifiable with any certainty other than the exotic and the latter probably suggesting papist roots to the audience. This is the first gaining of a name from, and thereby power over, a spirit. They read Mark 4 to him, setting out Christ's authority, followed by Luke 8, of Christ casting out demons. Edward sensed the devil was growing 'weary of our companie' and opened a window to give him a symbolic exit. Alexander leaped up, announcing, 'hee is gone, hee is gone, Lorde I thanke thee'. The fit having lasted more or less for four hours, the company gave thanks and went to supper.

As will become more common in later cases, at 4 a.m. the spirit attempted repossession. Edward bolstered his brother's faith successfully and Alexander slept till 8 when Aubon returned and Alexander pleaded for help, upon which he 'made a horrible spyttynge hys belly beinge swelled agayne'. Edward whispered comforting assurances of the power of faith and repentance in his brother's left ear which 'was soddaynly wrympled like a clunge Walnut which falleth from the tree or ['ere': before?] it be ripe'. He recalled the curate and got him to read the Scripture where Christ gave ministers the authority to cast

out demons (presumably Luke 9) and then outfoxed Aubon by whispering into Alexander's right ear. Shortly after, Aubon departed and the torments ended. Afterwards all was well with Alexander and the account was subscribed by seventeen family and friends as witnesses among 'many others both men and women'.

In the same year there was a possession and dispossession that gained far greater attention despite the absence of a publication and which had considerable influence on the development of the discourse of possession. Its prominence owes much to three factors: its social and physical location, the status and reputation of the individuals involved, and the dramatic nature of the symptoms and their resolution.⁹ Robert Briggs was of gentry stock and a lawyer at Middle Temple in London, aged 30 when he started his fits. He was known as 'a zealous faivarer of the gospell' and 'a diligent hearer but of small reading in the Scriptures' with much of his time taken up with legal studies.¹⁰ What made him vulnerable to the temptations of Satan was a moment of inattention during a lecture by Pierre Loiseleur de Villiers, probably at Middle Temple. Briggs thought he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost and, like Mistress Kingesfelde, was convinced he was damned. He mistook de Villiers' account of 'certaine old writers', that any sin committed 'willingly and wittingly' constituted the sin against the holy ghost, as true doctrine rather than, as the lecturer went on to show, overly harsh.¹¹ Briggs's response was more gentlemanly than Kingesfelde's, in that it was quieter, and he resolved to take his own life. After successive efforts, 'sometymes attempting to hang himselfe sometymes to cast himselfe headlong out of his windowe', were prevented, mostly by his wife and servants,

⁹ The main sources employed here are BL Harley Ms 590 ff. 6-66 and Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge Ms 220/235. There is another version in BL Lansdowne Ms 101 ff. 165-75 which has the questions addressed to Briggs and heard only by him, made explicit in the text where in the other versions they have to be deduced from his answers. It is treated at length in Kathleen R. Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer's Possession by the Devil: the story of Robert Briggs* (Westport, CT, 2002) employing only the first and third versions but the sharp comments of Thomas F. Freeman, 'Through a Venice glass darkly: John Foxe's most famous miracle', in *Signs, Wonders, Miracles, SCH* 41 (2005), 309n. should be taken seriously. It is a safe assumption that his intended account will provide a more trustworthy version. For now, a useful overview of John Foxe's role in dispossessions is available in Freeman's coverage of him in *ODNB*.

¹⁰ Gonville & Caius Ms 220/235 p. 2.

¹¹ Gonville & Caius Ms 220/235 p. 2.

he crossed the river to Southwark, possibly seeking a place free from such interventions.¹² There he was followed by 'an uglye dogge, shagge[y] heare, of a darke fuskey color, betweine Blacke and Redd'.¹³ Proving unable to shake off or harm the dog, the way it looked at him with 'such terrible sparkeling eyes' convinced Brigges that 'this wthout doubte is no dog but a divell come heather of purpose to waite for my sowle'.¹⁴

His first fit was on 11 April, swooning and losing his senses. When the fit returned the following day, his colleagues and friends were so amazed and concerned that they stayed with him and appointed a scribe to keep a verbatim record. When some heard of his behaviour they suspected 'a counterfayte fantasie' but when they came and saw him, 'they melted they mourned with us they confessed their owne rashness in preiudging'.¹⁵ A pattern was swiftly established in terms of time and behaviour which was the model for the next couple of weeks. The fits usually started between 8 and 9 in the morning, so he stayed in bed until then. He would start with gasping and foaming, then gradually losing sight and hearing and 'when the tempter came', feeling too, 'differinge nothinge from a deed man but that he spake and drew breathe'.¹⁶ Then he would start to answer the devil, with the company, numbering between a dozen and twenty, unable to hear the devil but his points evident from Brigges's response. For the next week and a half he had almost daily arguments with his adversary. The devil offered bribes of material goods and temptation to suicide but most of the record is dominated by more intellectual temptations and efforts at entrapment by theological sophistry. There were temptations to blaspheme, to prove that God did not care for him, that Satan had bought his soul and had a contract to prove it. Satan made efforts to tempt him with Antinomianism and despair. Throughout Brigges argued a careful line between human free will and divine omnipotence and proved

¹² Gonville & Caius Ms 220/235 p. 3.

¹³ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 7.

¹⁴ Gonville & Caius Ms 220/235 p. 4.

¹⁵ Gonville & Caius Ms 220/235 p. 1.

¹⁶ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 9.

adept at providing counter-examples to Satan's examples and corrected his foe's deliberate mis-readings of Scripture. The account portrays him as easily the most active in his resistance and, allowing for the limitations of other records, the godliest in his refusal of temptations so far. He was also the first recorded to give adaptations of Matt. 4:10 to dismiss his adversary, sometimes as 'awaye, I praye the, awaye', or 'adew to the devell' and once as 'Avante, Avante, Avade, Satan'.¹⁷ The nearest he came to having an idol in the first weeks of his possession, before momentary weaknesses to which I will return, was John Foxe. When Satan suggested Foxe would come no more he dismissed the possibility; when told Foxe had bewitched him, he told Satan that he thought Foxe 'hathe pierced the hevenes for me with his prayars'; at the suggestion that Foxe was a hypocrite, Brigges denounced Satan as a liar as Foxe was 'godes trewe servante'.¹⁸ Similarly, when told Foxe was an adulterer Brigges was willing to swear upon the testament that 'he will not so muche as look over the stret uppon a harlott' and when his description of God was questioned he gave his source as Foxe and that he stood by it.¹⁹

On 20 April he was troubled by an unfamiliar text from Proverbs that Satan drew to his attention and took his concern to Foxe. He provided a helpful exposition and also took Brigges to meet a similarly tormented man and the lawyer came away with the tip that the devil could not abide the name of Jesus and resolved to try the tactic. He was willing to 'suffer a thousand torments yet he would call upon the name of Jhesus in despite of the divell'. Upon this declaration he lost the use of his tongue and spent the next two hours 'strineing & strangling' to say the words, with sweat running down his cheeks 'in dropps like pearles'. Finally,

¹⁷ BL Harley Ms 590 ff. 18, 19, 22.

¹⁸ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 19.

¹⁹ BL Harley Ms 590 ff. 10, 19.

He cryed sodenly with a most loud & vehement voyce Jhesus Christ christe Jhesus in
dispight of the divell thou sonne of the most highest to the[e] be all glory but shame
and confusion to him that hath stayed me from gloryiing thee²⁰

The following day he triumphed again, with the struggle lasting for four hours. Riding upon
the eventual overcoming of the stilling of his tongue by Satan, he went on to provide a
good, orthodox Reformed exegesis of the Lord's Prayer. By the following Saturday, Satan
was upping the stakes, removing all faculties, including speech. On 24 April his comforters
found him 'hardly brethinge', a condition in which he remained for nineteen hours,
circumstances which brought Foxe to his chambers.²¹

Foxe started the process by preparing the seven gentlemen present, telling them
that any who bore hatred should forgive such emotions directed towards them or depart.
Then they were to repent of any former sins and vow to amend their lives. Having
accepted these duties they knelt while Foxe led the prayers and orders. His initial prayer
was for the return of Brigges's voice, immediately granted as he broke into praise and
thanksgiving. Foxe then asked for the restoration of the other senses, a request duly
granted. For the immediacy of the grant and the lack of a painful transitory period, as had
been the usual routine, the company judged this to be miraculous.

This did not cast out the devil for good but it did bring about a change of tactics on
both sides. Satan turned to personal and earthly threats, trying to undermine Brigges's
trust in his friends and supporters, suggesting that they had their own interests, desire
after his wife and goods or the latter through the former after his death. This seems to
have tested the depth of his capacity for forgiveness as evinced by the difficulties he found
with the pertinent section of the Lord's Prayer at this time, eventually overcoming his
willingness to accept Satanic allegations and repeating the call for his trespasses to be
forgiven as he forgave the trespasses of others. Whereupon the company joined in prayer

²⁰ Gonville & Caius Ms 220/235 p. 31.

²¹ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 31.

for the restoration of his sight, using a prayer left by Foxe, 'therewithe sodanlye at that instante his eyes waxed cleare so as he perfytylye reseved his syghte and gloryfyed god the father allmyghty'.²²

Satan's second new tactic was to attempt the seduction of Brigges with a glamorous beautiful woman. While he was initially polite to her and warned her of her dangerous companion, within the same day he perceived her true loyalties and his language became increasingly abusive. His dismissal of the offer, often in quite guttural terms, was proven to be on good grounds when the vision provided a minister to conduct the proposed wedding: that it was a Roman Catholic priest could hardly be topped as proof that she was Satan's servant.²³ This brought Brigges's new tactic to the fore, taking more direct help from Jesus. Brigges was, as he later put it, confident in the power of 'but fyve letters', those of the name of Jesus²⁴ but he also asked him for guidance in deciding whether the speaker was 'thy angle or Sathane transformed into an angle of lyght', for guidance in the discerning of spirits.²⁵

He also grew more confident in dismissing threats of damnation, citing numerous Scriptural examples of salvific success in repentant sinners and moving into an extended hunting analogy, dismissing the hellhounds, for while Satan had 'goodlye geldings... I ryde one a gallowaye nage'.²⁶ On the last day of his fit, 1 May, he was almost petulant in his dismissal, enquiring, 'Wilt thou never leave thy prating'? He explained how Jesus had taken the sins of the world upon his shoulders and scornfully addressed Satan as '[t]how evill face thou kennell raker thou dogs snowte thou haste the worst face that ev^r I saw'.²⁷ Presumably realising the game was up, Satan left Brigges and troubled him no more.

²² BL Harley Ms 590 f. 36.

²³ Although the offer remained open, Brigges came to the conclusion more quickly than the impression given in Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer's Possession*, 76-77.

²⁴ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 48.

²⁵ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 42.

²⁶ BL Harley Ms 590 f. 45.

²⁷ Gonville & Caius Ms 220/235 pp. 70, 71.

Before moving on, there are two points that are noteworthy of future reference. The first is that this was the first, albeit brief, appearance of 'foaming', that is, frothing at the mouth, in the possessed we have looked at. The second is the lack of emphasis in the account on efforts to force the dispossession of Briggs. The initial concern is to record everything he says or does. That is not to suggest it was of no interest but the emphasis, before Foxe's arrival after Briggs had the lengthy loss of most of the signs of life, was more passive prayer.

A less tidy, finely-tuned, controlled and settled case occurred in London in the same year. The possession and dispossession of Rachel Pindar and Anne Briggs (no relation) also had considerable influence, not least because of the involvement of Foxe albeit much more tangentially so than with Robert Briggs. It was also influential because it was contentious and its interpretation remained unsettled. For our purposes, part of its interest lies in its causation and the symptoms displayed which had unrecognised influence on later cases.²⁸ I will put the contention to one side for now to focus on the narrative, the symptoms and the manner of dispossession. Agnes Briggs, the twenty-year-old daughter of a London clothworker, and Rachel Pindar, aged 11, accompanied by her mother, met in March at the home of John Foxe. They had arrived, independently, to consult Foxe regarding fears about their respective conditions. Agnes had been 'afflicted' since Lent, and about Midsommer the previous year was 'the fyrst time shee fel into a traunce', there being no sense of any specific diagnosis on her part or of her kin. Rachel Pindar's position was much more clearly defined, with her mother declaring to Foxe and those present that Rachel 'had benne possessed of a devyll, and sayde, that when she had any traunce, shee woulde swell, and heave with her body marveyulously, and that she did avoyde at her mouth, in her traunces, heare [hair], a blacke silke threede, and a feather'. No indication of

²⁸ The main source is Anon., The disclosing of a late counterfeyting possession by the devyl in two maydens within the Citie of London (London, 1574). This was published in response to two unauthorised pamphlets which have not survived. A very helpful guide to the patchwork nature of the text is provided by Almond, Demonic Possession, 58-9.

Foxe's diagnosis or suggested response is given. That night, Agnes fell into a trance and vomited hair, the next time a piece of lace and a crooked pin, the third a tenterhook, that is, a small nail for fastening cloth, and the fourth two nails. From then on she vomited crooked pins at 'many and sundry tymes' and in these fits she also showed 'divers straunge countenaunces' and emitted 'divers straunge voyces, and noyses'. Rachel similarly produced 'divers straunge and hollowe speaches within her throate'.

Two accounts are given of the dispossession of Rachel Pindar, taken down shortly after the single session required to achieve the goal.²⁹ The first is subscribed by sixteen witnesses, including five of the Pindar family and headed by two ministers, William Long and William Turner. The others consist of one man and seven women, two of them the wives of the ministers. The shorter account is subscribed by six witnesses, including the ministers, Rachel's father, William, and Sarah Davars, all on the first list, with the list headed by George Allin and William Edwards. The two versions are mostly consistent with slight differences in emphasis. William Long seems to have headed the proceedings. He began by ordering Satan in the blood of Jesus Christ to speak and to state his purpose. Satan's mumbled response was 'O lone, lone, leatt lone alone'. Pressing the spirit, they found that this was Joan Thornton and where she lived. They asked how she sent him and he claimed by saying the Paternoster three times. They bickered over how many times she had said it. She had asked for Rachel's body and soul and Turner said that Satan could not have it as it was won by the sacrifice of Christ, regardless of Satan's claim that Rachel had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. They turned to asking after his name. In the longer version he admits it is Legion. This is taken from Mark 5:9 and Luke 8:30 although it is slightly confused, perhaps due to the heat of the moment, in that when asked how many the response was five thousand legions, with 'Legion' in itself a collective noun. The shorter version gives the name as 'Arke' which is less identifiable unless it was 'Arch', a

²⁹ None survive for the equivalent for Agnes, if such occurred, which is interesting because the two are treated in the literature as related. This may be due to the detailed account of her vomiting and the means of its supposed simulation.

claim to status as in Archangel, a reflection of Satan's rank. The spirit(s) started making threats, to take those present, to kill three people and to tear Foxe in pieces. The shorter version concentrates on the means, finding that a drop of blood was taken from Joan's hand and that she had one or two familiars, sometimes appearing like a dog, sometimes like a toad. Throughout the interrogation the child's lips moved out of synchronicity with the words uttered and the voice was not hers. Her eyelids moved but did not open, and 'she had greate, swelling in hur throte, and abowte the gawes [jaws]'.

Attention then turned to dispossessing Rachel, praying that God would release her, commanding Satan 'by the meyghtey powre and bloude of Jesus, to departe'. Satan complained that it had not been written, possibly meaning the order to depart or its authorisation, and John Bouth, Long's servant, agreed that it was not written in material terms but 'the Lord God hath writtine ytt in owr hartes'. Satan tried to negotiate, asking for a cherry, then an apple, a thread or a hair. Denied on each count, he complained that seeing as he got a drop of blood to come here, 'shall I depart awaye withe nothing?' He asked for the wag of a finger, or the paring of a nail and said he would leave if they said, 'I praye yowe', tokens of submission, power or worship, all refused as was his request to wait till tomorrow 'that my ladey comes'. He was told to depart and to blow out a candle as a sign of his departure. The candle was not blown out but 'immediatly the child rose up, and helld up hur hands, and said, he is gone, he will come no more'. Although, as we will see, this was not the end of the story in terms of validity, it was the end of the dispossession. For the purpose of the developing ingredients of demonic possession, there are two noteworthy elements. This is the first occasion that unusual vomiting gets any attention and it is also the arrival of a witch as an agent or the means in the process of the entrance of a spirit.

On 13 October, 1574 a prayer meeting was called to offer assistance to Mildred Norrington, the seventeen-year-old 'base daughter of Alice Norrington'.³⁰ The meeting was held at the house of William Sponer in Westwell, Kent, who employed her as a servant, and led by Roger Newman, vicar of the parish, and John Brainford, vicar of neighbouring Kennington. They were accompanied by Sponer, three members of the Tailor family and three of the Frenchborne family, vouched for by Scot as 'foure substantiall yeomen, and three women of good fame & reputation'. The ministers began by praying for God's assistance and commanded the spirit to speak to them and explain where he was from. He would not speak 'but rored and cried mightilie'. Despite repeated orders, for the next two hours, he would not, 'untill he had gon through all his delaies, as roring, crieng, striving, and gnashing of teeth; and otherwhile with mowing, and other terrible countenances, and was so strong in the maide, that foure men could scarce hold hir downe'. Naturally they persisted and eventually he spoke 'but verie strangelie', repeatedly saying, 'He comes, he comes' and 'He goes, he goes'. Throughout, the spirit's voice 'did differ much from the maids voice, and all that he spake, was in his owne name'. In response to being asked who sent him, which suggests they started with the presupposition of a witch, he simply stated that 'I laie in hir waie like a log, and I made hir runne like fier', that he wanted to hurt her and could not because 'God kept hir', although it is not clear whether 'hir' was the witch or Norrington. Trying to find out what he was, who sent him, and his name, the only result was that he was 'The divell, the divell' but he made threats that 'I will kill hir, I will kill hir; I will teare hir in peeces, I will teare hir in peeces'. Having been told he could not, he widened his target, threatening to kill them all.

Apparently wearied by their persistence, asking, 'Will you give me no rest?' he started to open up. He identified himself as Satan and his actions to be at the behest of 'Old Alice'. He had been with her for twenty years, living in two bottles, one under a wall in

³⁰ Scot, The discoverie of witchcraft, Book 7, Chap. 1, 126-9 from whence all the quotes are taken. Throughout the spirit is referred to with the masculine pronoun.

Westwell Street and another in Kennington. About a year ago Alice had sent him to kill Mildred Norrington because 'she did not love hir'. This, it seems, was when she, Mildred, was servant to 'master Brainford', perhaps the second minister, for this was when she lived in Kennington. Satan had appeared on several occasions, once casting her into the moat, sometimes with an assistant called 'little devill' in the likeness of two birds. While he repeated that his name was Satan, Old Alice called him 'Partener' (partner?) and that she had given him 'her will', presumably her free will rather than her testament in the legal sense.

They widened the net of his crimes, discovering that he had killed three for her. The first two were Richard Ager of Dig, a 'Gentleman of xl. pounds land by the yeare' who had often said he was bewitched and languished long before he died, along with his son, Edward. The third was a Mistress Wolton of Westwell and he had also stolen food and drink for Old Alice from a number of houses that he named. He was ordered to leave Mildred in the name of Jesus Christ and said he would but did not go. With the order repeated, he said, 'I go, I go' and departed. Mildred proclaimed, 'He is gone, Lord have mercie upon me, for he would have killed me'. They all kneeled down to give thanks, asking God to protect her from Satan's power and to assist with her grace. That is not the final finale, as it were, of the Norrington narrative and I will return to the revealing sequel later. Without that as a known part of the narrative, Norrington's is a good, orthodox possession and dispossession, up-to-date in the presence of supernatural strength, grimaces, strange voices and a witch accusation, along with a dispossession by prayer. Satan is relatively humble: while prepared to be loud and threatening in his possession, he had been living in a bottle for twenty years, sneaking into houses to steal food, drink, and meal for Old Alice (and, admittedly, killing three people as well).

From 1590 we have a brief account of an unfortunate possession in an unorthodox environment. When John Dee was returned from his continental adventures and returned

to his old house in Mortlake with his growing family, his nurse, Anne Frank had 'long byn tempted by a wycked spirit'. On 22 August he noted in his diary that 'it was evident how she was possessed of him. God is, hath byn, and shall be her protector and deliverer! Amen'. His diary is rather thin on the specific symptoms, other than what will emerge as the crucial one. Over the next week she was sorrowful, but 'well comforted and stayed in God's mercyes acknowledging'. On 26 August he anointed her breast with holy oil and she asked for a repeat prescription at the end of the month. Dee duly 'did very devoutly prepare myself, and pray for vertue and powr and Christ his blessing of the oyle to the expulsion of the wycked', anointed her twice and 'the wycked one did reseat a while'. A week later she cast herself into a well in an attempt to end it all but Dee, providentially, was able to rescue her. He appointed a keeper to watch her but it seems that by the end of September God, or at least the keeper was not up to the task as her protector and deliverer. Anne went to prayer and left, it was thought, to go to her room but snuck off elsewhere to cut her own throat. Her keeper looked all over for her and finally found Anne when she heard 'her rattle in her owne blod'.³¹

Satan had a much more dramatic role and we have much better access to the symptoms in the possession of Margaret Cooper, married to Stephen Cooper, a yeoman of Ditchet, Somerset.³² Stephen had been ill and Margaret had been away for two days, returning with some suggested reforms he might make to his life 'if God lent him life'. The initial signs of her troubles seem minor: she spent much time in 'idle talke', although her interest in 'an old groate' which their young son found may be redolent of the material items left in or taken from families to be bewitched. Stephen became concerned as this vague distraction continued 'as it were one that had been bewitched or haunted with some

³¹ John Orchard Halliwell (ed), The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee (London, 1842), 35-6.

³² Anon., A true and most Dreadfull discourse of a woman possessed with the devill (London, 1584) n.p. The account was recycled in two versions in 1614 with the date omitted, (better) illustrations on the cover and two other more recent cautionary tales added: T.I., The miracle of miracles as fearfull as ever was seene or heard of in the memorie of man, which lately happened at Diche in Sommersetshire (London, 1614) and T.I., A miracle, of miracles As fearefull as ever was seene or heard of in the memorie of man. Which lately happened at Diche in Sommersetshire (London, 1614).

evill spirite' and called her to prayer with him during a restless night. He asked her to repeat the Lord's Prayer after him, perhaps as much a test as a petition. 'But the devill who alwaie doth builde his Chappell so neere as hee maie to vexe Gods Church', distracted her from prayer and made her more interested in calling for the groat and for her wedding ring, her calls becoming more persistent as he went on praying.

He became more worried with the way she was looking at him and called for her sister as 'he was not able to keep her in the bed'. She and others arrived and Margaret was thrown around, foamed at the mouth and 'was shaken with suche force that the Bedd and the Chamber did shake and move in most straunge sorte'. After about half an hour of prayer she recovered and told that she had been in the town to beat away 'the Beare whiche followed her into the Yarde when she came out of the Countrie, which to her thinking had no hed'. Still concerned but unsure, her family suggested she join in the Lord's Prayer with them and put her vision down to lack of rest. Through to the following Sunday she got little rest and continued 'raging... which came by fittes, to the greate greefe of her husbände, freendes and neighbours'.

On the Saturday after that there was hope of recovery as she had some rest, despite the fact that 'she would talke somewhat idely to them, which came by small fittes'. On Sunday she was improved until midnight when the candle in her chamber burned out and she called to Stephen saying that she saw 'a straunge thing like unto a Snaile, carrying fire in most wonderful sort'. She was amazed that he, his brother and her sister could not 'see the Devill', whereupon they told her to call for grace and for protection against the devil. 'Well (quoth she) if you see nothing now, you shall see something by and by'. Shortly after they heard a noise outside 'as it had been the comming of two or three Cartes' and had no idea what was happening. Then Stephen saw something coming to the bed 'much like unto a Beare, but it had no head nor no taile, halfe a yarde in length and halfe a yeard in height'. He struck at it to no avail and it stuck Margaret three times on the

forehead, rolled her out of the bed, around the room and under the bed. Then it thrust her head between her legs and rolled her round the upper chambers and then down the stairs. Stephen and the six others present were too afraid to go down, standing and praying at the head of the stairs, with a 'horrible stincke' and 'fierie flames' smelt and seen from below. When Margaret called that he was gone, they hurried her upstairs and settled round her in the bed praying for her.

The candle in the chamber was dim so those present were not sure how the window opened. But suddenly Margaret was out of bed with her legs thrust through the window, prevented from falling out only by clasping the central post between them. They heard a thing knock at her feet 'as it had been upon a Tubbe', saw a great fire at her feet and smelt an awful smell. They charged the devil to depart in the name of the Trinity, to trouble her no more, and pulled her back in. Margaret looked out of the window, saying, 'O Lord... me thinke I see a little childe', but they were presumably in a state of shock and paid no attention. Upon her insistence, they looked out and 'loe they espied a thing like unto a little child with a very bright shining countenance, casting a greate light in the Chamber'. The candle suddenly grew bright and they fell to the ground, praised the Lord for his assistance 'and so the child vanished awaie'. Margaret prayed for forgiveness, blaming her sins for earning the visitation of spirits. Her troubles and the collective vision were evidently a local sensation before the publication as it prompted the visit of 'many godly learned men' including Dr Cottington, the local minister, his neighbour Mr Nicholles from Burton, 'with other cheefe Preachers from divers places of the Countrey'.

Moving from the concise, albeit sensational account of Margaret Cooper to that of Katherine Wright is a substantial change of gear. This is not simply because it was contested and because the accounts we have are from writers with their own interests to promote or protect. After all, we have no sources which are 'pure' in the sense of being free from contemporary mindsets of one sort or another. The shift in gear is consequent

upon the delay between the events and their recording and the political weight of the judgement involved in balancing the scales. Katherine Wright is the first possessed individual, of whom we have any record, who was assisted or otherwise by John Darrell, the minister whose interest in, and aptitude for, aiding the possessed won him acclaim and disapprobation. In addition her experience has the curious position of being a substantial case in its own right but tending to occupy a peripheral place in the controversy around Darrell. It rather falls into the shadows of Thomas Darling and William Somers.³³ In what follows, I will try to keep her central and the controversy peripheral although there will be, before it is dealt with more fully below, some necessary points to be made about assessing the sources.

One of the consequences of the focus on Darrell is that the history of Katherine Wright before his arrival tends to be shortened. Her troubles, and their treatment, began well before he was brought in. They began in 1586 when she was 17, living with her mother and stepfather with the latter, John Meekin being a far from loving parental figure. The first manifestation of her symptoms was a vision when she went to a well and saw a child with no feet, which caused her to be afraid, and began to be troubled with 'divers shapes and apparitions'. The fact that the vision occurred at a well may be a reflection of the association of such places with malevolent fairies, particularly as this was (and is) a part of the folklore of Derbyshire (specifically Eckington) where she lived.³⁴ It is certainly striking that this causal explanation fades away and is replaced by the growing orthodoxy

³³ There is an account in Sands, Demon Possession, 109-25 but I'm afraid the dependence on Harsnet's account alone for the narrative should encourage caution in the reader and we rather differ in our respective assessments, partly as a consequence of this. The treatment in Marion Gibson, Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy (London, 2006), 24-32 is more trustworthy but, of course, has different interests.

³⁴ Samuel Harsnet, A Discovery of the Fraudulent practises of John Darrell (London, 1599), 297-8. The first is mis-numbered 279. It may be related that one of the symptoms mentioned in Trial of Maist. Dorrell, Or A Collection of Defences against Allegations not yet suffered to receive convenient answers (n.p., 1599), 17 was that she 'was cast into sundry wels, yet being sought and found was without hurt'. There is a useful analysis of a similar case in Germany of the 1570s when Judith Klatten was helped in her fasting by being secretly fed by 'Little People', 'tiny men and maids, wearing beautiful ornaments' who also secretly removed her excreta to maintain the illusion that she was not being fed, in H. C. Erik Midelfort, A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany (Stanford, Cal., 1999), 50, 52-3, 55.

of witchcraft once her experience becomes seen as demonic possession. Following this incident she developed some sort of 'swelling in her body' and her concern grew to such an extent that she told her parents. They, too, were worried but there seems to have been an improvement in their relations. Her condition was generally adequate but she had 'fits of swelling', along with screeching, 'casting her arms abroad', starting up suddenly from where she was sat or falling down in a swoon. It should be noted that this was part of Harsnet's thesis that the symptoms were a pretence intended to maintain better treatment from Meekin and that she confessed to starting to counterfeit the possession for exactly this reason. How far this 'confession' can be trusted without caution needs measuring against the fact that the commissioners sent to examine her before Darrell's trial kept her with them for 'two halfe dayes and a night' and 'threatned to burne her fete if shee would not confesse that shee had dissembled'.³⁵

Part of the initial response was taking in visitors, apparently from some distance as tales of her sufferings spread. This was probably a mixture of neighbourly support and sympathy, along with freak-show fascination (although there was no allegation of the family profiteering). It seems a cunning man named Arthur either visited or was called upon, to see if he could help. His achievement was merely that he 'raised a Devill (in a likenes not remembred)' and to be immediately arrested by John, Lord Darcy.³⁶ This may have raised the attention socially as another visitor was Edward Beresford, the minister of neighbouring Cutthorpe-in-Brampton, who took her under his wing and into his house. His pastoral care may have kept her in the attention of the godly gentlewoman Isobel Foljambe. It would certainly be understandable if Beresford felt inadequate to the task in the month Katherine was with him. On one occasion during his accommodation, her fits left her very thirsty and he called for drink. However, 'one prettie toye of the devill' was

³⁵ Harsnet, *A Discovery*, 298; John Darrell, *A Detection of that Sinful, Shamful, Lying and Ridiculous Discours of Samuel Harshnet* (n.p., 1600), 185. The accusation is repeated in *Triall*, 18. Gibson notes the alleged threat, *Possession*, 129, while Sands does not include Darrell's critique of Harsnet's account in the sources for her treatment.

³⁶ Darrell, *Detection*, 19; *Triall*, 19 (quoted).

employed, for when they held it to her mouth, 'beholde the drinke spirted up out of the peice to the rooffe of the parlour'.³⁷ Foljambe and Beresford had Katherine Wright taken to Mansfield around Easter where, upon Foljambe's calling, a number of neighbouring ministers gathered, and, 'seing her in divers fits, suspected her to be possessed'.³⁸ Primary among the consultants was Thomas Beckingham, minister of Bilsthorpe, Nottinghamshire, described by Beresford as 'a man of note'. Darrell was present as one of the godly ministers of Mansfield: the author of Triall states it no more strongly than that, while Beresford deposed that, despite being a relative youngster among ministers at 23 or 24, he was 'already a man of hope for the releeving of those which were distressed in that sort'.³⁹ The diagnosis was uncertain with Beckingham not sure she was possessed and, at this stage, Darrell only certain that she was 'vexed with Sathan, eyther within or without her', that is to say that she was either being obsessed, with Satan troubling her externally, or possessed, with Satan having taken up residence internally. Whichever diagnosis was accurate he was convinced that sustained prayer was the best response.⁴⁰

Despite the lack of an exact diagnosis as yet, there was consensus that something was wrong, and so Katherine was taken into the house of a layman of Mansfield, Edmund Loades. We have a better idea of her specific symptoms in this period, although it is not clear whether they were becoming more intense, fitting better into the parameters of 'expected' symptoms due to a more focused, almost orchestrated context of a godly environment or simply better recorded. In her fits she 'did swell exceedingly in her body & necke' to such an extent that she had to have her petticoat loosely laced to allow for the changes. '[S]omethinge also was sensiblye felt to stir up & downe in her body, as if it had bene some quicke thinge'. She had extraordinary strength and extraordinary weight in that

³⁷ Harsnet, Discovery, 299; Darrell, Detection, 193, 186 (quoted); cf. Triall, 17. It is not exactly clear who put who in touch with whom as Darcy, Foljambe and Beresford shared overlapping godly circles, cf. Gibson, 25.

³⁸ Harsnet, Discovery, 299, 305; Darrell, Detection, 193 (quoted).

³⁹ Harsnet, Discovery, 299; Triall, 19. This last has Beckingham responsible for bringing her to Mansfield.

⁴⁰ Harsnet, Discovery, 301-2. Harsnet states this is a more fundamental disagreement although he would have been familiar with the distinction between possession and obsession.

five strong men found it hard to carry her even a short distance, a symptom lacking a precedent.⁴¹ During her fits, she was also 'altogether senceless', seemingly lacking in hearing, she screeched and spoke in the voice of the devil, sometimes uttering oaths and blasphemies or laughing inappropriately, with a voice different to her own, although Harsnet had deponents who begged to differ about the nature of her voice.⁴² Some other symptoms appear in Triall, the author of which was with her for most of this time though not, as will emerge, present throughout the trial itself. In addition to Darrell's list of symptoms impossible to feign, we are also told that she had to be bound to a post because she was 'so oft cast into the fire and water' and that she attempted to cut her own throat, as well as having unspecified supernatural knowledge. Less sensationally, she also had difficulty eating and had spells of foaming at the mouth.⁴³

Darrell was there from the Thursday and the stage was set for the period of sustained prayer on Saturday in the home of Loades. It started at four in the morning, possibly to lessen the public attention, and Darrell led the prayer in the company of his wife, Loades and unnamed others. Some prayers were of his own invention and others taken from a new translation of Johann Habermas's The Enimie of Securitie. In itself this backs up Darrell's stated uncertainty at this stage as to whether she was possessed or obsessed as it is a very general collection intended to foster godly discipline in the household, with prayers for magistrates, ministers, the church and crown as well as for the individual. Possession is not mentioned and the prayers most pertinent to Wright's

⁴¹ Darrell, Detection, 186. It should be made clear that the purpose of Darrell's list was to cite the symptoms that were beyond being counterfeited. The extraordinary overall weight is taking the more common weight of particularly heavy parts of the body of the possessed to a greater degree. Triall (17-8) repeats these and states that the swelling was 'so as her body and necke were swollen twice as big as they were wont to be'.

⁴² Harsnet, Discovery, 313, 306; Darrell, A True Narration of the Strange and Grevous Vexation by the Devil, of 7. Persons in Lancashire, and William Somers of Nottingham (n.p., 1600), 15; Triall, 27; *idem*, Detection, 186.

⁴³ Triall, 17; John Darrell, The Doctrine of the Posession and Dispossession of Demoniakes out of the Word of God, appended to A True Narration, separate pagination, 7.

condition are against general assaults and vexations of Satan rather than possession specifically.⁴⁴

As the morning wore on and the fits continued, Darrell seems to have become more confident in the likelihood of possession with the tipping factor being hearing voices within her. He started to enter into 'communication with the said spirits, divers in the mean time trembling & quaking, as fearing some hurt to themselves, when they should bee cast out'. Darrell concurred.

I confesse, that I charged the spirit to tel his name, (which I did then in ignorance) and that one spirit sayd, his name was Roofye, in a very great voyce, and in very fierce and cruell maner, & that another said his name was Midlecub.⁴⁵

Slightly earlier, Harsnet suggested that Darrell dismissed the first name as common to all spirits and neither Darrell's Detection nor any of the other treatments engage with this specific inconsistency so we have no means to clarify this engagement. It is noteworthy that, by 1598, he felt the need to plead ignorance for asking for the names, as it is something seen in earlier cases and is very much present in the following one. More importantly for Wright's narrative, he continued his interrogation, asking who sent them there. Midlecub answered 'Margaret Roper' and Darrell pronounced her to be a witch responsible for the possession. Apparently he had earlier enquired when her fits began and Katherine said it was after she had refused to give something to Margaret Roper, an old woman from Eckington, so, depending on how much credibility one grants Darrell, Midlecub's admission was either confirmation of earlier suspicion or a handy contrivance to fit into a classic English witchcraft narrative.⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that the footless child had no part to play which, again depending on the reader's position, is evidence of Katherine Wright experiencing a more orthodox possession in the new context, or of her greater

⁴⁴ Harsnet, Discovery, 299-300; Johann Habermas, The Enimie of Securitie, trans. Thomas Rogers (London, 1580), 114-9, 152-7.

⁴⁵ Harsnet, Discovery, 308.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 310, 304.

treatment as an object under the control of godly interpreters. Perhaps these are just different ways of saying the same thing.

There is an element of Darrell's performance which needs slightly longer treatment than perhaps it merits. One of the allegations to be answered by him was that he had laid on Katherine's belly and that Thomas Beckingham had said that he had entered the room, found Darrell on top of her, 'plucked him of by the heeles, & thrust him out of the Chamber'.⁴⁷ Darrell's response was that he did so in imitation of Elisha and Paul. In Harsnet's account he quotes Wright's confession, claiming that Darrell told her that 'he would by so lying, presse the devil out of me'. Harsnet had Darrell's initial response blaming the act on youth and 'blinde Zeale', leading to an imitation of the prophet and the apostle. Darrell then modified this answer to claim that he did lie on her but not on her belly. Then three days later he asked to change his statement, given the difficulty of remembering the details of acts twelve or thirteen years past, having had time to think and 'by conferring with my wife (who was then present)'. He said, 'I did not the said fact, to the end there specified', that is, in imitation of Elisha and Paul, to which I will return, because he had not expected to work a miracle. He was simply trying to 'keepe her down' as she was 'verie unrulie' and that he was assisted in this endeavour by someone else.⁴⁸

The author of Trial had access to witnesses and may have been there himself but not to Darrell's full response. He repeated Harsnet's version but with a kinder reading. Darrell had lain on her side and that was to help Edward Loades who had tried to restrain Wright on his own, in vain. In addition Beckingham was not there at the time and the author made it clear that there were many women present, including Darrell's wife, countering the implication of the silence of Harsnet's version that the two were alone in a chamber. Furthermore, the deposition was solely from Beckingham and it was reported

⁴⁷ Trial, 20.

⁴⁸ Harsnet, Discovery, 300-1.

that 'this shameless lyer shortly after his periury, went up & downe the Countrey bereft of his wittes, and died in lamentable sorte'.⁴⁹

Darrell's response is rather lengthier, initially repeating the assistance of Loades and the presence of other women. One of them was the wife of Henry Crosse of Mansfield who gave evidence to the commissioners which did not match the version they wanted and hence they threatened her with imprisonment. In the trial, being pressed for an immediate answer he stated 'for the present I did thinke or imagin that I did it in some childish, foolish, and indiscrete imita[t]ion of the Prophet and Apostle'. Having had time to think, he asked to alter his testimony much more quickly than after three days. Harsnet had given only two of the three reasons given for him not imitating Elisha and Paul. Elisha granted the wish of the elderly Shunammite women to have a son. When he died, Elisha was taken to him 'and lay upon the child, and he put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and the flesh of the child waxed warm' (II Kings 4: 34). Similarly, during an overnight service, Eutychus fell asleep during Paul's sermon (presumably evidence of exhaustion rather than a critique of the sermon), fell down three storeys, being taken for dead. Paul went down, 'fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.' (Acts 20:9-10) Hence for Darrell to have imitated either would have been to ask for a miracle, well beyond ordinary means, in effect to get above himself. As Darrell saw it, any such imitation would have required him to 'have laied my mouth upon her mouth my eyes upon her eyes & my handes upon her hands', which was not what he did. In any case such an action would not have been appropriate during her fits, had he considered it appropriate anyway; it would have been a means to have been employed during a trance.⁵⁰ The bottom line is that the account of the restraint as Harsnet presents it, is selective, to a purpose, and abusive. This is not to present Darrell as a model of sanctity, merely to be cautious about taking Harsnet on

⁴⁹ Triall, 20-1.

⁵⁰ Darrell, Detection, 188-90; cf. I Kings 17:17-24.

trust.⁵¹ While the forms of restraint may cause unease in readers now, Loades and Darrell were operating within the parameters of orthodoxy, with the clearest precedent being John Lane's restraint of Anne Mylner.

To return to the process of dispossession, having gained an accusation of bewitchment from Midlecub, Darrell arranged for Margaret Roper to be taken to Geoffrey Foljambe, the husband of Isobel Foljambe and a JP, in order to have her imprisoned. He would have hoped for sympathy from a fairly godly magistrate but the appeal received short shrift. John Meekin deposed that the dismissal was accompanied with a threat to place Darrell in gaol, a suggestion which Darrell did not recall.⁵² At the trial there was no way to call Foljambe as a witness, he having died in 1595, but the most likely explanation for the dismissal was the problem of spectral evidence. If the only testimony against Roper was the word of a devil, renowned for lying, these were slender grounds for a trial let alone a conviction.⁵³ The question of evidence helps to make sense of why, after the initial failure to have Roper charged, Darrell had her brought to meet Katherine. It was part of the orthodoxy of witchcraft that bringing a witch face to face with the target of her maleficia would prompt a reaction, certainly improving the chances of an admission of guilt and, as will be seen, this phenomenon became a tactic transferred to possession cases. It seems that this was Darrell's intention and it fits in with his later practice. Harsnet concentrates on the allegation that she was brought to be scratched, seen on a more popular level as either a cure or a revelation of guilt. There certainly seem to have been some present in

⁵¹ It is one of the consequences of Sands' neglect of Trial and Detection that when the allegation is mentioned there follow four pages on sexuality, sexual abuse and demonic possession, nearly a quarter of the chapter: Sands, Demon Possession, 117-20.

⁵² Harsnet, Discovery, 310-11; Darrell, Detection, 190.

⁵³ This runs counter to Gibson's suggestion that Foljambe was uncomfortable with the fact that the affair had become 'more sensational'. This is, however, based on the later treatment of Wright after her repossession and, as Gibson observes, at this stage the dispossession was 'a private and largely unremarked affair': Gibson, Possession, 27-8.

favour of the means, though Darrell claimed he was not among them and that if Margaret was scratched, it was not with his approval.⁵⁴

Despite the lack of progress with the prosecution, Darrell claimed that the dispossession had been successful. Having spent a month at Mansfield, he took her back to Edward Beresford's and from thence to the home of Thomas Wright, her brother, about Whitson. During this time she was said to be largely in good condition. There were a few efforts at repossession during these six or eight weeks weeks, supposedly minor ones. Satan's efforts to repossess were there in Alexander Nyndge but yet to become an expected phase. (It should also be noted that Harsnet had depositions from Beresford, both Thomas and Katherine Wright and from John Meekin that they noticed no change.) After two or three weeks at Whittington 'shee continued her former practises' and Beresford recalled Darrell, apparently still confident of his abilities.⁵⁵

His reputation certainly seems to have preceded him as once it was known that he was on his way, 'there was a great brute that a myracle should be doone there'. Upon his arrival, the situation was very different to the relative restraint of Mansfield, for Beresford and Darrell were met at Thomas Wright's home by about four or five hundred people in or about the house.⁵⁶ They spent three days at Whittington and Darrell's diagnosis was that she had indeed been repossessed, evinced by what was seen as her insensate, trance state. This was likely to be a more dramatic occasion, not unaided by the crowd, for Darrell concluded that Midlecub had returned with company this time.⁵⁷ One by one, he charged the demons to depart and a total of eight spirits left her with Darrell announcing the exit of each of them to a crowded and frightened room. On the Sunday, he reported what was becoming the norm for dispossession, more intense fits as the devils reluctantly left. He said she was

⁵⁴ Harsnet, Discovery, 311-12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 305-6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 307-8.

shewing the signes of dispossession, as renting sore, crying lowde, and lying for dead, I affirmed, that I beleewed, that then one of the spirits went out of her: which signes appearing in her eight severall times that day, and the night following, I sayd she was possessed of eight wicked spirits, and was also dispossessed of them.

Unfortunately for Katherine this did not prove to be the end of her troubles. Shortly after Darrell departed she became repossessed again and so continued between her eighteenth and thirtieth birthdays. According to Harsnet this continued until about three months before her examination but that she was now resolved to mend her ways and abandon her counterfeiting. The author of Triall claimed that the possession was not over and that since her confession, having 'bewayled her periurie', she 'doeth, or suffered the same things still'.⁵⁸ Once she slipped from being of purpose to the prosecutors and defenders of Darrell her later history remains unknown.

If the centre of attention was the political furore around the experiences of John Darrell and the possessed, the troubles of Katherine Wright would, as they usually have, serve as a preface to the more immediately contested cases of William Somers and, a little earlier but less immediately contentious, of Thomas Darling. While this is something that will be touched upon below, the next post of call is a set of cases which, while certainly far from peaceable on a local level made no ripples in the political pool and, if anything, reasserted the existing power structures in Huntingdonshire. This is the case of the witches of Warboys, where five daughters of Robert Throckmorton were possessed along with seven female servants in the household, troubles caused by the neighbouring yeoman family of Samuels, with Alice Samuel receiving the first accusations, then her daughter Agnes and the unholy trinity completed with her husband John. They were also held responsible for the decline and death of Lady Cromwell, a friend of the family, a

⁵⁸ Ibid., 313-4; Triall, 18; cf. Darrell, Detection, 186-7, 192-5.

conclusion that took them over the border of the 1563 Witchcraft Act and brought their execution in 1593 after three years of recurrent sufferings within the household.

The Throckmorton family was of minor gentry stock but well connected. The predominant source for their experience is a lengthy tract, collaboratively produced by the Throckmortons, their relative Gilbert Pickering and the local cleric, Francis Dorington, also a relative. In itself it is very readable although with the clear intention to demonstrate the guilt of the Samuels and the honesty and probity of the Throckmortons and their kith and kin. In addition, we have recently gained the close reading of the case by Philip Almond which manages to combine a diligent and assiduous engagement with the account and an awareness that it is a damned good yarn.⁵⁹ While there are very minor differences in our respective assessments of the cases his reading serves well as a fascinating piece of micro-history. For my particular purposes, it means that I do not have to devote much space to the narrative at this stage and can concentrate on the symptoms, their diagnosis and the response to them.

I will start with what we know about those who were possessed. We know a great deal about the five daughters. The first to show 'a strange kinde of sicknes' was Jane, aged nine in November 1589 when she was first stricken (B). Exactly a month later Mary, aged 10 ¹/₂, and Elizabeth, 11 or 12, joined her. Similarly, the youngest daughter, Grace,

⁵⁹ Anon., The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys, arraigned, convicted and executed at the last Assises at Huntingdon, for the bewitching of the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton Esquier, and divers other persons, with sundrie Divelish and grievous torments: And also for the bewitching to death of the Lady Crumwell, the like hath not bene heard of in this age (London, 1593) (references within the text below); Philip C. Almond, The Witches of Warboys: an extraordinary story of sorcery, sadism and Satanic possession (London, 2008). Several versions appeared within a short period with minor differences in pagination and occasional omission but nothing of substance. The version I relied on was printed by Thomas Man and John Winnington in 1593 and is in the University of Glasgow library. I read it alongside the version printed by the same people in the same year, held in the Folger Library, Washington which differs in pagination, spelling and punctuation but I cite the former as it is closer in terms of pagination to the version Almond cites making it as easy as possible for anyone wanting to cross-reference. Almond provides a helpful way into the bibliography in 'The Witches of Warboys: a bibliographical note,' Notes and Queries 52 (2005), 192-3. It is also a case central to J. A. Sharpe, 'Disruption in the well-ordered household: age, authority, and possessed young people', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England (Houndmills, 1996); a stimulating use of the case as a means to interrogate the early modern understanding of 'community' is provided by Anne Reiber De Windt, 'Witchcraft and conflicting visions of the ideal village community', Journal of British Studies 34 (1995), 427-63.

just approaching her ninth birthday, who plays a minor role in the text, and Joan, the eldest at 15, who was much more central, went down in January (B2). There is a substantial shift in age regarding Lady Susan Cromwell, the second wife of Sir Henry Cromwell who, while being central to the final sentence, was marginal to the details of the narrative. During a brief visit she confronted Alice Samuel, cut some of her hair, a popular means to counteract witchcraft, and had an altercation. Her fits and her lengthy demise took place away from the centre stage.⁶⁰ However, while we know a great deal about the five daughters we know next to nothing about the rest of the possessed. In an early conversation between Joan and a spirit, she was told that there would be twelve in the house to be possessed, with the five daughters and seven others, all women and all servants. This proved to be true and their symptoms were similar. The narrator lays down his social position when he mentions this and adds, 'Of whome and the manner of their faith, if it should bee written in perticular how they were delt withall, there would be no end of this booke'. In addition to no names and no ages, we cannot even be sure how many were possessed because we are then told of those servants who suffered, 'presently upon their departure from Mistris Throckmortons house they were all verie well' and that 'those servantes that came in their places for the most part of them, they were afflicted in the like sort as the other' (B3).

There is a clue to one additional possessed member of the household and a couple of minor walk-on parts to note. Quite late on in the narrative, a relative, Elizabeth Pickering, is mentioned. She seems to have been a servant who married into the family. She was named as 'one of the twelve, that were bewitched' (M3) and was old enough, by 1592, to be married and to have had her first child.⁶¹ Secondly, towards the end of the trial, as series of unexpected witnesses appeared, delivering allegations of mainstream

⁶⁰ Almond, *Witches*, 64-7, provides a helpful introduction to Lady Cromwell, not least in noting that she died a year after the date suggested in the text, choosing to resist the decision to guess whether this is a mere typo or a deliberate slip to emphasise the proximity to the encounter with Alice Samuel.

⁶¹ Cf. Almond, *Witches*, 158-9.

maleficia against Alice Samuel, mostly cattle, swine and horses dying unexpectedly. The jailor of Huntingdon also appeared, reporting one of his employees who, finding Samuel to be unruly, 'chayned her to a bed-post'. In response to this, presumably, Samuel bewitched him and he 'fell sicke, and in all respectes was handled as the forenamed children were, with heaving up & down of his bodie, shaking his armes, leggs, & head, having more strength in him in his fittes, than any two men had', crying out against Mother Samuel until he died about five or six days after. Similarly, one of the jailor's sons fell sick and he brought Alice to his bedside where he held her until the son had scratched her, 'and so presently his sonne amended' (P3).

The last item to be noted before surveying the symptoms is an absence. While the family and friends are very concerned about the girls and their suffering, there is a very limited degree to their efforts at dispossession. Despite plenty of clergy and a fair bit of piety, there is little prayer and no fasting to facilitate the departure of the demons. The cause is seen to be solely the undeserved malice of the witches and the focus is predominantly, almost entirely, upon gaining an admission of guilt and finding short-term assuagement of the symptoms, concentrating on the means of the possession, that is, the witches, rather than the overarching divine cause whether it be spiritual testing or punishment for individual or collective sins, the more likely response of the puritans the Throckmortons et al. are assumed to be. Related to this, as will be seen, is the willing adoption of popular means of countering witchcraft, occasionally hedged with 'excuses' but employed nonetheless. Similar blurring of boundaries between 'popular' and 'elite' (or, more accurately, educated in Reformed spirituality) categories for understanding the actions of the spirits will be seen and this is an issue to which I will return.

The symptoms of possession had a great deal of common ground for the sisters with some variations and particularly intense periods which will be noted. The initial sickness of Jane will serve well as a way into the physical manifestations.

Sometimes shee woulde neese very lowd and thicke for the space of halfe an howre together; and presently as one in a great trance and sound lay quietly as long, soone after she woulde begin to swell and heave up her bellie so as none was able to bende her, or keepe hir downe, sometime shee would shake one legge and no other part of her, as if the paulsie had bin in it, sometimes the other, presently she would shake one of hir armes and then the other, and soone after hir head, as if shee had binne infected with the running paulsie (B).

The quiet trance state, and the swelling and shaking are familiar. That she would 'neese very lowd and thicke', and 'neese' and 'neesing' are employed throughout the text, may momentarily raise an eyebrow and tends to be rendered without comment as 'sneeze.' The term is more specifically resonant in Scripture than this suggests. It is retained in the Authorised Version in Job 41:18 as part of the description of Leviathan, a mixture of sneeze and snort, and Leviathan had the habit of swelling up and discharging the inflation through his nostril with a moist, heated vapour which sparkled in the sunlight.⁶² In addition, and particularly pertinent for our purposes, when Elisha revived the son of the Shunammite mentioned with regard to Katherine Wright, his recovery was shown in that 'the child neesed seven times' (II Kings 4:35). We should certainly not be dismissive of the 'neesing': on one occasion Joan 'fell sodainly into bleeding at the nose, and bleed verie much, whereat she marvelled' (Iii) and on another Elizabeth 'fel into such sore neesing about fortie times together, & faster then one could wel count them, in so much that bloud issued out of her nose and mouth', eventually falling 'into a sore bleeding, at the least a pint at both the nosethrils and mo[u]th' (C3).

The swelling, the neesing, the shaking, and the trances were recurrent throughout the three years, sufficiently so for the reader to be given the outline of variables within a broad routine.

⁶² Slightly earlier, Job is told to pay respect to the snorting of a horse, that 'the glory of his nostrils is terrible' (Job 39:20).

These kinde of fits would hold them, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, either an howre or two, sometimes halfe the day, yea the whole day, and many times they had sixe or seaven fits in an howre, yet when it pleased God to deliver them out of their fits, they neither knew what they had said, neither yet in what sort they had been delt withall, as hereafter shall be declared in perticular (B2).

Indeed loss of memory and loss of sense, in terms of seeing what everyone else would see, were so much the norm that the sufferings of Lady Cromwell were felt to be noteworthy in that she kept her memory. When Joan was given an awareness of what she was going through and retained a sense of those around her in her later fits she felt it to be so new and unusual that she demanded an explanation from the spirit.

On many occasions the acrobatics went beyond individual limbs, accompanied by groaning and screeching. An almost poetic image was needed to capture the response of three of the sisters to the arrival of Alice Samuel. They 'fell downe upon the ground strangely tormented, so that if they had bin let lie still on the ground, they would have leaped & sprung like a quick Pickerell newly taken out of the water their bellies heaving up their heades, & their heeles still touching the ground as though they had binne tumblers' (B3). As occurred many times they took the shape of hoops, a familiar position, and this time Master Whittle, a family friend, took Jane into an inner chamber trying to keep her on the bed. The nine-year-old's belly was 'farre bigger and in higher measure for her proportion, than any woman with child, her belly being as hard as though there had binne for the present time a great loafe in the same'. Her strength and rigidity were beyond his strength and he lay 'with his whole body and waight over he, to hold downe her bellie, fearing that she would have burst her backe' (B3), as Lane and Darrell et al. before him.

In addition to the presence of Alice Samuel (and at times her absence!) the acts that brought on the fits were also sufficiently reliable to be set out in routine. Whenever they were up and asked either parent or grandmother for a blessing, 'so soone as they

tooke a booke in hand to pray', sitting to dine or trying to say grace before a meal or on the Sabbath when the church bells rang, fits would begin (F3). The immediate reaction of a modern reader, I suspect, would be to see brattish children reacting to godly discipline and while that might be an element, there is also completely contrary evidence which we will come back to. That much said, there are symptoms that fit into this category. When Elizabeth Throckmorton was taken to Gilbert Pickering's home she was vexed when grace was said, when thanksgiving was offered, and when 'motion was made of prayers' (C2). If any should read the Bible or any other godly book or even 'named any word that tended to God or Godlines', a fit instantly descended upon her (C2). She was said to have 'merry fits, ful of exceeding laughter (as they were al often times in their fits) and that so hartely and excessively, as that if they had bene awaked they would have been ashamed thereof'. (Although we should pause before the image of the petulant brat and the dour zealots takes hold as this is followed by 'merrie iests of her own devising, whereat she would force both the standers by, and her selfe to laugh greatly' (C3).) That much said, it is hard to resist the thesis of licensed misbehaviour hearing of Elizabeth's inability to pick up food or her repeatedly missing her mouth, 'whereat shee would sometimes smile, and sometimes laugh exceedingly', particularly when this is followed by the note that when she was in her fit 'she looked farre more sweetely and chearefully than when shee is awake' (C2).

Against such aspects of the performances we must place the much more godly manifestations. To stay with Elizabeth, one day she read and sang Psalms all day, 'being well all the day untill the evening' when she became frightened of Alice Samuel's perceived efforts to place a mouse, sometimes a cat, frog or toad in her mouth, presumably the physical form of possessing spirits.⁶³ Having spent time being capable of little more than playing cards, 'she began to dislike all bad things, and delighted in

⁶³ Shortly after, she had a vision of Alice Samuel wearing a white sheet 'with a black Childe sitting upon her shoulders' (D2), a vision with less overlap with the forms of witch's familiars.

reading', burning all the cards she could get hold of, to spite the spirits (C3). During an extended trance between fits

she would goe up & downe the house very wel, she would eate and drink, and sometimes be very pleasant in outward gesture with her sisters, she would doo any thing, which by any signe she did understand should be done, she would make a reverence as shee passed by, unto those where she saw, it was due: insomuch that any man ignorant of her estate, could perceive nothing to be amisse in her, yet wold she never speake to any in particular, neyther could she heare any y^t spake to her during that time (D5).

There were two patterns of godly behaviour more widely shared, similar patterns with different targets. The first appears in the context of Alice Samuel having been taken into the house and suffering relentless efforts to get her to confess. The narrator notes that 'such were the heavenly & divine speeches of these children in theyr fits, to this olde woman, some at one time, some at another... as that if a man had heard it, hee would not have thought himselfe better edified at tenne Sermons'. These pious speeches consisted of setting out the 'ioyes of heaven' which she would lose, and the 'torments of hel which shee shoulde endure' if she failed to confess (with the token proviso 'if shee being guilty'). They went on to condemn her 'naughty manner of lyving', the abuse she gave to all who displeased her, particularly the sisters and their parents, her negligence of divine worship and her poor parentage of Agnes, promising forgiveness if she confessed. This began and ended in tears from the children and all the bystanders were similarly moved to tears, 'onely the old woman was little or nothing moved' (G3). Once Alice was imprisoned the attention turned to Agnes and one verbal plea stands out. While Joan was in a trance, she summoned Agnes, now taken into the Throckmorton household herself. Before explaining the inadequacy of any shows of piety that Agnes made, Joan delivered many 'wordes of exhortation'.

Oh that thou hadst grace to repent thee of thy wickednesse, that thy soule might be saved: for thou hast forsaken thy God, and given thy selfe to the diuel. Oh that thou diddest knowe what a precious thing thy soule was, thou wouldst never then so lightly have parted with it: thou hadst neede to pray night and day, to get Gods favour againe, otherwise thy soule shall be damned in hell fire for ever (Liii-M).

Very early on it was established that the sisters heard spirits within them and this could be the means for the manifestation of diabolic responses. On a basic level this was the revulsion to prayer but external interrogation was an opportunity to define oneself against the devilish occupant. This was through physical reaction as others could not hear the voices. What follows is an orthodox rounding up of the usual suspects and allies when 'one chanced to aske her, or rather the spirite in hir'.

love you the woord of God? whereat she was sore troubled and vexed. But love you Witchcraft? it seemed content: or love you the Bible? againe it shaked her, but love you Papistry? it was quiet. Love you praiers? it raged. Love you the Masse? it was stil. the Gospell? Againe it heaved up hir belly: so that which good thing soever you named, it misliked, but whatsoever concerning the Popes paltrie, it seemed pleased and pacified (C3).

This could work more explicitly to the credit of the possessed when the spirits threatened them. They would respond tauntingly: 'I defie thee thou wicked spirite, doe what thou canst, thou canst doe me no hurt, thou seest that God is stronger than thou, thou art as good to let me alone, I am glad at my hart that thou canst not overcome me'. The spirits would respond with torments after which the possessed would 'reioyce in countenance, and outward signes' if they could not speak (D5).

Conversations with spirits were an opportunity for godly performance although part of their enactment was more ambiguous. Towards the end of the ordeal, Joan spent the day in a lengthy fit. Towards the evening the spirit came to her '& she talked very familiarly

with it, as her common custom was, demanding of it from whence it came, and what newes it brought, speaking very disdainfully to it' (lii). This consisted of a performed conversation; as the narrator made it plain, the reader must understand, 'in all their maner of talking together, that the children would first repeate the first spirits answere, before they would aske any further question of them' (K). This was to take the reconstruction of the conversations of Robert Briggs a stage further. On the one hand they could score godliness points in their disdain as Joan's reply to the threat of worse fits exemplifies: 'God is above the divell, and do what you can for you shall not be able to hurt me' (K). On the other hand this also meant that it was a less governed interaction. In the lengthy process of bringing a confession from Agnes, Joan reported not only the names of various spirits, Smack, Pluck, Catch, Blue, Hardname and a couple of lesser characters, but also a contest, effectively a feud among them. A succession of spirits came with injuries, a broken leg, a broken arm, even a broken neck, with Smack handing out most of the punishment. This put the sisters in the slightly odd position of taking pleasure in the spirits suffering but supporting one demon against the others, rather undermining the clear division between good and bad supposed to structure the struggle between the divine and the diabolic. This may be a consequence of the less governed nature of the conversations allowing a less high brow demonism to survive under the more educated demonology contributed by Gilbert Pickering and some of his friends.

This popular dimension is not, however, limited to the sisters. Lady Cromwell's effort to cut Alice Samuel's hair was noted above. Far more intrusive popular means were imposed upon Alice and eventually Agnes. This was the practice of 'scratching the witch,' partly recuperative and partly as revelatory. There were also intentions to scratch John Samuel which diminished when the strong and short-tempered man was actually there. The text states the initial disinclination of the Throckmorton parents to try this means but with the failure of medical means, Gilbert Pickering won them over. A get-out clause was

provided by the sisters conducting the scratching when in their fits and being appalled at their violence enacted under the guidance of the spirits, ex post facto, once returned to being themselves. The collusion is particularly plain when Joan scratched Agnes. The possessed took the head of the young woman under her arms and scratched the right side of her face, for herself, then the left side, 'for mine aunt Pickering, and scratch that also until bloud came forth of both sides very abundantly' (N3). Once she was done she wanted to cut her nails and wash her hands so she was not tainted by the witch's blood. When her hands were shaking too much, Mary Dorington, her aunt and the vicar's wife, helped her. Joan cast the nails and then the bloody water into the fire to remove any trace of contamination. Once she had made Agnes kneel with her and pray, Francis Dorington read prayers and Joan's fit ended, whereupon she started crying, 'saying that she would not have scratched her, but y^t she was forced unto it by the spirite' (N3).⁶⁴

At this point I will close with two points for future reference. The first is a neglected symptom and, more importantly, its interpretation as it runs counter to the most likely response of anyone reading the tract now. Joan was often tempted 'to cast her selfe into the fire, and into the water' and to end her life by cutting her throat with her own knife. Several times she took her knife from its sheath and threw it away, to cast away the temptation. When she lunged towards the fire, she would have been burned had she not been caught by onlookers. The narrator observes with gratitude that these temptations only occurred when there was someone at hand to prevent their enactment. We might read these as deliberate, sensationalist, attention-getting acts made secure in the confidence of failure. The narrator sees it as evidence of 'the gracious providence and goodnesse of God', allowing Satan to achieve only so much (O).

The second point involves Alice Samuel and emphasises the context-dependency of symptoms and their diagnosis to a particularly high degree. When she was held at the

⁶⁴ She had a similar response when she bloodied her handkerchief, saying that 'it was a good deede to throwe the handkercheffe into the fire and burn the Witch, for she knew she sayd, that this bleeding came of no good cause' (lii).

Throckmortons', after they delivered their condemnation of her lifestyle, lack of piety and so on, mentioned earlier, Alice was suffering physically, likely as not due to the stress. She had recurrent nosebleeds and grew very pale. Then she complained of back pain and lack of sleep. She reported pain in her limbs, pain that moved about, groaning, 'one while complainyng of this parte of her bodie, another while of that'. She was asked what ailed her and she complained of her belly, 'that there was somthing in it, which as she thought stirred, and it was as big as a penny loafe'. The same symptoms in the sisters or the servants were the symptoms of demonic possession. When Elizabeth Throckmorton felt the swelling and affirmed its presence, her conclusion and that of Robert was that she was plainly carrying the devil's child.

To conclude this account of the sufferings of the Throckmorton sisters, their relatives and household with an engagement with the judicial proceedings and the greater and more decisive sufferings of the Samuel family would be to change the object of assessment. While this is worthwhile and will indeed be turned to below in its proper place, at this point it is more opportune to keep the attention on the experience of demonic possession and the responses to it and so I will leave the gentry of Warboys in their torments and move on to two more of the cases involving John Darrell.

Actions of Divine and Diabolic Behaviour in Lancashire and Derbyshire

If this was an analysis with John Darrell at its centre, the 'natural' possessed to follow would be Thomas Darling, as that was Darrell's next known case after Katherine Wright. Then I would turn to the possessions in the Starkey household in Lancashire as that is in concert with his chronology. However, because the focus here is on the chronology of the cases of possession and the related development of the associated symptoms, the temporal time frame becomes more complicated as the sufferings of the Lancashire Seven started before and ended after those of Thomas Darling. To, hopefully profitably, muddy the waters without becoming unnecessarily over-complicated, I will begin with the experience of Lancashire before George More, John Darrell and John Dickons appeared, then turn to the boy of Burton and return to Lancashire for the denouement. This is intended, as far as is possible, to keep the possessed more central and to broaden attention to the responses of those around the possessed beyond those more central to the judicial trials that followed.¹

The experience before the arrival of the godly preachers tends to be treated as a preface to the main event and there are several consequences to this. The first is a matter of length. Actual fits in the Starkey household started in February 1595 and continued, with varying intensity, for two and a half years before the relatively brief appearance of Darrell

¹ I recognise that there are dangers in this alternative frame in that the accounts of Darling along with some of the critiques and responses precede the publication of the main sources on Lancashire; it is a matter of weighing this against the teleological consequences of reading them in a 'Darrell-ocentric' manner. While this could be seen as taking these texts out of their context it has the advantage of drawing attention to the changes in symptoms and explanations that survive, unaddressed in the later accounts. I have already provided a fairly close reading of the texts relating to the Starkey household, ironically, in such a Darrell-ocentric manner in '(Re)possession of dispossession: John Darrell and diabolical discourse', in John Newton and Jo Bath (eds), *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden, 2008), 91-111. Unfortunately this was written before and published after the appearance of Marion Gibson, *Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy* (London, 2006) and so did not benefit from her stimulating engagement partly upon the circulation of the account in manuscript and the delayed publication of the accounts by Darrell and More. The central accounts are George More, A true Discourse concerning the certaine possession and dispossession of 7 persons in one familie in Lancashire, which may also serve as part of an Answer to a Feyned and false Discoverie (n.p., 1600) and John Darrell, A True Narration of the Strange and Grevous Vexation by the Devil, of 7. Persons in Lancashire, and William Sommers of Nottingham (n.p., 1600), hereafter referred to in the text as ATD and ATN respectively.

and More, assisted by John Dickons, the minister of the parish. Furthermore, it tends to draw attention away from the rather muddled shifting of causation. Similarly, because starting towards the end brings a sense of walking in on a fully established, 'orthodox' possession and dispossession, this draws attention away from the gradual, processual, nature of the development of the symptoms, with some elements leaving traces with a more popular element.

It is helpful to begin with an introduction to the *dramatis personæ* within the framework of the narrative. The possession took place predominantly in the house of a protestant gentleman, Nicholas Starkey, in Cleworth, in the parish of Leigh, Lancashire. His bride was the inheritrix of a family, 'whose kindred some were Papistes, of whom some partlie for Religion'. They were so against the prospect of losing their inheritance to Protestant stock that they 'wished & vowed still to pray for the perishing of her issue'. The Starkeys produced four healthy children, each of whom 'pined away in a most strange maner' (ATD, 11). Other family members felt compassion, seeing the grief of the Starkeys consequent upon the vows and prayers and told Mistress Starkey, whereupon she made a will leaving everything to Nicholas and his heirs, regardless of her own success in bearing children. This act, effectively rendering any further infanticide 'purely' vindictive rather than 'to a purpose', meant that the next two children, John and Anne, prospered until they were 12 and 10 respectively.² It is noteworthy that More, who is the only writer to mention this earlier experience, allows the reader to infer that this is a causal factor in what follows by simply following the statement that they 'prospered well' with 'but then with five moe in her family, they were possessed and vexed with evill spirites' (ATD, 12).

Anne was the first to suffer, initially with 'a heavie dumpie countenance, and with a certain fearful starting & pulling together of her bodie'. A week later John was on his way to school when he was 'compelled to showte vehemently', completely incapable of

² ATN has Anne aged 9 and John 10 at the outbreak but More's account is much greater in its treatment of the earlier period and so probably more trustworthy on details like this.

restraining himself. 'After this they waxed worse & worse falling into often strange & extreame fittes' over the next ten weeks (ATD, 12; ATN, 1). Nicholas Starkey was naturally concerned and his first port of call was a seminary priest. More brushes this aside with 'for to speak of no more'; part of the reason he mentions it is because the priest could offer no help because 'he had not then his bookes', presumably the manuals for exorcism. Probably on the advice of friends, Starkey was put into contact with Edmund Hartley, a cunning man, who treated them with 'certayne popish charmes and hearbes' with some success so that, with regular visits, the children seemed to be well over the next eighteen months (ATD, 12-13).

As Hartley started to lose interest or possibly to want to enhance the remuneration for his services, symptoms began to return, with John bleeding profusely and Hartley claiming that none but he could staunch the flow. He initially accepted 40 shillings per annum but then required a house and grounds, negotiated through a mixture of promises and threats. Starkey took Hartley to his father's house and Hartley himself seems to have had some sort of fit there: he 'was tormented sore all night longe'. Starkey's misgivings, partly grounded in lessening success and perhaps partly pecuniary, were heightened the following morning when Hartley made a circle with partitions and crosses on the ground and asked him to 'tread out his circle, for he said he might not doe it himselfe'. Starkey responded to what was a thinly veiled threat by looking for more orthodox medical help. He also turned to John Dee, who was understandably cautious, given his own experience with his possessed nurse. Dee advised him 'to crave the helpe & assistance of some godlie Preachers, with whom he should ioyne in prayer and fasting for the helpe of his children'. He also called Hartley before him and after he was 'sharplie reprovved' it seems the children suffered less for the following three weeks (ATD, 13-15).

Troubles returned with a vengeance in January 1596. On 4 January John was reading a book when something gave him such a thump on the back of his head that he

was 'stricken downe with a horrible shriek, and said that Satan had broken his necke', being tormented for two more hours. That night he leapt out of bed with 'a terrible outcry', tossing and tumbling around the bed, 'being exceeding fierce and strong like a mad man, or rather like a madd dogge,... snatching at and biting every body that laide hold on him, not sparing in that fitte his owne mother', going on to throw the bed-staves at those present and the pillows into the fire. (ATD, 15-16; cf., ATN, 2).

Anne's fits began again, along with 'three other yong girles in the house'. Nicholas had taken on their education, which gives some indication of their social status. Margaret Hardman was 14, her sister Elinor 10 and Ellen Holland 12. More makes it plain that Hartley was to blame, claiming that 'when he ment them a mischiefe, then he would kisse them if he could, and therewith breathe the Devil into their bodies'. The primary agent of possession, apart from the devil, becomes unclear in that it is said that 'he kissed Iohn Starkie, and all the maydes that were possessed'. This includes Jane Ashton, a servant aged 30 and Margaret Byrom, a visiting kinswoman of Mistress Starkey's, aged 33. He apparently attempted to kiss one Joan Smith but she escaped his clutches and 'of all the maide servents, she onely was preserved and not once troubled at al'. The accusation became more explicit when Elinor, in one of her fits, said that if 'Edmond had kissed her, three men could not have held her'. If the waters are not muddy enough, Hartley himself suffered: Margaret Byrom was 'infected' when she went to comfort him, he 'beeing in a sore fitt in the night', and 'he leaned his heade downe' to her and suddenly she could neither stand nor speak, and when others held her, 'shee sunke downe & became senceles'. At this he went into another room and had no more fits while he was at Cleworth, 'though he had divers before he met with this maide' (ATD, 16-22; cf. ATN, 2). Presumably because the accounts that survive from Darrell and More have him as the perpetrator rather than the victim, whether he was possessed is not an issue they

examine.³ To a degree it is similar to the swellings and pain of Alice Samuel although here the response is silence rather than an alternative diagnosis. The following may be indicative of Hartley losing any sense he had of being in control. Shortly after this resurgence, when Margaret Byrom decided to return to her mother's house at Salford, hoping to find some ease, Hartley decided to accompany her. In the trip of seven miles, she had ten fits and asked him how she might be helped. He 'tolde her plainlie, that both she and the rest were past his handes, and that no one man could do more than any good, it was too great a worke, but they must be 3, or 2 at the least with fervent and hartie prayer' (ATD, 18).⁴

It is difficult to trace the exact timing of many of the specific symptoms as this was not a primary concern of Darrell or More but a suggestion can be gained from the sections of the accounts that cover the period between the more numerous possessions, the first recorded contact with Protestant clergy and the trial. About 14 January, all but Jane Ashton and Margaret Byrom started fits 'by a verie suddaine and fearfull skrikinge, barking & howling, in such a hideous noyse, as cannot be expressed' (ATD, 18). One would start and, one by one, others would follow, 'in a ring of 5. bells for order and time' This was followed by a period when 'they fell a tumbling, and after that became speechlesse sencelesse and as deade' (ATN, 3). Margaret Hardman 'nicknamed and taunted all that were present', apparently not knowing what she said. With her eyes closed, she could see only Hartley, and 'at him she rayled, & angerly smote', perhaps with some echoes of the Throckmortons (ATN, 3). By February, John had developed a pattern, having 'verie short fittes and thick', each of which ended when he made three knocks. The end changed, with him washing his hands in clean water to signify the end of the fit (ATN, 3).

³ Darrell touches upon it, noting that when he heard of Hartley's fits that 'I for my part then thought, & doe so still that in the end he who had so sweetly (by kisses forsooth) sent the diuell into so many, had by the iust iudgment of god, the diuell sent into him': ATN, 8.

⁴ Harsnet fell on this with delight, expressing what a wonder it was that Hartley seemed to be predicting what would happen, almost allowing the reader to suspect collusion without the author actually saying so: Samuel Harsnet, A Discovery of the Fraudulent practises of John Darrell (London, 1599), 22-3.

Margaret Byrom's return to Salford proved crucial as her fits became more intense and frequent. Hartley visited her every day but upon his arrival she fell into a fit each time. She had many visitors, including some ministers, among whom was Matthew Palmer, Dee's curate. They were suspicious of Hartley and tested him by asking him to recite the Lord's Prayer. Of course he proved incapable and was apprehended as a witch and taken before two JPs. After they examined him and 'divers witnesses', unfortunately unidentified, spoke against him, he was sent back to Byrom, so that she might accuse him to his face. On five such occasions she simply fell backwards and was struck dumb. In his absence she could give testimony. On his way to Lancaster jail, he stopped off at Cleworth to pick up his clothes on 2 February 1597. The possessed had been relatively at ease but 'presently they fell into verie violent and outragious fittes', attacking him and 'offring to strike him', perhaps also echoing the Throckmortons. They were forcefully restrained, which was as well, 'for they were so fierce and furious against him, as if they would have pulled him in pieces' (ATD, 18-20; cf. ATN, 6-7).

One of the JPs, Edmund Hopwood, visited Cleworth to take evidence from the possessed there but all the children were struck dumb and fell down, while Jane Ashton could do no more than howl and bark. At this point one of the younger girls, still in her fit, said, 'Ah Edmond, doest thou trouble her now, when she should testifie against thee' and all the children complained after Hopwood had left that Hartley 'had stopt their mouthes, & could not suffer them to speake' (ATD, 19-20).

Matthew Palmer was rather more successful in his examination of Margaret Byrom, still in Salford. She had earlier been asked about the experience of her fits and she said that something 'rouled in her belly like a calfe' and lay on her left side. When it moved from within her belly towards her heart, 'she thought the head and nose therof had bene full of nailes', causing her to shriek. It swelled her belly and when it lessened a cold breath left her mouth, causing her to bark and howl. It rested 'like a colde longe whetstone' on her left

side making her feel cold, and whenever she sought heat to relieve her chattering teeth it pitched her backwards. Palmer gained some further account of the visions that precipitated the reactions to Hartley. One time she saw 'a great blacke dogge, with a monstrous taile, a long chaine open mouth coming apace tawardes her', casting her one her back by the fire and 'houlding her tounge' for half an hour. This was followed by 'a bygg blacke catt' staring at her and taking away the use of her hands and eyes. Then appeared a large mouse that leapt on her knees, 'took awaye her tongue, eyes, and sences, [so] that she lay as dead'. When she regained feeling, 'it puft up her belly as a sore'. Such visions and fits troubled her daily for six weeks during the day and at night the mouse sat heavily upon her head, holding her rigid and with her eyes closed, usually leaving around 3 in the morning, declaring its departure by a thump on the back of her head, not dissimilar to the announcement of the return of John's fits. The spirit also prevented her from eating or drinking on six occasions in these six weeks and when people tried to force-feed her she and the comestibles were cast down. On 10 February she felt like she was being pulled in 'an hundred peeces' and then her mouth emitted 'such a stincking smoke' that she was repulsed by her own self. Through the night her 'voyce and crying' were altered and the consequential halitosis kept her neighbours at a distance for two days.

Often her sences were taken away, and she maid as styfe as iron, and oft as dead even breathlesse. it made her speake sharplye, hastely, and by snatches: somtimes it made a loud noyse in her bellye, like that in the bellye of a great troting horse.

Finally, days before her examination at the trial, 'appeared the devill in the liknesse of Hartlay', offering her silver and gold to speak the truth. She refused the bribe, saying that she had already spoken truthfully and on the second night he departed, 'saying doe as thou wilt'. During and after the trial she went to morning prayer every day, largely untroubled except for one day when 'it took her' in the middle of the sermon, 'heaving up

her shoulders' and depriving her of her senses, then taking away the use of her legs, 'and thus it molested her in the Church, to the admyration of the people, about an hower and halfe' (ATN, 6-7; cf. ATD, 29-34).

Slightly later Mistress Starkey asked the five younger possessed how they were handled and their vision stands in contrast in its ambiguity and the first appearance of a popular element with perhaps some similarity to the relations Joan Throckmorton had with some of her spirits. All five agreed that 'an angell like a dove was come from god, & that they must follow him to heaven', and certainly demons appearing in the guise of heavenly messengers is well established orthodoxy. They were told that he would lead them to heaven, no matter how small the hole. Upon this command they ran under the beds. Margaret Hardman was found under a bed making a hole and when asked what she was doing, 'she said she must goe through the wall for she on the one side, and her lad on the other would soone make a hole' (ATN, 4) We will encounter further references to 'lads' below, as often as mischievous pranksters and sidekicks as devils.⁵

The ultimate fate of Hartley can be dealt with briefly before returning to the plethora of symptoms set out which are harder or impossible to tie to a specific time. On 6 March 1597 he was tried and found guilty. The difficulty was that 'they could finde no lawe to hange him', whereupon Starkey recalled the incident of drawing the circle on the ground. Hartley denied the incident, confident that he would not be hanged, 'for the Devill had promised him, that no halter should hange him', according to More. The evidence was considered sufficient to earn the death penalty. At the first attempt the rope broke, 'whereupon he penitentlie confessed, that he had deserved that punishment, & that all whiche Mai. Starchie had charged him with, was true, and so he was hanged out the

⁵ Darrell has her as 'Elizabeth' Hardman and later on as 'Margaret', giving the same age to Elizabeth that More gives to Margaret. More has her throughout as Margaret and as his is the longer account, especially on the earlier period, I have accepted his version. This account of burrowing is immediately followed by a more dangerous attempt to get through to the other side in an effort to have 'leaped out of the casement through the glasse windowe' (ATN, 4). About a week before the preachers arrived one of the younger possessed was heard to say 'thou naughtie lad, thou makest us sicke. for thou knowest the preachers will come shortly': ATN, 5.

second time'.⁶ Darrell recalled that 'among the manifold pleasant speeches they used, one or mo[r]e' of the possessed 'spake iocundly' about the hanging, asking, 'Do they thinke they colde hang the diuel? I wis no: they might hange Ed: but they coulde not hange the diuel: no marvel though the rope broke: for they were two Ed: and the diuel' (ATN, 8 cf. ATD, 52-3).⁷ Thus the second, and successful, hanging was evidence that Satan had abandoned his erstwhile servant.

The more generic treatment of symptoms of possession by Darrell and More is driven by two central goals. The first is to make explicit the correlation with Scripturally ordained means of measurement, with the get-out clause that the weakness of the present age meant that God had ordained additional manifestations to those in the Gospels.⁸ The second intention is to emphasise the supernatural nature of the symptoms either individually or collectively as a means to refute allegations or confessions of counterfeiting; one may confess to counterfeiting but the plausibility of such a confession must be tested against whether it is naturally possible to fake such symptoms. As I will show, this structuring topos has consequences for the development of the measurement of diabolic possession in the seventeenth century.

In what follows, I will move through the symptoms in four sections. The first section covers those that can fit the broad category of youthful wilfulness to evade unpleasant responsibilities. The second is the lengthy set of symptoms identified as common to all the possessed at Cleworth, mostly familiar from earlier cases, some with different emphases. The third is a number of manifestations that are united by little more than a broad character of 'oddness.' The fourth is a more godly set of symptoms. These are obviously

⁶ ATD, 21-2. Starkey's evidence of conjuration might have turned the offence into a felony, although it was unusual for such an offence without a consequent death to win an execution. Some of the evidence of 'divers witnesses' might have made this a second offence and therefore a capital offence. For the legal background (and the ambiguities), see Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (Harmondsworth, 1973), 525-6, 532-3.

⁷ To be entirely fair to Darrell, he might have meant 'pleasant' in the sense of 'pleasing' as in pleasing manner, rather than humorous, although he does note that this was a jocund observation.

⁸ The former can be seen most clearly in More's discussion of the signs of dispossession with the structure being taken from Scripture and then matching the individual against the models: ATD, 78-81.

leaky categories and I am sure that particular instances could be shifted or share distinctions with instances that appear in other sections. For example, there is a performative element in 'odd' symptoms or in some of the godly ones that some would choose to see as youthful wilfulness; this is an inevitable consequence of trying to give a structure other than the examination of Darrell.

More notes, without comment, that in the time when fits would come thick and fast, the torment was not unallayed. If, for instance, 'they went to cardes or other games', there were no fits 'during the whole time of their playing and gaming'. Similarly, if they were taken from home 'to a gentlemans house to heare a play', in that time 'they were not troubled, nor one whitte disquieted' Should any Scripture be read, prayers used for them or 'exhortations applyed unto them, then ordinarily they fell into their fitts, and were fearfully tormented'. As a precautionary measure, for about two years (and this seems only to apply to the younger possessed) 'they never came to the church, only for feare to increase their torments' (ATD, 39-40; cf. ATN, 5). During one trance Elinor Hardman started 'singing and playenge the minstrell' and Anne Starkey 'followed laughing at their toyes'. While Elinor was 'playing with her mouth as cunningly for the present, as if she had bene a minstrell' the other four children 'did daunce so finely, as if they had come out of the dauncing schole'. All this time they were incapable of hearing anyone who called to them, knew not what they were doing and could only talk to one another, not unlike the Throckmortons. Perhaps a little mitigation is provided in that, at the end of this trance, they 'fel downe as deade' (ATD, 39; ATN, 3).

The list of symptoms held in common mixes the familiar and the unfamiliar. It opens with visions, largely demonic or with established images, pointing out the presence of Satan, Beelzebub, 'a great blacke dogge... with a firebrand in his mouth' or noting an attack and responding with the assurance of 'but God will defend me'. Each had two spirits in attendance, one internal, bringing physical suffering, one external, 'most ugly and

terrible to behold', to induce fear. They heard the voices of the spirits and at times 'did make marveillous answeres'. Part of the fit, lasting between one and three hours, took away senses, leaving them feeling 'nothing but the Divells' and completely insensate to external stimuli. The shrieking, barking and howling has already been encountered and More stresses the way in which it seemed to constitute a summoning and a roundelay, almost a bestial choral society. Alongside this went orthodox physical symptoms, of swelling, 'sore heaving and lifting', with 'violent straying' with most of them 'vomiting much bloude many times' and disfigured faces, turning their heads, sticking their tongues out and what sounds like gurning, an appropriately northern English tradition.⁹ Less amusing was the violence, often directed towards themselves but also towards others, a less common symptom apart from when it was directed towards the supposed witch. Elinor Hardman once attempted to jump out of a window.¹⁰ With this went long spells, sometimes for up to three days of being blind, deaf and dumb, and periods of being senseless in both senses, both void of feeling and 'as much sence in a stock as in one of them', often combined with rigidity, extraordinary strength, and fasting. More actively, there was plenty of blasphemy, 'filthie & unsavorie speaches' which More, unfortunately, judged to be so offensive 'as it is not to be named'.¹¹ They 'shewed verie great and extraordinarie knowledge', some of which we will see shortly. At the end of every fit, even when they might have been between forty and one hundred fits in a day, they would say, 'JESUS blesse me' and never showed any signs of the hurt inflicted during the fits (ATD, 40-6; cf. ATN, 4).

Turning to the symptoms united by oddity there is a temptation to categorise them as episodes illustrating the powers granted to possessing demons in order to accentuate

⁹ John Darrell, The Doctrine of the Posession and Dispossession of Demoniacs out of the Word of God, appended to A True Narration, separate pagination 7, adds gnashing of teeth for Margaret Byrom and John Starkey.

¹⁰ Darrell, Doctrine, 9.

¹¹ There is a glimpse when Darrell mentions one of the children calling Mistress Starkey 'whoore': Darrell, Doctrine, 10.

the supernatural nature of their spiritual condition. As that would, I feel, de-emphasise their oddness and also because they don't all fit into a culturally pre-scripted manifestation of possession this would be too rigid a demarcation. The first has further echoes of or similarities with the Throckmortons. Two of the younger girls, Elinor and Margaret Hardman foretold how many fits they would have during the remainder of the day and the day following.¹² Elinor thought she would have a three-hour fit in the morning and when the time came she had them set the hourglass behind where she could not see it and in any case she had her eyes shut. For the three hours she said nothing other than noting the time each fifteen minutes and telling them to turn the hourglass when it ran out. At the end of the three hours she said, 'Iesus blesse mee' and recovered. Margaret got off lightly in that she did the same for only two hours. When she was asked how they knew the time, she 'answered that a white Dove told them so' (ATN, 4; ATD, 35-6).

Ellen Holland and Margaret Hardman spent three days and nights unable to eat or drink and they would speak to no-one 'except it were on[e] to another, & to ther lads'. In this time occasionally 'their lads gave them leave (as the[y] said)' to eat a little but then got angry and withdrew the permission, making the girls regurgitate or rendering them incapable of swallowing. On the third night Ellen was asked at 8 in the evening when she would be able to sleep. She said that she would have a fit for four hours, calling for the hourglass and a distaff and spindle as she had been told that she would spin for ninety minutes of that time. This was exactly what happened and although she was young and only just learning to spin, 'yet she did it at that time so finely & with such expedition, as was thought impossible for a very skilful woman to do the like' (ATN, 5; ATD, 38).¹³

The third episode starts with the recurrent animalistic theme and then just becomes odd. John and Anne Starkey, Ellen and Elinor lost the use of their legs and spent seven

¹² More identifies the first as Elinor and fails to mention the second. Darrell refers to 'Elinor Holland and then to El. Hol.' And for the second this is an instance of 'Elizabeth Hardman'.

¹³ Darrell, Doctrine, 7, suggests that all seven had periods when they ate little and with much difficulty.

hours scuttling from chamber to chamber on their hands and knees. They fled from family and neighbours, 'calling them devils with hornes'. They could not rest, but they would 'leape up from the flore to the bed, & down from the bed to the flore, hopping so up and down, as lightlie, like froggs' (ATN, 4; ATD, 36-7). After this time their legs were restored but they were struck dumb and senseless and went to the garden. Each of them took one leaf from each sort of plant in the garden, 'from the greatest to the least', and then went from room to room where each child would lay down one leaf from the same plant, 'where any one of them did lay downe one, there all the rest would lay downe another of the same sort; and no moe, nor no other'. This last project took less than an hour, a regime to be envied by the strictest disciplinarian (ATD, 37-9).

The first godly apparition takes us back to Margaret Byrom's account of her experiences. On six occasions during her time at Cleworth, six spirits appeared to her together. Five of them were very black, 'fowler then blackmores, marveyulous uglie to beholde' They would drive great nails into her and were 'wringing and bending of her, as if they would breake her backe bone'. However, the sixth spirit was 'like a very faire childe, so fine and comely as ever might be seene' and 'sat ever next her, & would say unto her, feare not, for thou shalt have no harme' (ATD, 34). Perhaps this protecting spirit has echoes of the child at the climax of the possession at Ditcheat.

The second and third godly manifestations are much more external, for the benefit of the bystanders. On one occasion John Starkey, aged 12, was in a trance, with his eyes closed and no idea of what he said or did, although he showed the ability to identify all the neighbours and strangers present, a total of about twenty in addition to his immediate family. As an instance of 'verie extraordinarie knowledge' More recounts when John spent more than three hours delivering a godly exhortation, 'performing the same so excellently... as they that heard it did admire it, & thought that a good preacher could very hardly have done the like'. He declared the 'straunge sinnes of this land committed in all

estates & degrees of people', threatening them with divine judgement. He exhorted his parents and those present to repent so they would avoid any such plague. Then he prayed, first for the church, the monarch, 'for the upholding of the Gospell, and for all the true Ministers of Christe, for those that have Authoritie, for his parents, and all the people of God'. He concluded by singing most of Psalm 4 'in a most sweete and heavenly tune, as ever might be heard' (ATD, 24-6).

Perhaps more attractive to godless readers now is 13-year-old Margaret Hardman's godly performance. In a three-hour trance, possessed 'with a spirit of pride', she 'did most lively express both by wordes and gestures, the proud women of our times'. Such women could not be satisfied with 'anie sober and modest attire but wanted each new fashion. She constantly turned to the spirit, saying, 'come on my lad', asking to be taught all 'tricks of pride', demanding ever finer fabrics, cuts and colours. Whalebone was inadequate for her bodice for only horn was sufficiently stiff. Her black velvet cap required a feather and slews of gold thread. Every detail had to be better than any other.

My ladde, thou must bring me a paire of gloves of the finest leather, that may be, with twoo golde laces about the thumbes, and a fringe on the toppe with slewes and red silke underneath, that I may draw them through a gold ringe or els I will have none of them.

Having required even her items of personal hygiene to be silver and silk, she came to the punchline, saying, 'I defye thee Satan and thy pride, for this is thy illusion and deceite, I will have none of it'. She came to the end of the trance, asking for the blessing of Jesus and remembering nothing. Having enacted the negative side of feminine pride on this occasion, she went on to portray the positive on another. She joined the maids washing clothes and 'though they were two lustie women' and she but a child, 'yet shee washt more for the space of an hower so quicke and so fine, that they could not come neare her' (ATD, 26-9).

I will heartlessly leave the sufferings and curiosities of Lancashire as strict chronology has been directing our attention to the midlands for a while. Almost exactly a year after the first symptoms of what became the demonic possession at Cleworth appeared, on 27 February 1596 the first pains of Thomas Darling, a much more celebrated possession, arose. Thomas, aged thirteen, had been hare-hunting with his uncle, Robert Toone, a wealthy clothier from Burton-upon-Trent. They became separated while they were out and when Thomas returned to his uncle's house, he felt 'heavie' and quickly grew to be 'verie sicke, vomiting & casting up what he had eaten at dinner'. The following morning there were 'sore fits' and more vomiting. In the course of these fits he would often point and say, 'Looke where greene Angels stand in the window' or complain 'that a green Cat troubled him'. His friends perceived a vague 'strange ague' with the visions evidence of a consequent 'lightnes in his head'. His aunt was sufficiently concerned to take samples of his urine to two physicians. The first medic found no disease 'unles it were the wormes' and the second gave the unhelpful diagnosis that he judged it 'to bee (though some strange, yet) naturall disease'. Those closer at hand suspected epilepsy, 'by reason that it was no continuall distemperature, but came by fits, with sodaine staring, striving and struggling verie fiercely, and falling downe with sore vomits'.¹⁴

The benefits of reading Darling's experiences chronologically, without Darrell or his trial central are very clear.¹⁵ The first is that it concentrates attention on the symptoms and

¹⁴ The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine Witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapenhill (London, 1597), 1-2. This is the central text and references will appear hereafter in the text. Gibson has provided an exemplary account of the socio-economic and religious context, placing Darling and his relatives in the upper echelons of Burton's society although a by no means uncontested position: *Possession*, 47-56.

¹⁵ Without getting drawn too far into the 'truth' of the account it is necessary to mention Darling's later 'confession' to counterfeiting and its subsequent retraction. Darrell sets out in detail the conditions intended to extract such a confession, with Darling having been kept at Bancroft's house with access denied to his family, a mixture of persuasion and threat, 'to be beaten with rodde, or pinched with a payre of pincers', along with correspondence supposedly from Darrell. Harsnet apparently achieved the goal by asking a few simple questions, noting down Darling's answers and getting him to place his signature at the foot of the page, leaving a large space in which Harsnet could then insert the required confession: John Darrell, *A Detection of that Sinful, Shameful, Lying and Ridiculous Discourse of Samuel Harshnet* (n.p., 1600), 179-81; John Darrell, *An Apologie, or Defence of the possession of William Sommers, a yong man of the towne of Nottingham* (n.p., 1598), f. 28; *A Briefe Narration of the Possession, dispossession, and repossession of William Sommers* (n.p., 1598), Aiii.

especially on the ways in which they developed through time. The second is a perhaps surprising appreciation of just how semi-detached Darrell's part was to Darling's story. With the tale most frequently appearing in discussions of Darrell's later examination, we tend to forget just how late he appeared. His part was more as a crucial cameo appearance of a (B-list) celebrity at the wrapping-up than a more nose-to-the-grindstone foot soldier in the Lord's army. Along with this, the chronological treatment broadens the cast of characters, encouraging more attention to the collective construction and negotiation of meaning than is fostered by knowing the punchline.¹⁶

The fits continued over the next month and in between them there were the first signs that Thomas was out of the ordinary. His religious exercises in the gaps between physical travails 'might well have beseemed one of riper yeares', showing the fruit of a 'religious and godly' education. He humbly conferred with 'good Christians', expressing his expectation of death and his readiness 'to leave the world, and to be with Christ', noting only his regret that his ambition to be a godly preacher was to be frustrated.¹⁷ If God were to take him, he would lose the opportunity 'to thunder out the threatenings of Gods word, against sinne and all abominations, wherewith these dayes doe abound'. On 21 March his fits went up a degree, taking on symptoms more specific to possession. He swooned and then, having been placed on the bed, thrashed around, proving difficult to hold. His legs rose up with extraordinary rigidity, Thomas emitting a 'greevous roaring' as the

¹⁶ This communal generation of meaning sits alongside the communal nature of the text which is the main account of Thomas Darling's fortunes. The text gained greater authority from being a collaborative venture from trusted godly witnesses more than it would from a single author seeking sole authority. This would carry weight as a text, manuscript or published, circulating among the godly, less so when contested by hostile critics and Harsnet, of course, fell upon the text with glee, turning the 'trust' into 'credulity' and thereby 'untrustworthiness.' Gibson examines the construction of the text and the impact of Harsnet's withering critique in *Possession*, 56-66. Harsnet lists the contributors as Jesse Bee, Thomas Saunders and Edward Wightman with the editor being John Denison, the minister. Arthur Hildersham and Darrell had an opportunity to cast an eye over it and Darrell suggested some changes which Denison did not implement, sending it to the printer as it was, contrary to the impression given by Philip Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2004), 151. As will become clear, the time spent with Darling by the last two figures was minimal and Darrell made it clear that there were details that he wished to have corrected, while accepting the overall accuracy of the piece: Samuel Harsnet, *Discovery*, 267, 269; Darrell, *Detection*, 172-3.

¹⁷ This readiness for death may have been taken to an extreme in an undated attempt to throw himself out of a window although, if he was taken to be culpable in suicide, it would not have taken him to Christ: Darrell, *Doctrine*, 9.

bystanders tried to bend him. Then he went into a hoop, with his belly above his head and feet. Once he fell down, 'groning verie pittifully', he ran round on all fours, thrashed around again and vomited. When he came back to himself, he said, 'the Lordes name be praised' (2-3). His stomach was said to be so swollen, or to pushed up so far in his physical fits, that the buttons on his doublet and the aglet holes on his breeches would break and had to be loosened.¹⁸ This was to be the regular pattern of his fits, although the scampering was rare, and his fits usually ended with him on his knees in prayer.

The next day he had many fits, pointing to the green cat that troubled him, asking his friends to pray for him and requesting Scripture to be read between fits. As they struggled to read during his tortured condition, he asked that they send for Jesse Bee, a godly layman from Burton who was to take many of the notes that contributed to the account.¹⁹ Upon Thomas's request, Jesse started reading Scripture, beginning with John 9 and the boy went into a fit at the fourth verse, a fit that lasted fifteen minutes. Jesse carried on reading John 11 through to 13 and then Revelation 1 with Thomas falling in and out of fits as he did so (3).²⁰ Jesse noted that the fits would end when he stopped reading and told Elizabeth Toone that he thought Thomas was bewitched. The following morning Thomas told of a stereotypical encounter with a reputed witch in the woods when he was parted from his uncle the day his sufferings started.

Over the next few days his fits continued, with him shrieking and covering his eyes to try and escape the vision of a green cat with 'eyes like flames of fire' along with pain 'like the pricking with daggers or stinging of Bees'. Attention was turned to the immediate cause of the trouble with traditional means. On 8 April, upon the advice of Thomas's

¹⁸ Triall of Maist. Dorrell, Or A Collection of Defences against Allegations not yet suffered to receive convenient answer (n.p., 1599), 22; cf. John Darrell, Doctrine, 6; Darrell, Detection, 181.

¹⁹ There are no grounds for Almond, Demonic Possession, 151, to describe Bee as 'a cunning man' or, for that matter, as 'a witchcraft specialist', either in his portrayal or his behaviour. This may be drawing upon Harsnet, Discovery, 22 where he refers to friends being 'sent to Witches' and that a 'cunning man was also procured' but these are probable allusions to offers which will appear below rather than to Bee.

²⁰ The choice of John 9 is plain as it is an account of Jesus healing the blind man and the last verse before the fit started may be significant in that Jesus explains that the blindness is not caused by the sins of the man or his parents but that it is there so that the works of God should be made manifest.

grandmother, the wife of William Walkden, vicar of Clifton Campville in Staffordshire, and his aunt, the wife of Thomas Saunders of nearby Caldwell, Alice Gooderidge was sent for and interrogated. Thomas was encouraged to scratch her by those present (although the text expresses misgivings about the lack of Scriptural backing while accepting it as common practice). Thomas had gone into a fit immediately upon her entry into his chamber and she proved willing enough to undergo the humiliation, saying, 'take blood enough child, God helpe thee'. Thomas replied by telling her to 'pray for thy selfe, thy prayer can do mee no good'. When Robert Toone questioned her he found her, as expected, impious and unable to say the section of the Lord's Prayer about temptation (5-6).

As the fits increased, Toone and Bee consulted the JP Thomas Graysley and duly brought Alice and her mother, Elizabeth Wright, before him. Darling's visions maintained this focus. The following day, having woken with his nightshirt 'knit betwixt his legs' by an unknown means, his fits took on a new mantra. In addition to 'grievous groaning and fearfull skreaming', he cried out, 'looke where the Witch standeth with three warts upon her face'. By 14 April Graysley came to meet with Toones, bringing Sir Humphrey Ferrers and summoning Wright and Gooderidge, with the latter's husband and daughter. Graysley watched Thomas read the gospel of John and fall into a fit upon John 1:4. When Wright entered the parlour, he fell into a 'strange and cruell fit'.

Lying uppon hys backe, his eyes standing staring open in fearfull manner, his teeth set in his head, his armes clapped close to his sides, and all the parts of his bodie quaking very fearfully.

The fit continued when she was bade to pray over him, a prayer which no one could understand. Naturally the fit abated once she was cast out. The JPs had the two women examined physically and found sufficient incongruities to be identified as witch's marks. Ferrers took Alice back to the boy and told him to scratch her. Her found his hand

‘benumbed and pluckt to his side, and he tormented in every part’. He tried four times to scratch her without success, despite regaining control when he tried to lay hands upon anyone else, thereby proving the cause of his lack of control to be Gooderidge. She was accordingly sent to Derby gaol for an earlier, and unrelated, incident, and Wright was dismissed (7-10).

The next day Thomas’s fits took on a different temper. While he did not completely lose interest in the immediate cause of his affliction, he became much more interested in Satan and the model moved much closer to that of Robert Briggs. After a physical spasm he went into a trance and conducted conversations where he reported the questions addressed to him, answered them in defiant piety, paused to receive the next question and so on.

Doost thou say thou art my god, and that I am thy sonne? Avoyde Sathan, there is no God save the Lord of hosts. Pawzing a while, at last he said againe, And wouldest thou have me worship a moulten calfe? I will worship nothing but the Lord God, and him only wil I serve. Againe being silent awhile, he said; Wilt thou give mee three townes if I will worship thee? Avoyde Satan, it is written, I shall worship the Lord God onely (10).

Apart from one interruption, to which I’ll come shortly, this became the dominant model for the rest of his possession. As with Robert Briggs, repeating the questions was crucial for the spectators, ‘for they neither saw nor heard any thing’ and had no access to the ‘thing [which] spake to him with a voice small and shrill’ (11).

He resisted the spirit’s temptations and expressed his disdain for threats of greater torments, each of which was followed by greater physical fits. He managed to discover that the spirit’s name was ‘Wrythe’, but was unsuccessful in getting an admission as to his mistress’s name. He was starting to attract visitors, with a mixture of curiosity and piety. A number of ‘divers worshipfull personages’ came and asked him to read the Bible and the

resultant vexation moved them to 'commiseration and pittie', whereupon someone mentioned that Elizabeth Wright was in town and they sent for her. What followed was a blend of freak-show, lynch mob mentality and, perhaps, piety. Some women exposed Wright's supposed witch marks and she was questioned until she refused to cooperate. Then she was brought to the boy against her will and at the consequent fit told to pray for him. While she was on her knees, 'at her divellish praiers', his fit continued and it ceased when she was cast out, with Thomas reviving with his customary 'The Lord be praised'. Finally, they were joined by Mrs Dethicke of New Hall, who 'came in to beholde with others these strange lights' and Jesse Bee accordingly read the opening to John's gospel, sending Thomas into a fit by the fourth verse (13).

The dialogues continued the next day, with earthly temptations, their refusal, threats of physical pain and their due appearance. He pressed again for the identity of the devil's mistress but was told that she had given 'a drop of bloud to thy dinner' and so had won confidentiality. In between fits his mother exhorted him to put his trust in God. He responded with confidence: 'My whole trust is in him; for the Lord hath my enemy in a chaine, and keepeth him in a compasse, which he shall not passe' (14-15). Later on they were joined by an unnamed stranger who quizzed Darling 'concerning poeticall and other schoole points'. Thomas grew weary and asked to be taken to another room but the stranger followed him, asking more questions and weeping. Mrs Darling asked what was troubling him and he assured her of his good intentions, that he meant no hurt. 'No', said Thomas, 'you bade me I should not dissemble, saying that there was no witches: also you asked of me if I thought there was a god? God blesse me fro such comforters: I pray you al pray for me that the Lord would deliver mee from this temptation'.²¹ Upon the departure of the stranger the minister of Burton, Peter Eccleshall, intervened, comforting the mother

²¹ Almond's suggestion, Demonic Possession, 152n, that the unnamed stranger was Reginald Scot, is dubious. The suggestion that local readers might have known the stranger is plausible but the idea that a gentleman was willing to travel from Kent to the midlands to correct the misapprehensions of what, at this stage, was a local sensation, seems unlikely, not least as Darrell's other supporters were more than willing to draw attention to Scot and deride him when Harsnet, sometimes silently, cited him.

and son and advising him that, should Satan speak to him again, he should not reply as the Father of Lies was too likely to lead him astray. Two hours later, in another fit, it was evident from 'his lookes and gestures that the evill spirit spake' but in response to his minister's advice, Darling 'kept a discontented silence'. Upon his recovery his mother told him that if it should speak again, 'he should not feare or forbear to answer it'. Surely enough, in his next fit, he returned to the task with gusto, asking its name, being told that he would not tell until tomorrow (perhaps an echo of Anne Brigges and Rachel Pindar); his denunciation was full-blooded.

Thou art a liar, I have ever found thee so, and I will not beleieve thee. Dost thou saie thou wilt torment me far more grievously than ever thou hast done? I care not for al that thou canst do unto me: In the Lord is my trust, who wil deliver mee when his good pleasure is: (14-16)

Thus there were three related negotiations and performances. The first made plain his confidence in his faith and the limits God had placed on what Satan was allowed to do. The conversation with the well-intentioned doubter made explicit the lesson that doubting the existence of witches and their diabolic master was a step towards atheism. The third, more carefully trodden, accepted the authority of the cleric but, suspecting that he underestimated the strength of Darling's piety, accepted the godly maternal advice to return to the fray.

The values, the mission, and the task are implicit in the last fits of the day and the way the following day is related. After his contemptuous dismissal of Satan's threats he was quiet for a while. Jesse Bee, one of the writers and editors of the text, and hence probably in sympathy with if not responsible for this structure, spoke to Thomas. He encouraged Darling to be courageous, 'to take unto him the shield of faith, and to offer Sathan the combate'. With permission, Jesse started reading John. At the ninth verse a fit began, 'which vexed and tormented him in everie part of his bodie'. This ended, Jesse

asked if he should read again and Thomas 'answered cherefully, read on in Gods name'. This pattern recurred for four fits, gradually diminishing, 'sathan no doubt finding his force quailing, and his fierie darts quenched'. After the fourth fit, Jesse read through, with Thomas 'cheerfully & attentively hearkening', getting to the end of the chapter with no further pains. The fits returned in the morning, so frantic that two men could not hold him, one of the fits 'more vehement than the rest'. When it ended, Jesse said, 'Come Thomas, shall we provoke him to battell?' and Thomas answered, 'yes verie willingly'. Unfortunately Robert Toones had taken his Bible to church so Thomas asked Jesse to resolve his doubt whether it was licit to eat or drink before the Eucharist. Having happily accepted Jesse's advice, he then went into a fit, groaning and screaming, 'turning as round on all foure, as a pigge on a spit'. Then he leapt about, hanging from the tester over the bed and said, 'dost thou say I shall hear newes within these 2. or 3. dayes? I pray God it be good newes', this last in the style of Joan Throckmorton's conversations with her spirits (17-18).

The other lesson given by this day was of alternative therapies. One told of having met, 'of her owne accord', with Widow Worthington, 'the good Witch of Hoppers (as they call her)' who offered assistance if Darling's mother or a close friend visited her. A similar offer came from another 'Witch about Coventry', presumably another cunning woman. Mrs Darling was relatively gentle in her disavowal of this means: 'detesting the divells helpe', she thanked them for their kindness towards her and only then 'sharply reprovved them for attempting a thing so unlawfull' (18).

The next morning was quiet until Thomas ate, whereupon his violent fit parted him from the company of his repast. Once the fit ended, Jesse returned with an appetite for fighting, asking, 'Thomas shall we take the Sword with two edges, and bid Sathan the Battayle?'²² Thomas, 'beeing well acqaynted with the phrase', answered, 'if you will read, I will gladly heare'. Jesse turned, once again, to the beginning of John's gospel which took

²² The reference is to Psalm 149:6: 'Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand'.

Thomas through three fits. In his restored state he took the book himself and chose the opening of Revelation as earlier. After the fit brought on by this, he returned the text to Jesse, asking him to read on and once again their appetite, or stamina, for Scripture proved greater than the devil's, for Jesse finished this chapter and the next without being interrupted by 'anye more of the Boies fits' (18-19).

The next nine or ten days record fit after fit with offers of crown and countries, occasional dumbness and great pains. Thomas scornfully rejected the temptations and pressed for the witch's name. He derided Satan's offers compared to what God's more trustworthy offers promised. The visions gradually became more graphic. At one point in a trance he said, 'dost thou say if I wil not worship thee thou wilt make me a four-footed beast? that lieth not in thy power, since God hath made me a reasonable creature: my faith sathan is strong'. The next torment had him crying out, 'A beare, a beare: his mouth was stretched out, and he rored fiercely like a beare, crying out, he teareth me, he teareth me'. During that day he was attacked by a bear, a hell hound, fire, a dragon, and a fly, with the news he had been promised amounting to nothing more than that his suffering would continue (21).

At the end of the month, having resisted further offers from Widow Worthington and such like, they decided to give a chance to one man who promised a cure, on condition that he should make his means clear and they not include 'Coniuration and Inchauntment'.²³ The day before he was due, Alice was brought to the house, resulting in further violent physical fits: 'he shrieked pitifully, blearing out the tung, and having his neck so wrythen, that his face seemed to stand backward'. After a total of 27 fits that day, Alice admitted vexing the child, promising the cessation if they forgave her. They suspected Elizabeth Wright had a hand in the pains and so two or three went to Stapenhill to see what she was up to and found her on her knees, 'praying (no doubt) to the divell' (23-4).

²³ Harsnet, Discovery, 22, also describes him as a 'cunning man' a more accurate term than Almond, Demonic Possession, 151, 'a witchfinder'.

1 May was when 'the Cunning man would make the Witch confesse'. She made some voluntary admission and tried to negotiate her release but found it hard to speak the confession, asking for their prayers. Her new interrogator worked to force her tongue loose by sitting her close to the fire, effectively burning her feet. The text declares this a 'ridiculous practise'; she did, however, offer to reveal all to Mistress Dethicke, although once again, 'when she began to speake her winde was stopped'. Back in the general company she would or could give no more than that she had mistaken Thomas for another boy, against whom she had an appetite for revenge.

Hopes for a full confession having been raised, the next morning Jerome Horabin, Edward Wightman, Mrs Caldwell and others visited her to see what could be added. She made some further admission and advised them to get help for Thomas. Mrs Caldwell asked if they should also pray for her and she asked for prayers from Peter Eccleshall to help her speak the truth. On 3 May Wightman returned, with Robert Toone, Richard Teate and others. This time she expanded upon her story about meeting Thomas in the woods: after something of a contretemps, the devil had appeared to her 'in likenesse of a little partie-colored dog red and white', which she called Minnie. She sent him to torment Darling. He had returned to tell her that his mission was accomplished and again while she had been in gaol. Her final advice was that 'the boy will not mend except you seek for help', whereupon her throat stopped and she said, 'come out thou foule serpent' (25-6).

Between 8 and 2 on that day Darling had twelve fits and at 3, as if in answer to Alice's suggestion Arthur Hildersham in the company of 'divers other godly ministers' including Darrell and More, turned up. Hildersham examined the possessed and quizzed him about his faith. There seems to have been some discussion over whether he was possessed or not with Darrell's opinion prevailing.²⁴ Hildersham went on to explain to the company effectively the orthodox line on the proper godly response. Whereas papists

²⁴ Harsnet, Discovery, 270-1; Darrell, Detection, 173.

boasted that their priests could cast out devils and 'the simple everie where' felt that it was to the discredit of Protestant ministers, that the second part at least was true, that godly clerics had no such power. Although the Lord 'oft in these daies' did cast out demons in response to godly prayers, this was no guaranteed cure. To believe in such miracles was a dangerous opinion. Possession was a 'temporall correction', a means by which to glorify God and aid the process of salvation, and so 'it cannot without sinne be absolutely prayed against'. The crucial word is 'absolutely': praying for the removal of demons without finding the sin that was the root cause (not necessarily in the possessed individual), the purpose of the possession, was a confusion of priorities and, similarly, to conduct prayers with the sense that they would assuredly be answered was presumptuous. That much accepted, 'there is a good use of praier in such a case, and of fasting also', to sanctify the judgement to the beholders and the possessed, and perhaps to secure the deliverance, with the condition that it was 'if the Lord see it be best for his owne glorie'. Hildersham having spoken for all, the ministers prayed together and Thomas suffered no fits in this time (26-6).²⁵

Over the next week he underwent further fits, suffering facial distortions and visions of fire and a man emerging from a chamber pot. At times he called upon the company to pray although he could not always hear them, and singing the sixth Psalm with them. The green cat seems to have been absent for some time and the conversations were explicitly with Satan and within Hildersham's parameters, when Darling's tongue was functioning.

Avoyde sathan, I have upon my head the helmet of salvation, and I am girded about with trueth.²⁶ Jesus Christ hath shead water and bloud for my sins, & I sweat but

²⁵ Kathleen R. Sands, Demon Possession in Elizabethan England (London, 2004), 137, suggests that Hildersham's speech ran counter to Darrell's understanding of possession and dispossession and that he 'carefully observed the boy's fits for several days'. The latter is simply inaccurate; there is only the one visit recorded. As for the former, a very similar exegesis can be found in, for instance, Darrell's Apologie, ff. 14-5; Hildersham simply repeats the commonplace understanding that Protestant ministers have no special gift for dispossession. Effectively, she accepts the statement of Harsnet which runs against the repeated assertion that the agency in dispossession is entirely divine: cf. Harsnet, Discovery, 270-1.

²⁶ Probably referring to Ephesians 6:17 or possibly Isaiah 59:17.

water, O Lord thy apostles were whipt & scourged for thy trueth, & they departed, reioycing that they were accounted woorthy to suffer for thy names sake. And now (O Lorde) I reioyce that thou accountest me woorthie to suffer these cruell torments (28).

On 19 May, in a trance after a vehement fit, after which 'there scarce appeared any signe of life in him', he spoke of a lengthy vision. He said, 'I heare a voyce from heaven, the Lorde speaketh to me' and, raising his hands, said, 'Looke where my brethren lob is'. Having rejected an order from Satan, he cried, 'heaven openeth, heaven openeth, I must goe thether' and then, 'I see Christ Jesus my Saviour, his face shineth as the Sunne in his strength, I will goe salute him', rising despite the efforts of his keepers to restrain him. After a screaming battle with a dog from hell, he returned to the trance.

Oh Maister Hildersham. I thought he would have torne me in peeces, preach iudgment against all sinners, flames of fire, flames of fire; See Maister Hildersham, preach and teach, Oh fast and pray night and day.

Then he saw Christ wearing purple and embraced him, asking for protection. He became fearful, saying 'Doost thou say this is the bottomlesse pitte where the damned be? Maister Hildersham, we had need to pray, Oh preach and pray' (29-30). Prayers were rewarded by the return of Jesus and the apostles who he embraced and praised. Then he turned his head to see Judas 'frying in torments'. He lay in a trance but speaking fearfully of a series of visions worth quoting at length.

Ah looke in this place of torments where drunkards are hanged by the throats, swearers and filthie talkers by their tongues: and having spoken of other torments for other sins, he saide, O great iudgments, great iudgments.... Yonder comes mother Redde Cap, looke how they beate her braines out, see what it is to be a witch: see how the toades gnaw the flesh from her bones. O pray, pray, looke what wailing, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth yonder is: Lord shew us thy mercie; take me by the hand Maister Hildersham, and let us go to heaven

After respite of fifteen minutes, he fell into a quiet trance and said:

O Maister Hildersham, look where Gods chariot is come to fetch you and me, see how God loveth us: by and by he beganne to quake, and cried; Lo. Lo, the greene Cat comes out of hell: then falling into a quiet trance, he said, looke where the 7 churches be, and presently he skritchted saying, Lo, lo, 7 ugly divells, looke, they goe downe to the bottomlesse pit.²⁷ Pawzing againe he saith, See how many kings and rich men go to hel, even they that were so brave, and fared so daintily, and were so stowt. After this he fell into a trance, saying; come M. Hildersham, the Lord bids us come, let us go, and so he went on, and could hardly be staid

After this vision, partly made up of an enactment of the career hopes he voiced earlier, preaching alongside one of the most famed godly preachers of his day, the rest of the day was a succession of visions, alternately fearful and awe-inspiring with Jesus coming, followed by Judgement Day. 'The trumpets sound, see see, the graves open, the dead arise, and al men are come to iudgment; harke how the Angells cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.... Looke looke how the wicked flie away like a flocke of doves, yet see a flame of fire overtaketh them'. His penultimate vision of the day was positive: 'I see a milke White dove flying towards me, see where my Savior commeth, his face shineth as the Sunne'. This pattern lasted over the next two days until 12 May when he was removed to the house of his uncle, Thomas Saunders, three miles away at Caldwell (31-2).

He showed no signs of recovery in the first fortnight at Caldwell, with mere variations in the number and intensity of fits and trances. It was noted that on the Sabbath, 'when the boy was remembred by praier in godly Assemblies', Satan showed his most extreme cruelty. 26 May was an intense test regarding the 'number and qualitie of his fits & torments'. He cried out, 'Looke where satan commeth from under the bed: & often times Thunder, thunder; Lightening, lightening; Flames of fire, flames of consuming fire; A beare,

²⁷ The seven churches are taken from Rev. 1, a text he has requested before, while the seven ugly devils are an adaptation of Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2.

a beare, A dragon, a dragon; looke where sathan comes downe y^e chimney, looke, looke; for Gods sake take me from him'. After further discussion, at the recommendation of William Walkden, Darrell was called and duly arrived the next day (33).

Darrell watched Darling in his fits and assured him and his supporters that he was indeed possessed, noting his foaming at the mouth and the 'unnaturall swelling and styrring' in his body.²⁸ He told Thomas that the only way for his deliverance was to resist Satan, citing James 4:7, an unusual choice although one that makes sense in pastoral terms in that it promises the devil's flight less conditionally than other New Testament references. He briefed the parents and family to prepare themselves for fasting and prayer the next day, explaining the particular means by Matt 17:21. They asked him for his presence and assistance. He promised his assistance in prayer and fasting but not his presence, 'to avoide note of vaine glorie' and in any case he was confident of Thomas's 'firme faith'.²⁹ He passed on his copy of The Enemie of Securitie which he had employed with Katherine Wright. He gave them some idea of what was likely to happen in terms of Satan's expressions of anger and that if such manifestations happened they would know for sure that he was right in his diagnosis, 'which his [Darling's] Frendes at Cawdwall stood in doubt of' (33-4). With a stress on the need to persevere with the task through its demands, he departed.

The exercise started with prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit and the remission of sins. Thomas fell into a fit, was struck dumb and, emerging, joined the prayer. After a while he went into a trance and a small voice came from him, 'Brother Glassup, we cannot prevaile, his faith is so strong, and they fast and pray, and a Preacher prayeth as fast as they'. Another voice came, this one 'big & hollow', saying, 'Brother Radulphus, I wil

²⁸ Darrell, Doctrine, 6.

²⁹ Cf. Triall, 13; Harsnet, Discovery, 276, has his cake and eats it in that he uses Darrell's refusal to 'prove' that he was aware of his reputation after Katherine Wright and if he was afraid of vainglory they why did he attend the fasts in Lancashire and Nottingham? Therefore, either to attend or to refuse to attend is evidence of vainglory!: Darrell, Apologie, ff. 29-30.

goe unto my master Belzelbub, and he shall dubble their tungs'.³⁰ This was the first occasion he had given voice to the spirits inside him. He pointed to the chimney where he could see Beelzebub '& the witch by him'. He asked if that was the one who had bewitched him, declaring that he forgave her and charged them to leave, citing James 4:7. Presently he said, 'He is gone, he is gone', by which he may have meant Beelzebub, for the devils took him into a fit, then a trance in which, with his mouth open, Glassup was heard saying, 'Radulphus, Belzebub can doe no good, his head is so stroken off with a word: but I wyll goe fetch the flying Eagle and his flock'. At the end of this session he lay in a trance and said, 'I see an Angell in the windowe, like a milke white dove, sent from the Lord to bee with mee to comfort and assist us: but that is nothing in respect of the Lorde himselfe' (34-5).

In his next fit, one of the voices said, 'We cannot prevayle, let us goe out of him, and enter into some of these heere', a threat that understandably intimidated the company. Next time the voice was heard saying, 'I would they were all gone but one that is among them: and then wee should doe well inough'. Who this 'one' was emerged in the next trance when one of the devils announced, 'There is a Woman earnest about prayer, get her away'. John Alsop said, 'Wee cannot spare her', but it was not until they looked around that they realised Frances Wightman, Thomas's aunt and Edward's wife, was sat behind, 'earnestly at prayer in a corner' (35).³¹

After reading for a while, Thomas returned to a trance and one of the voices was heard again, saying, 'Wee cannot prevaile, wee cannot prevaile, their Church increaseth'. Their spirits raised a little as the numbers but not the quality of the company grew, as one devil said, 'Here commeth one of my people', apparently referring to a 'man of bad life' who had just arrived. Thomas gestured for this man to be removed which he was forthwith.

³⁰ Cf. Darrell, Doctrine, 12 (misnumbered 10); *idem*, Apologie ff. 12-3 similarly describes his 'uncouth and hollow' voice; in a list of his supernatural symptoms, Triall, 22-3 mentions time that he spoke with his mouth gaping without expanding on whether the voice was demonic or normal.

³¹ Harsnet, Discovery, 48, identifies her and Gibson, Possession, 61, notes a handwritten marginal note to this effect in the Lambeth Palace Library copy of The most wonderfull and true storie.

The devils turned their attention to the book, urging Thomas to tear it and he managed to snatch one leaf out of it, the only success among many efforts. His fits between 8 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon started violently in that he would 'bite strike and spurne them with his feet', 'wherein he was farre stronger than he was wont'. His mouth would set wide open, draw awry and his face almost turned to his back 'and his armes and sholders thrust out of ioynt'.³² One of the devils gave backing to the unwillingness to use cunning folk when he said, 'Wee cannot prevaile, for they will not holpen with Witches. Brother Radulphus we cannot prevaile: let us goe to our mistres and torment her, I have had a draught of her blood today'. Upon this Thomas entered a trance with a small voice saying, 'I will stop thy mouth', at which moment his throat was so tight that the company thought he was being strangled. There was one more occasion when a spirit gained voice, telling the company, 'Your praiers prevaile not, they are not heard'. He was sharply put in his place by Master Rampan, the schoolmaster of Burton, who retorted with Matt 18:20: 'Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them' (36-7).

About 2 o'clock Thomas had a 'mervailous strange fit' and at the end he 'strained to cast with great vehemencie', eventually managing to cast up 'some fleame and choller'. The bystanders understood this to mean that, if he was possessed with two spirits '(as it is probable he was)', then one was gone. So for the next two hours his fits continued but were less intense. At 3 he managed to eat a little, preceding and following the meal with the Lord's Prayer and by reading some prayers from The Enimie to Securitie. At about 6, while he was being carried on his keeper's back due to his legs being immobile, he cried out like a bear. He was laid upon his bed where he began to 'heave and life vehemently at his stomacke, and getting up some fleame and choller'. He pointed across the parlour, saying, 'Looke, looke, see you not the Mouse that is gone out of my mouth' (37).

³² Triall, 22, mentions his arms and shoulders being thrust out of joint as characteristic of 'many of his fits'; cf. Darrell, Detection, 181.

After a quiet spell and recovery, at about 7 he was placed with others at the table where he fell into a trance. Taken to bed, as he lay there, a voice was heard, saying, 'My Son arise up and walke, the evill spirit is gone from thee; arise and walk'. Refusing the offers of assistance from those who had tended to him, he stood up and walked on his own for the first time in three months.³³ Aware of his improvement, he fell to the ground '(of his owne accord)' and thanked God for his deliverance, in such a beautiful manner that the bystanders thought it 'was to bee admired in a childe'. The text made it clear that 'the same Spirite which armed hym with faith and patience' in his trials, was still instructing him in his thanksgiving. Thomas took to town, 'that it might appeare what Jesus had done for him' (38).

Two days later he moved to his grandfather William Walkden's house at Clifton and Darrell visited him, warning him to keep his faith strong and cared for, 'least the uncleane spirit returning', might find him unprotected and hence, 'bring 7 worse than himself with him, as our Savior expresseth' (Matt 12:43-5; Luke 11:24-6).³⁴ Thomas was fine until he returned to Burton and restarted school on 8 June. In the afternoon he told his schoolmates that if they came with him to the churchyard, 'I will show you a strange thing'. They accordingly followed, with Rampan unconcerned because they took their books with them. He became worried when Thomas cried out because of pain in his legs, and Rampan, recalling his troubles, tried to get him to repeat, 'Oh Lord for Iesus Christes sake have mercie upon me' but to no avail. All Thomas could do was cry, 'O my legs, my legs', although the text notes the difference in the suffering, suggesting that this was the external pain of obsession rather than the more voracious and complex torture of possession (39).

He was taken to his uncle's, presumably Robert Toone's, crying, 'Daggers, daggers' and eventually admitting that he was afraid of Satan. The company offered

³³ Trial, 22, suggests that 'a strong man was hired to carie him for 12. weekes of 17. untill he was dispossessed'.

³⁴ Harsnet, Discovery, 283, states that Darrell used Matt. 12.

encouragement and comfort and told him to pray. He struggled to do so through the pain, and seems to have heard something, asking, 'what a thundring is here? I cannot abide this thundring' and seeing a woman present not perceived by others. Lying quietly, a voice came from him, saying, 'He fel a little and I caught him'. After a while he woke, amazed that he was not at school and then read some Scripture and retired for the night.

The next morning Toone gathered neighbours to read Scripture and to pray for the removal of 'this heavie displeasure of God' and to aid Darling's resistance to demonic temptations. Thomas started the reading, pausing to ask, 'what woman is that which stands there?' Encouraged to go on, he fell into a trance and expanded on the comfort he had spoken of the day before. 'Behold I see a Lambe, hearke what the Lambe saith; Thou didst fall & he caught thee: feare not, the Lord is thy buckler and defender'.³⁵ He read again and fell into a trance, this time rejecting a series of earthly temptations, including a précis of the account of the woman offered to Robert Briggs: 'What faire woman is this, that is so gorgeously apparaild? Dost thou say thou wilt give her mee if I wil worship thee? Avoyd Sathan, I neither care for her nor thee; the Lord is my comfort, and him onely will I worship' (40). There followed a succession of readings and trances with conversations, effectively a summary of previous threats, promises, and visions. Satan asked him to open his mouth which Thomas saw as an attempt to get a chance to re-enter him. Thomas knew the rules, as it were, and repudiated Satan: 'Avoyde sathan, thou canst not enter into me, except the Lorde give thee leave; and I trust he will not'. The next trance was more positive, with him saying, 'come maister Hildersham, let us sixe go to heaven', (there being six present at that time). Later on the image of an angel (or possibly the Holy Spirit) reappeared: 'Oh I see a milke white Dove: the Dove saith, Feare not, you shall have better newes' (41).

³⁵ Possibly an adaptation of Psalm 92:2-6.

The devil and the dove took turns in trance after trance with the news brought by the dove strengthening Daring's rejection of Satan and his confidence in the devil's eventual failure. Having told Satan he was no longer afraid of him, he said, 'M. Hildersham, see see how the world passeth away, yea it must passe away, it hasteth on apace'. He then reported how a little of God's word was sufficient to chase Satan off, 'see see how Sathan flieth away', perhaps echoing Darrell's use of James 4:7. After his final resistance he lay still and then concluded:

Looke where the dove commeth, harke what the dove saith, The Lord thy God hath tied thy enemy Sathan fast in a chaine, unles thou fall againe, he shall never tempt thee, hold fast and forget not:... O Lambe of God that takest away the sinnes of the world, thy name be praised, thy name be magnified and extolled for evermore (42).

With that he opened his eyes, read cheerfully for a while and the company joined in prayers of humility, thanksgiving, and praise. He rose, finding himself well in mind and body and so remained. As the text ends, with a slightly grisly conclusion: 'Now the Witch is dead, had she lived, she should have bin executed' (43).

At this point we should return to Lancashire, where we left seven members of the household and family of the Starkeys possessed earlier. An accidental consequence of Nicholas Starkey's contact with John Dee either when he visited him himself or indirectly through his curate, Matthew Palmer, was that he heard of Darrell's success with Darling, through Dee's butler. Darling was the son of the butler's uncle and once Starkey heard this Darrell appeared to be a helpful source of experienced aid, following Dee's advice along with the academic's unwillingness to offer assistance himself. Dee proved willing to help with the delegation when Starkey asked him to write to Darrell requesting his presence, presumably hoping the reputation of Dee would prove persuasive for the two men were unacquainted, as both Darrell and More are quick to point out. Starkey also wrote himself, probably around the start of December, but neither was successful. Darrell insisted that he

lacked ‘anie speciall gift’ for dispossession. However, about the middle of February 1597, Starkey sent more letters, this time including one by a local JP, James Ashton, and this was more fruitful. Darrell, ‘craving first the advice of many of my brethren in the ministry, met together in an exercise’, because, as More put it, ‘he would attempt nothing in those cases without very good advisement, and lawful consent’. Sixteen ministers accordingly met at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. It was concluded that he should go and he requested that he be accompanied by George More, the pastor of Cawlke in Derbyshire, apparently to make reports of any success more believable, having the strength of two witnesses. In his response to Starkey, Darrell asked for ‘the assistance of some faithful Ministers about M. Starkie, especially his Pastor to ioyn with us’. Starkey read the letter aloud with his son and others present and this seems to have created both a sense of anticipation and a hiatus in the torments. John had no fits between hearing the news and the preachers’ arrival while some of the others suffered a little but threatened the spirits with their sense of approaching deliverance.³⁶

This sense of imminence seems to have come to a head on the day of the ministers’ arrival, perhaps aided by the return of Margaret Byrom from Salford. A couple of hours before they got to Cleworth Jane Ashton’s stomach began to swell to such an extent ‘that she compared her bellye to a woman great with child’. When it abated a breath came up her throat which ‘caused yelling’ and then the spirit fell down into her body ‘like a cold stone, as it did with M[argaret] By[rom]’ (ATN, 9; ATD, 54). More and Darrell arrived at 1 p.m. on 16 March 1597 and were greeted by Mistress Starkey with John and Anne and took them in to meet Nicholas in the hall. They enquired regarding the current state of the sufferers. John and Margaret Byrom had been well for a fortnight and four days

³⁶ More, A true Discourse, 49-50, 54; Darrell, True Narration, 8; Harsnet, Discovery, 2, 22; Triall, 13; Darrell, Detection, 25, 26. The dating of the first letters is based on Darrell’s suggestion of ten weeks between the two sets. (Hereafter references to More’s Discourse and Darrell’s Narration will appear in the text as ATD and ATN respectively.) The surname shared by the JP and Jane Ashton, the possessed servant, is likely to be a mere coincidence, given the contrasting social positions.

respectively and Anne also, it seems, to have been in better shape.³⁷ The presence of any fits encouraged the diagnosis of continued possession and thus 'wee suspected greatly Satans lurking in them'. The ministers duly requested those still troubled, particularly three of them, to join them. They were all relaxing in the kitchen and Nicholas called them into the hall (ATN, 8; ATD, 50-1).

The first to enter was Margaret Hardman who approached the table, curtsied, and was thrown back into a chair three yards away, into which she 'reared backward' and stayed there, stretched out and rigid. The next was Elinor, who curtsied and was flung to the side of the table in the same state as her sister. The third was Ellen Holland who entered with her hands covering her face and said, 'I am come to counsayle before I be called', and was immediately cast over the side of the form, 'where shee satt agaste like the rest'. They remained in this condition for about fifteen minutes, with their faces disfigured and their bodies swollen. Darrell recalled 'a sensible stiring & rumbling within each of them: and not only so, but such a vibrant moving there was also in their inward parts', particularly in Margaret, which could be heard by all present (ATD, 50-2; ATN, 8).

Once they revived, they stood up and talked among themselves, including the jocular remarks about Hartley's hanging, apparently deprived of any awareness of any others. Then 'they began to raile and revile' and strike out with their hands and feet and could 'not be ruled till they were removed into an upper chamber' where they carried on talking to one another and 'mocking and scorning such as held them downe'. More and Darrell withdrew to the garden to discuss the best response and had Starkey call his pastor, John Dickons, resolving to fast and pray the following day and to brief the family and the possessed that evening (ATD, 52-3).

When Dickons had joined them they explained the situation to him and began the briefing. In terms of the possessed it was very much swimming against the tide. Jane had

³⁷ Anne's health is a presumption from silence in that there were three of the children said to be still troubled. Anne is not one of the children brought in and so it seems a safe presumption.

started 'a straunge skriking and howling', quickly taken up by the others. John and Anne 'cried out mightily, with such outrageous roaring and belling,'³⁸ that they could not of a long time be resteyned'. Nearly all of them contributed to a 'supernatural loud whupping', fulfilling a prophecy or threat that Hartley had made much earlier to Nicholas Starkey (ATN, 9, 1; ATD, 54-5). John was cast down and held on the bed, 'and so payned in his stomacke, and pulled in his belly, heaving and lifting, as if his heart should burst', shedding many tears. The ministers tried to comfort them with exhortations but Elinor and Margaret Starkey and Ellen mocked everything they said. When the Bible was called for, 'they fell a laughing at it, and sayde reach them the Bibble bable, bibble babbell', continuing with 'many other scorninges and filthie speaches'. Leaving them to their own devices, the preachers counselled John, advising him to trust in the Lord and to pray, trying to get him to repeat the Lord's Prayer after them. He proved incapable, but 'that scorner' who lay next to him did repeat it but 'nicknaming every worde in the Lordes prayer', seemingly preventing its completion. Eventually they were driven from the chamber, talked with Dickons, prayed and then retired for probably much needed sleep at midnight (ATD, 54-6; ATN, 9).

The fasting and prayer began at 7 the following morning. Beds or couches were brought into the large parlour for the possessed to lie upon and in addition to the family and clergy, about thirty 'honest neighbours' attended, with 'some holding and tending the sicke possessed, & some sitting by'. All seven were active, 'their torments stil increasing, & their fits doubling upon them, somtimes either howling or crying, or els lifting, or rayling'. At the end of their fits they would go into a trance, 'being as a breathing time to refresh them by, and then to it againe' (ATN, 10; ATD, 59). The ministers preached in turn, beginning with Dickons, although they were challenged in volume, as four of the sufferers were 'possessed with scorning spirits'. The 'principall and chiefe of the scornors' was Margaret

³⁸ Almond (Demonic Possession, 195) expands this to 'bellowing' which is acceptable but it might also be noted that 'belling' was the noise that stags made in rutting season and perhaps, given the other bestial imagery, as appropriate a reading.

Hardman, probably joined by Elinor and Ellen, judging by the previous day, and one other.³⁹ The other three were 'very sober, although there were very sore tormented'. Some hope appeared during Dickons' sermon when a spirit spoke through Margaret Hardman half a dozen times, 'in a fine lowe voice and in the tune of singing', delivering the phrase, 'I must be gone, I must be gone, whither shall I goe? Whither shall I goe? I will not dye, I will not dye'. So it continued to the middle of the afternoon when, during More's sermon, she was heard to say, 'I cannot tarie: I cannot tarie: I am too hoote: I am too hoote: let me goe: let me goe' (ATD, 60-2; ATN, 11).

At this point pandemonium, almost literally, held reign. Margaret, followed by the rest, broke out 'into exceeding loude crys, all seaven roaring, & belling in such extreame and fearfull manner that they troubled us al, being so violent and outragious that they had much adoe to be holden'. Elsewhere Darrell reported that all seven spent the day of their deliverance uttering 'most filthy speaches'.⁴⁰ The clergy came to divide their labour as Jane Ashton, 'being both the strongest & worst of the rest, was also more violentlie vexed', so Darrell and Dickons took her to a great window in an other part of the parlour, leaving More with the rest. Ashton's fits must have been spectacular as the others were frenetic, often seen as a sign of Satan's final effort before his withdrawal. The others were 'forced to lay about them with both hands and feete, to pulle their hayre, and to rent their clothes, to knocke their heades, and to strike themselves, crying out with open mouthes, & roaring as if they were madd'. This condition continued for two hours, exhausting all present (ATD, 62-3, 65, 66-7).

The first to be dispossessed was Margaret Byrom. Her fits had started about 4 or 5 in the morning and she had her most intense fits yet, hearing only the voices of the others possessed. She was very full of pain, and 'strayned up much fleamy and bloody matter'.

³⁹ The 'other' may have been Anne as she is included, by a process of elimination, in the four uttering 'filthy scurrilous speaches' in part of Darrell's account: ATN, 10.

⁴⁰ Darrell, *Doctrine*, 99.

According to her own account later that night, she felt the spirit come up from her belly, towards her breast and through her throat. When it left her throat it gave her 'a sore lug', that is, a pull or start and 'a darke mist dazeled her eyes'. It left through her mouth, leaving a sore throat and 'a filthy smel', making her food taste unsavoury for a week. She saw it leave in the likeness of a crow's head which sat, surrounded by darkness, in the corner until it left with a flash of fire out the window and, to her, the whole parlour seemed to be on fire. She lay as dead for about half an hour with almost no breathing until she started 'up most ioyfully, magnifying god, with such a cherefull countenance and voyce' (ATN, 10, 11).

Apart from Jane, the rest were delivered shortly after Margaret, between 5 and 6 o'clock. John was the second to be relieved. He was 'so miserably rent that abundance of blod gushed out both at his nose and mouth' and 'he gnashed fearfully with his teeth'. His vision of the spirit's departure was that it went from him 'lyke a man with a bulch of his black [sic] very yll favored'. He resembled a corpse for a while 'soe that some said to us, he seemeth to be dead'. Then all of a sudden he started up '& praysed god in most cherful & comfortable manner' (ATN, 10, 11). The other four 'made sundry tymes greate shewe of vomyting and nowe and then vomyted indeede, somthing like fleam thick spettle'. They were physically very active, making much 'light behaviour and vayn gestures', and more verbally active, delivering 'sundry scurrilous speaches' and talking among themselves and being 'blasphemous', during the sermon crying, 'bible bable he will never have done prating, prittle prattle'.⁴¹

While Darrell and Dickons attended to Ashton, the rest, one by one, managed to escape those around them, falling off the couches in the midst of prayers from parents and neighbours, 'with strange and mightie cryes'. The prayers were heard while they lay 'altogeather senceles, their bodies stretched out, as if they had bene starke dead', for

⁴¹ The second part, berating the prattling, might be seen as an adaptation of a similar complaint from Robert Briggs mentioned above. His target was Satan's prattling and the phrase is common enough for the proof of influence fairly tenuous.

about fifteen minutes.⁴² Dickons rejoined the group and saw 'how they rose up agayne one after another, in order as they fell, acknowledging that they were freed from the evill spirit, and that he was departed from them'. With delight they stood up,

leaping and dauncing & praying God: when also we were all filled with exceeding ioy, which was testified by showting and clapping of handes, so that the earth rang with the prayses of God, and the whole house was filled with the sounde thereof (ATN, 10; ADN, 65-7).

Each of them gave an account of the devil's departure. Margaret Hardman pretty much shared John's vision. For Anne the spirit also had a bulge but it was on his breast and as big as a man's head; he was 'a foule ugly man, with a white beard'. Ellen concurred but her spirit was clean-shaven. For Elinor it 'was like an urchin' and left the parlour through 'a very litle hole', perhaps an echo of the earlier promised pathways to heaven.⁴³ As they recovered, More warned all six that 'Satan would seeke to enter into them again' and warning them to put on 'the whole armour of God', assuring them that if they did 'manfully resist, no doubt but you shall see that Sathan will flie, not being able to do you any harme'. As Darrell put it, once Satan had been expelled he needed consent to re-enter, 'without which it would seeme satan cannot reenter' (ATN, 11; ATD, 69 [misnumbered 65]; ATN, 13).⁴⁴

Their immediate attention was elsewhere though. Darrell had missed the dispossessions of the first six with his care focussed on Jane Ashton and now he was joined by the other clerics to attend to her. Having reached what appeared to be some resolution or at least remission, they decided to resume the fasting and prayer 'in the behalfe of that maide onelie' the following morning (ATD, 70). As it emerged, they were not to be able to concentrate solely on Jane. More's warning proved to be worthwhile as Satan

⁴² Cf. Darrell, *Apologie*, f. 18.

⁴³ More's version is similar, with minor differences. Elinor's urchin is an urchin in the sense of a hedgehog rather than an elf, small child or hunchback: ATD, 80 (misnumbered 76).

⁴⁴ He employs Matt. 12:43-5 and Luke 11:24-6 as the authority for attempted repossession although there is no suggestion of consent being required: ATD, 81.

attempted to resume his accommodation. Margaret Byrom was approached in the night by 'an ugly black man with shoulders higher then his head', promising her a gentle repossession. She prayed against him whereupon he threatened to cast her into a pit on her way home. She maintained her resistance and so he petulantly threw her to the ground and 'departed twise as byg, and foule as hee came, with two flashes of fyer... making a noyse like a great wynd among trees'. This pattern of bribes and threats was duplicated for the other five. The first assaults came about midnight and seem to have continued for two or three days. For John the devil appeared in the same form as he left in, offering bags of gold, but when 'he sawe nothing prevayled with sugred wordes', he threatened to break John's neck. Anne had a similar vision and for Margaret Hardman who was offered gold, and her refusal was followed by threats to break her neck, 'cast her into a pyt, and drowne her,' before he departed. Ellen was initially approached by a spirit 'like a great beare with open mouth' which turned into 'the similytude of a white dove', similar to the earlier approaches disguised as a divine messenger, but to no avail. Elinor also had a bear, 'with fyer in his mouth', which naturally made her leap out of bed. He asked her to open her mouth as he opened his, possibly an adaptation of Hartley's means of possession. Satan made quite an effort with her, offering her a bag of gold and one of silver nine times, then running away as 'a beare that breakes loose from the stake'.⁴⁵ What was seen by the bystanders was some being thrown 'violently downe before us all' and others losing the use of arms or legs for a while (ATN, 11-12, 13). All six were, eventually, successful in repudiating Satan's succours.

Greater space in the accounts is devoted to Jane, perhaps as a cautionary tale to others possessed and partly as political point scoring. Darrell suggests that the previous night, when she 'pretended in wordes to be as well as the rest', they were not convinced

⁴⁵ More's version is consistent with this with a couple of additions such as 'a black Raven, with a yellow bill' and 'divers whelpes'. The biggest difference is that he states that it was 'most usually in the shape of Edmond Hartley'. The Scriptural authority for the diverse temptations More uses is Matt. 4, the temptations offered to Christ in the desert: ATD, 81.

as the 'signes of dispossession were wanting'. It emerged that in the great pain and suffering the spirit had tempted her to say he was gone, promising to be quiet and 'that he would not molest her at all'. Once they resumed their duty in the morning, this time with about fifty supporters in the parlour, Satan reneged on his promise to Jane. Now 'the whole house did ring of her againe'. Darrell seems almost pleased to be proven right in his suspicion, for it was now clear 'that satan was certainly in her'. Through the morning she was tormented, gagging a great deal like a dog with a hair ball and producing only a little phlegm. When she hung down her head to vomit, 'often the spirit would all to shake her as an angry mastife a litle cur dogge, so that after her delivery she was very hoarse & weake'. About noon or 1 p.m., signs of relief appeared. They had taken it in turns praying over her 'till we were wearie'. More took his turn one more time but when he indicated that he 'desired another to take my rowme', she took his hand, held him in place and said, 'Nay for Gods sake leave me not yet, sticke to it a litle longer, & you shall see he will departe shortlie'. He returned to the task and with the prayers of all three she 'was cast into a traunce, lying as if she had bene fast a sleepe'. Then she burst into tears and 'presentlie rose up, and thanked God that the evill spirit was departed from her'. It went out like 'a great breath, ugly like a toad, round like a ball' and returned within an hour as 'a foule big blacke man' but she resisted its efforts this time (ATN, 12-13; ATD, 70-1).

After the end of Satan's efforts to resume his occupation, the Lancashire seven were recognised to have been successful in their works of resistance and 'since that tyme (praysed be God therfore)' were free from molestation. Apart, that is, from Jane, who left the Starkey household and 'went and dwelt in a place of ignorance & among papists, & became popish herselfe'. With the devil waiting for his opportunity, while she was living with her uncle in 'the furthest parte of Lancashire' there 'resorted unto her certayne Seminarie priestes, by whose coniurations and magical inchauntments', she was repossessed. Having been taken back by the devil she joined those 'whose last estat with

Kat: wrights & Will. Somers, shall be worse then their first'. And, as Darrell concluded his account, 'Here followeth, the story of William Somers' (ATN, 12-13; ATD, 70-1; ATN, 13).

The Troubles Experienced and Caused by William Sommers

The case of William Sommers is the most famous, with the greatest treatment, both by contemporaries and historians. Perhaps because of the attractions of the political drama of the High Commission trial and perhaps because of the bitter vitriol running through the resultant literature the symptoms of William Sommers, and later his sister, Mary Cooper, are a surprising absence in the historiography of the discourse of demonic possession, at best receiving a quick survey, at worst being treated as a political football with the referee, the commentators and the press tending to take Samuel Harsnet as more trustworthy than the clearly positioned stance of John Darrell and his supporters. It is necessary to leap ahead temporally to aid comprehension of the main sources: after a lengthy imprisonment and accusations of fraudulence delivered in the Court of High Commission Darrell and George More were suspended from the ministry although no sentence was officially passed.¹ My concern is to try to assess the symptoms and to do so I do not intend to invert the dominant balance of authority but to allow a greater critical engagement with the surviving accounts. As always, there is no text untainted by the perspective of its author or authors but we should apply this caveat to Harsnet as much as to Darrell et al. The contested nature of the texts, their often aggressive, even satirical, nature has four consequences, one of which I will return to at the end, three of which need to be addressed at this point. The first is that the raised stakes of truth meant that the principal area of argument was whether the symptoms were supernatural or not. If they were or

¹ Marion Gibson, Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy (London, 2006), has provided a superb reconstruction of the interplay between local and national politics in the case and Thomas Freeman, 'Demons, deviance and defiance: John Darrell and the politics of exorcism in late Elizabethan England', in Peter Lake and Michael Questier (eds), Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660 (Woodbridge, 2000), 34-63, gives an excellent introduction to the various competing accounts. Gibson (128-34) works as a guide into the legal framework and outcome. The symptoms are not the centre of attention for either. While there will emerge some differences in emphasis in the way the case developed, Gibson's treatment is to be taken as more reliable than all its predecessors. D.P. Walker, Unclean Spirits: possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (London, 1981), 61-73 pays some attention to the symptoms but his description of Sommers (64-5) as 'probably a mentally unbalanced epileptic' rather sets his cards on the table.

could be shown to be supernatural, then any number of confessions to counterfeiting could be produced and dismissed; supernatural actions are beyond feigning. The second consequence is that it is difficult to trace the ways in which the symptom developed through time with any precision. I will draw attention to the symptoms as they appear in the course of the narrative but the nature of the texts necessitates a more generic treatment after the temporally located discussion. The third is that it would be almost perverse, certainly unhelpful, to fence off truth-claims completely and so, while some more complex questions will await answering until later, some ground will have to be laid, not least in order to disturb the assumptions that tend to run through much of the literature.²

At the beginning of October 1597 William Sommers, aged about nineteen or twenty, started behaving strangely. Sommers was an apprentice, at the lower end of the middling sort, with family among the rising stars of Nottingham local government, but with a poor record of lack of commitment to his training and more interest in immediate pleasures than in his future. At this point he was lodging with his master Thomas Porter, one of the more godly inhabitants of the town. Accounts of the initial symptoms are imprecise: he 'did use such strang and ydle kind of gestures in laughing, dauncing & such lighte behaviour' that there were fears for his sanity. He refused food for 'a long space together' and shook 'as if he had had an ague'.³ He 'began to be strangelie tormented in bodie and so continued for diverse weeks', astonishing witnesses and worrying friends, 'and gave great tokens that he was possessed by a wicked spirit'.⁴

² Most recently, Philip Almond, Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 2004), gives the title of 'counterfeit demoniac' to his introduction to Sommers's extract; this is to take as given an under-explored issue. His conclusion is rather surprising. The political dimensions mean that the possibility that Sommers 'was neither possessed nor stimulating possession but was (at least on some occasions) "genuinely" a demoniac was never canvassed' (243). One of the central issues throughout the period under attention and in the ensuing texts was the timing of his possession, dispossession and repossession and, from the perspective of other contributors, whether he was at any point possessed. It is not clear what Almond means by a genuine demoniac who is not possessed and he does not enlarge upon this question.

³ John Darrell, A True Narration of the Strange and Grevous Vexation by the Devil, of 7. Persons in Lancashire, and William Sommers of Nottingham (n.p., 1600), 15. This shifts very quickly, and silently, from the arrival of the troubles to a broader, temporally unidentifiable list of symptoms.

⁴ A Briefe Narration of the Possession, dispossession, and repossession of William Sommers (n.p., 1598), B.

Darrell states that the symptoms were the same in the four weeks before his arrival as they were after, basing his claim upon depositions given in Nottingham. Certainly Sommers was quickly watched over, partly as an expression of concern and partly because of his efforts at self-harm or even suicide attempts, 'to preserve him from destroying himself'.⁵ Richard Mee set out physical and some behavioural symptoms from before Darrell's arrival. Sommers would turn his head disturbingly far round, fall to the ground and his crooked limbs prove remarkably stuck in place. His eyes were as large as 'beasts eyes, readie as he thinketh to start out of his head', and his mouth would be drawn 'verie strangelie to one side' to a degree that had never been seen before. In addition his tongue would be stuck out the size of a 'calves tongue' and he would thrash around with such strength that sometimes six people could not hold him, despite Sommers showing no signs of exertion. While he was senseless, he would gnash his teeth, foam 'and sodenlie scrich like a swine when he is in sticking' (with Mee, as a butcher, presumably speaking from experience) and would 'be violentlie cast into the fier' from a distance of about five feet.⁶ Elizabeth Milward, a fairly frequent bystander, reported an unprecedented symptom before Darrell's intervention, one which was to recur through his troubles. The first time she called neighbours in to help him, she heard 'a thumping, or knocking in his bed'. She put her hand into the bed to find the source and felt the knocking, '(as she thought) at a hollow space above the chest of his bodie'. This noise so frightened her that when she heard it as she descended the stairs she was 'so fearefull as she durst not stay above with him'.⁷

Joan Pie, one of the most diligent observers (and very much among the godly) gave a similar account of the physical symptoms, taken to a slightly greater extreme. She

⁵ John Darrell, *A Detection of that Sinful Shamful and Ridiculous Discourse of Samuel Harshnet* (n.p., 1600), 97, 163, 92. The pagination goes from 96 back to 90 and is then maintained with occasional misnumberings. In what follows, I will stick to the pagination as given in the text with the repetition shown with the addition of roman numerals and corrected page numbers indicated as these seems easier to chase than the alternative foliation.

⁶ *Briefe Narration*, Diiii.

⁷ *Briefe Narration*, E.

recalled having visited Sommers at Porter's house on Sunday 30 October. He fell into 'a fit of laughing' and then was thrown to the foot of the bed where he rolled into a ball with his head between his legs and bouncing up and down three or four times 'about halfe a yard in height'.⁸ The following day she noted his strength in the failed efforts of about five women to prevent him from beating his limbs on the ground and smashing his head on the floor. On the same day he was sat in a chair and suddenly cast towards the fire about six feet away and, despite his head striking the grate and his hand lying in the fire there were no burns. When the bystanders tried to put him back on the chair they found him exceedingly heavy.⁹ At about the same time he proved very nimble, managing to stretch himself to reach a line from which a cloth was hung as a partition, and to wrap it round his neck in an effort to hang himself before anyone could intervene.¹⁰

The most complete list of early symptoms comes in two letters calling upon Darrell's aid, a process to which I will return shortly. Written on 2 November, Barnaby Evans told 'Brother Darrell' of a more spiritual set of symptoms. The spirit is sometimes 'in one place, sometime in another', possibly a reference to swellings which will become familiar. When the company charge it to depart in the name of the Father 'it tormenteth him, and he shrieth and cryeth', symptoms of which he had no memory upon recovering himself. Sommers had reported visions of the spirit, 'sometimes a mouse, sometimes a dogge', which would encourage him to hurt himself and those who prayed for him, or promising him wealth and 'fyne cloathes' if he would allow the spirit a fortnight's peaceful residence. At the same time Darrell received a letter from Robert Aldridge, the minister from St Mary's, Nottingham, reporting symptoms, some of which Darrell recognised as having Scriptural backing, some he had seen in his previous cases. He spoke with Hugh Wilson,

⁸ Briefe Narration, Ciiii; cf. Darrell, True Narration, 15, 19; A Briefe Apologie Proving the Possession of William Sommers. Written by Iohn Dorrell, a faithfull Minister of the Gospell: but published without his knowledge (n.p., 1599), 14, 37; Triall of Maist Dorrell, Or A Collection of Defences against Allegations not yet suffered to receive convenient answer (n.p., 1599), 28.

⁹ Briefe Narration, D; cf. Darrell, Detection, 163.

¹⁰ Briefe Narration, D.

the messenger and heard more of foaming, casting into the fire and extraordinary strength.¹¹

Barnaby Evans seems to have been central to the diagnosis of diabolical possession. Possible madness or an ague had been considered as causal but as the neighbours of Porter gathered to consider the condition of Sommers the diagnosis of possession seemed a more comprehensive template than the first two models. Evans was curate at St Mary's, a junior post for a cleric with a doctorate which, placed next to his godly inclinations shown, for instance, in the way he addressed Darrell as 'Brother', raises the possibility of him being a bright spark waiting upon a preaching post not necessitating any compromise of godly credentials. He was next door neighbour to Porter and a frequent visitor. When Sommers had movement in his stomach, according to Sommers, Evans, 'coniecturing thereby that some quick thing was in my bellie', raised the possibility of possession. He brought in John Sherratt, the like-minded clerk of St Mary's who had read The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys and measured the symptoms reported there against those shown by Sommers. They went for Robert Aldridge who did not rush to his parishioner's bedside but once he arrived and saw Sommers's fits, 'he gave it out for a certainty I was possessed'. This pronouncement from such a respectable minister seems to have brought more attention, drawing more visitors from a wider social spectrum from town and country to view Sommers.¹²

¹¹ Darrell, Detection, 27-8. It is noteworthy that the lay accounts emphasize the physical symptoms while the clerical ones focus on the spiritual ones. It would be premature to build too much of a thesis on this as evidence of differing perspectives as the lay accounts are from depositions intent on proving the supernatural nature of the symptoms while the clerical ones are pleas for pastoral guidance and the focus is on causation; the purpose of the lay attention to the symptoms needs physical evidence, that of the clerical needs causal evidence.

¹² Samuel Harsnet, A Discovery of the Fraudulent practises of John Darrell (London, 1599), 97. Sommers's statement pointedly declares that Aldridge declined the invitation two or three times. This expression of reluctance makes sense from Harsnet's perspective in that Aldridge was an important voice and a late arrival to common ground with Harsnet. As will become clear, he played a larger role in the dispossession and in terms of the shortness of time between the diagnosis and the letters to Darrell, his reluctance, if true, did not take much persuasion to be overcome.

Sommers had been predicting Aldridge's arrival¹³ and he certainly appeared on 1 November. Thomas Hayes, the minister from Kirkby-in-Ashfield, had come to town to see Sir Charles Cavendish and was intreated by Sommers's mother to see her son. He found him in a fit, cast upon the ground at the name of Jesus with his legs locked in their crooked position. He also noticed a lump moving in one leg, then in the other, moving into his stomach and swelling and then going up into his throat, cheek and near his ear. Hayes took hold of it between his fingers and found it to be 'the same in softnes, and qualitie' as the yolk of an egg. Clearly perturbed, he fetched John Atkinson, the Clerk of the Kitchen to the Willoughby family and effectively their agent in Nottinghamshire, who we will encounter again. Atkinson, an old friend, had experience with 'such as were troubled with melancholies, or temptations' and Hayes wanted his opinion on the possibility of natural causes. Apparently finding none, Hayes then fetched Evans and Aldridge and, in response to 'theyr prayers, and presences', Sommers had more fits, 'giving out words, that it was no disease, but the Divell'.¹⁴

The dating of this appearance is in conflict with Aldridge's own deposition, which claims his first appearance was two days later, but as his letter arrived with that from Evans, dated 2 November, an error in recollection may be surmised.¹⁵ In any case, there were more voices adding to the understanding that Sommers was possessed. The wife of Thomas Gray, a lesser Leicestershire gentleman, had seen Sommers in his fits and had read The most wonderful and true storie. She consulted Mrs Beresford of the family of the minister who offered early guidance to Katherine Wright and Beresford mentioned that the sister of Darrell's wife was resident in Nottingham. Mrs Gray and other gentlewomen including Lady Zouch asked the sister-in-law, Mrs Wallis, to write to him requesting his attention. She said that this would be insufficient but that Darrell would be more likely to respond favourably to a letter with numerous subscriptions. This produced the letter

¹³ Briefe Narration, D; cf. Darrell, True Narration, 17.

¹⁴ Briefe Narration, Ciii.

¹⁵ Briefe Narration, Ciii.

‘framed by Syr Evan (as they call him)’, mentioned above, which was swiftly delivered by Hugh Wilson.¹⁶ Along with this came the letter from Aldridge. Upon these texts and from the conversation with Wilson, Darrell agreed that Sommers was possessed but initially declined the invitation, advising fasting and prayer and that they should call upon someone nearer at hand, naming John Ireton of Kegworth and John Brown of Loughborough as potentials. According to Darrell this was based upon a fear that some might ascribe some special gift to him and hence lessen their appreciation of the true power behind any dispossession, that they ‘would turne both theyre eyes to the Lorde and his ordinance, which is all in all’.¹⁷

In an exchange of written and verbal responses which puts the current postal system to shame, Darrell’s unwillingness was overcome. Brown was away and Ireton recommended Darrell, apparently writing to him himself to encourage him. At the same time the mayor, Peter Clark, spoke to Master Hoult, one of the earl of Huntingdon’s men, asking him to get the earl to write to Darrell. Hoult suggested that one from the mayor would suffice, ‘his place considered’ and so a letter from Clark and some of the aldermen was sent and ‘by theyr importunate letters and messengers he condescended to their desires’. The speed of his conversion from unwillingness to zeal tends to get missed. As the accounts are split between Harsnet’s depiction of Darrell as an ambulance chaser and Darrell et al.’s emphasis on his diffidence we have tended not to notice the frantic exchange. Evans dated his letter 2 November, refusals and pleas flew back and forth and Darrell received ‘allowance’ from ‘two godly & learned men then in Ashby’ and arrived in Nottingham on 5 November.¹⁸

There were further reports of the mobile swellings on the day before and on the day of his arrival. William Hinde recalled a fit in the presence of Robert Aldridge on 4

¹⁶ Harsnet, Discovery, 23, 97; Darrell, Detection, 27.

¹⁷ Darrell, Detection, 28; John Darrell, An Apologie, or Defence of the possession of William Sommers, a yong man of the towne of Nottingham (n.p., 1598), f. 1; Triall, 13, 49; Briefe Narration, B.

¹⁸ Darrell, Detection, 28, 29; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 1; Briefe Narration, B.

November in which there was a swelling in Sommers's neck the size of a 'great walnut' which moved into his cheek, the size of a 'great hasselnut', into his eye when 'the skin of his eye', presumably his eyelid, vexed black'. Hinde had heard accusations of counterfeiting and so grabbed the swelling when it was in his cheek and found that it 'did tremble like as Aspen leafe in a calme winde, and was verie soft'. Either the same day or the next, Richard Mee recalled a swelling in his arms and legs, '(they being naked)' about the size of a walnut. When it moved into his belly it grew to the size of 'a 6. pen: browne lofe' and was too hard for him to press down. Aldridge testified to a similar phenomenon on the third of November, making it plain that Sommers was lying on top of the bedclothes, wearing only his hose. Aldridge could see 'a thing running up his right leg', the size of a mouse. When Aldridge called upon God, it moved into William's belly, swelled his stomach to twice its size, was the size of a fist in his chest, diminishing to a walnut when it moved into his face. Finally, to counter suggestions of it being literally manipulation, he stressed that Sommers was lying on his back with two bystanders restraining his hands the whole time.¹⁹

On the day of Darrell's arrival the fits seem to have become more intense. Milward deposed that he was 'extremelie tormented', with, according to William Aldred, a preacher from Colwick, his belly 'heavinge up' and his mouth drawn 'towards his eares'. Then he lay as if dead for an hour and a half, being senseless, speechless and 'without breath to theyr sight', having become 'cold as Ice, and hands black unnaturalie', the rest of his body being covered. They tried, unsuccessfully, to revive him with 'Aquavitæ, and other comfortable things' and his body was too heavy for them to lift him up. Joan Pie concurred, adding that he lay with his mouth wide open and empty and telling the bystanders, "["]I wil use W:S his tongue, and members for 3 daies["] without moving, or stirring his tongue, or lips in speaking'. As Darrell dismounted his horse, evidently he had been spotted, for Pie rushed

¹⁹ Briefe Narration, Ciiii, Diii, Ciii; cf. Darrell, Detection, 152.

out to tell him of the prolonged period of senselessness. He reassured her that it 'was a mere acte or operation of the Devyll, and that the boye was nothing lesse then either dead or in daunger therof'.²⁰ Pie took Darrell in through the back door with Sommers apparently still unaware of his arrival. In the time between Pie leaving the house and reentering, Sommers recovered, with Milward deposing that his first words were, 'Dorrell comes, Dorrell comes, he will have me out, but I wil come agayne for Nootingham and Lenton are jollie townes for me' or, as Pie phrased it, 'I have but a small tyme to staye, but I will shortlie returne'. Pie reported a similar prediction the night before which, she said, was particularly surprising as the messengers had reported that he was not to come until the next week.²¹ The timing and nature of the prediction was an issue of contention, as Harsnet used it as proof of Darrell having trained Sommers. Darrell claimed that such predictions were made between him having received the first two letters and hearing from the mayor, a claim which looks rather dubious on this evidence. He quibbled about the deposition of Edmund Garland that two or three times before the minister was sent for Garland had heard Sommers in his fits say 'Darrell, Darrel Darrell', being willing to accept the timing which fitted in with his plan but denying that which did not. However, he had a get out clause in that it did not matter if 'it were otherwise then I affirme', as 'it was not *Som.* but the divel, by his tongue that named me', thus laying 'the foundation of that building he since hath erected', the 'accusations of counterfeiting', in effect that Harsnet had been beguiled by 'the subtely of the divell'.²²

Sommers had started a fit just before Darrell's entrance at about 5 in the evening. Any doubts Darrell had were overcome and he assured Sommers that he was possessed and started to 'prepare and stir him up to a sperituall fight against satan'. He explained to

²⁰ Darrell, True Narration, 17; Darrell, Detection, 166; Briefe Narration, D. This understandable calming assurance runs slightly counter to his denial of the accusation that he had said Sommers was possessed before he had seen any fits. He could respond that he merely said that it was an act of the devil rather than possession per se but this is rather casuistical: Darrell, Detection, 2(ii).

²¹ Briefe Narration, E, D. Pie deposed that his face was black 'in a strange manner'; cf. Briefe Apologie, 38.

²² Darrell, Detection, 86, 29; cf. Harsnet, Discovery, 98, 110-17.

the 'manye being present with hym' that it was not Sommers himself that spoke in his fits, but the devil in him and explained the symptoms of possession from Scriptural examples and from his own experience with Katherine Wright, Darling and the Lancashire Seven. He denied, however, that he told the company that these same symptoms would appear in Sommers, that he announced that it was the sins of the people of Nottingham that were being punished rather than Sommers's sins or that such sins would be identified by the gestures Satan enacted through Sommers's body, an important denial for what followed that evening. A broader understanding, consistent with his exegesis of earlier cases and with what we know from interpretations delivered in Nottingham, is that it was the sins of the country in general, rather than solely or particularly those of Nottingham, that were being punished. This fits in with Thomas Porter's later deposition that Darrell 'made a godly exhortation to those that were present, that every man should be careful to looke to his owne waies' for 'this boy is not so much troubled for his owne sinnes, as for the sinnes of the people'.²³

For an hour that night Sommers, with his eyes closed and apparently deaf and dumb, enacted a charade of the variety of earthly sins, values and punishments. This may be an echo of the performance of Margaret Hardman at Cleworth. There were about sixty people present and as Sommers mimed the sins, the audience deciphered them, with Mistress Gray and Lady Zouch noted as those who 'had the most talke, and did especially interprete some of the said signes' although 'many confusedly did interpret the dumb shew', with Darrell more or less in the chair, and a constant background of prayer for Sommers's relief.²⁴ In addition to the depositions of Sommers, Thomas Porter, Robert Cooper, John Sherratt, Mr Bernard, Mistress Gray and Darrell's account, through their

²³ Darrell, *True Narration*, 17-18; id., *Detection*, 92(ii)-93(ii); cf. Harsnet, *Discovery*, 112-5.

²⁴ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 117-9; *Trial*, 50; Darrell, *True Narration*, 18. Although Harsnet gives the impression of an orchestrated performance claiming that Darrell 'did expound them very learnedlye, to signify this or that sinne that raigned in Nott', his following suggestion that Aldridge used the enacted sins as the basis of his sermon the following day accidentally acknowledges the contribution of Mistress Gray and Lady Zouch in that part of his proof for Darrell's contribution is that 'it is not likely that the womens expositions would have carried such credite, excepte M. Darrell himselfe had beene and Actor in them': Harsnet, *Discovery*, 119; cf. 116.

respective perspectives, we have more lengthy coverage from John Atkinson, mentioned earlier, in an account he sent to the Willoughby family. Sommers started with expressions of 'mockinge, mowinge and flowtinge', moving on to the deceits of tailors' practices. Then he followed the manners of 'anticke dancers' with a gesture denoting cuckoldry. The next section was devoted to alehouse culture, the vice of 'quarreling and brawlinge with fighttinge and swearing', gambling and more down-to-earth dancing. Highway robbery and murder followed, with him pretending to pull his boots on to mount his horse and escape. The dubious practices of cobblers led into 'the abuse of viols and other instrumentes' and the 'filthy and horrible sinnes of whordome', both male and female.

His treatment of pride in fashion was similarly trans-gendered. Women were mocked in their devotion to particular vanities in dress, hair and jewellery. Hair was the primary focus for men, with the tricks of barbers in enhancing vain moustaches and beards emphasised. This served as a preface to the perfuming of facial hair and eyebrows and meticulous attention paid to plucking stray nasal and aural hairs. This effort was contrasted to the sluggishness of going to church, pretended piety followed by noisy sleep and sudden wakening, saying, 'God be thanked' and 'Lorde, increase my faith!' in a scoffing manner. Here we have Darrell's only recording intervention, with him ordering Sommers to look at him, examining him and informing the onlookers that 'I feare yt be not William that speaketh'. Sommers fell into great laughter 'that hee hade thought he head deceived the minister'.

Sommers returned his attention to the alehouse with drunkenness and its consequences, mostly brawling, killing and vomiting. Possibly not unrelated was gluttony, leading to more feigned 'spueing and vomyiting after it'. This took him to the circulation of 'spitefull lybeles' and back to fashion, in particular shoes with heels of cork and ungathered hose. He moved on to the tricks of purse-picking, demonstrating the means of doing it and the means of evading detection, and then purse-cutting with the consequent

arrival at the gallows. Burglary was followed by covetousness. The latter had the hoarding of money followed by gambling to increase the lot, its loss and the misery of penury, finishing with the drawing of the bow and striking of the drum, possibly condemning pride, machismo or competitiveness. At this he finished, speaking, presumably with the voice of the devil, 'I must begonne'.²⁵

The following day, Sunday 6 November, Darrell chose not to visit Sommers until three in the afternoon, presumably going to hear Aldridge's aforementioned sermon. Sommers does not seem to have neglected his duties. On his way to church, John Clerk, a shoemaker, having heard of the fits, stopped by Porter's house. There he found Sommers in a fit with a voice saying to Edmund Garland, 'Edward Garland art thou there, how doe thy children, I will have one of them, even the youngest'. Garland confidently answered, 'I defie the Devill: for he can have no power off me nor my children'. When Sommers came to his senses, Clerk saw him getting dressed and under his shirt he saw a swelling the size of a rat which he took hold of, finding it soft 'as a downe pillowe'; it slipped away and Sommers told him it had gone into his leg.²⁶

At three Darrell arrived and his initial aim was to prepare Sommers, the Porters and especially Sommers's family, '(whom that iudgment principally concerneth)' for the following day. Presumably the focus on the Sommers was that Thomas and Ann Porter, and Mrs Gray, were more used to the routine of religious exercises than was Robert Cooper. Part of the preparation was to make the participants more aware of the discourse of possession and Darrell duly ran through the examples from Scripture and his own experience although he denied having made any predictions that the same was to be

²⁵ Darrell stresses that many of the enactments ended with the consequent punishment and that 'at the end of sundrie of these he laughted excedinglie, divers times clapping his handes on his thighes for ioye', probable evidence of the different aims of the accounts, the former for instruction, the latter for entertainment: Darrell, True Narration, 18; HMC, Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton, preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire (London, 1911), 165-7; cf. Harsnet, Discovery, 115-20. Harsnet (119-20) notes of 'a ballade' which went round the town portraying the show although it is not entirely clear whether it was oral, in manuscript or printed.

²⁶ Briefe Narration, E. Garland's Christian name appears indiscriminately as 'Edmund' and 'Edward' in the texts.

expected the following day.²⁷ As evening drew on many more people appeared and by 7, Darrell, William Aldred 'and diverse other ministers' were joined by the mayor and many others. Prayers were made, in which Darrell exhorted 'all such whose hearts GOD should touch with his feare' to prepare themselves for the fasting and prayer which was to begin at seven the following morning. Sommers was given 'litle or no rest from satan afflicting him'. Indeed, he suffered more than he had before. His tongue was apparently withdrawn into his throat with spectators opening his mouth, lighting their view with a candle and seeing nothing but the root of his tongue. Despite this challenge, he managed to repeatedly say 'for corne, for corne', which Darrell interpreted as a condemnation of the 'unsatiable desier of gaine' leading corn traders to raise prices. Some 'well disposed people' spent the time reading and praying but to no avail. The ministers withdrew to discuss the details of the exercise but the fits continued, with Richard Mee and the minister Thomas Westfield reported supernatural symptoms during their watch, with others, between 3 and 6 in the morning. There was a walnut-sized swelling behind his ear and then they heard a voice, not William's natural voice, saying 'that he would have his right eye, & then he would have his left'. At this point the swelling moved into his eye, where it was slightly smaller but the eye became black and only regained its normal colour upon the disappearance of the swelling.²⁸

The clerics, and some laity, had withdrawn to work out a more detailed plan for the exercise. Darrell asked Aldridge, Aldred and Nicholas Hallam, the rector of Trowell, to join him in the ministration of word and prayer, primarily, he claimed, to lessen the risk of people perceiving that he had any greater gift for dispossession than 'the rest of my bretheren'. Not running contrary to this but a more politic motivation may have been to keep local clergy involved to lessen the danger of the new show in town alienating the established acts. They accepted the invitation and Aldred was chosen to be the first on the

²⁷ Darrell, True Narration, 18; Harsnet, Discovery, 120-3; Darrell, Detection, 92(ii).

²⁸ Briefe Narration, Ciiii; Darrell, Detection, 18-19; Briefe Narration, Ciiii, Diii.

bill.²⁹ What may have been a related issue was also discussed: the location of the fast. Some (unnamed) discussants saw St Mary's as the obvious site but Darrell was against this. According to deponents cited by Harsnet, Anne Porter, Nicholas Hallam and Ralph Shute, the vicar of St Peter's, Nottingham, were outraged, although we cannot be sure whether their outrage was felt at the time, encouraged or invented by Harsnet. Darrell's feeling was 'That if it shoulde be kept there, there would be much attributed to the holinesse of the place: and wishing rather, that the place of his dispossession might be in the field, that so all the people might behold it'. The argument that he expressed in his own writing later was that it was another matter of vainglory that to hold the exercise in the church was to almost be getting above himself. To go beyond this is more possibility than proof, although there is a strong element in Gibson's suggestion of the centrality of the contested ecclesiastical and social geography of Nottingham. With St Mary's as the wealthier parish and the home of the powers that be, there was a risk of alienating the parishioners of St Peter's, not least with their vicar party to the decision.³⁰ In addition, Darrell may have been hoping to avoid the risk of credit being given to the institution as well as, or to the detriment of, the exercise and the divine mercy as the cause of any dispossession. On a personal level, he may have preferred for the fast not to have been held on Aldridge's home ground, whether that was feared as detrimental to Darrell's or God's reputation. In any case, the discussion led to something of a compromise, choosing 'a narrow low roome', or, as Darrell put it, 'the next convenient and seemly roome, to the place of the boyes abode', that is, in the home of George Small, a layman whose later defence of Darrell showed he had more common ground with Darrell than Aldridge, who was quicker to jump ship.³¹

The following morning William Langford, a surgeon and one of the godly, arrived at Thomas Porter's house. He found William Sommers on his knees in prayer joining with

²⁹ Briefe Narration, Ciii; Darrell, Detection, 19.

³⁰ Harsnet, Discovery, 47-8; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 30; Gibson, Possession, 91.

³¹ Harsnet, Discovery, 48; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 30.

some company. He approached some of those present and quietly told them that Sommers was to be taken immediately to Small's house. Sommers fell straight into a fit, being 'cast sodenlie thwart upon the bed' and proving very difficult to move. It is not clear whether this was because he was thrashing about or if he was unnaturally heavy, although Langford said that he had 'onely the guiding of his head' but 'could not continuallie keepe it by his strength' thus suggesting the latter. It took six or seven to carry him to Small's, while he gave 'strang and fearfully scrikings', as they carried him in and laid him on a couch.³²

His fits seem to have continued with little respite through the day. His body was swollen, he 'was tossed up and doune' with remarkable strength. His mouth was drawn awry and his 'face and neck distorted' now to the left and then to the right, almost right round. He gnashed his teeth, stuck his tongue out and at other times it was 'turned backwardes into his throat' with his mouth so wide open that it could be seen from a distance. His eyes stared out and his mouth often stayed gaping. He wallowed and foamed 'in such an abundant manner, that the foame did hang downe from his mouth unto his brest', notwithstanding the fact that he had no sustenance from six in the morning to five in the evening and that one was appointed to continually wipe it up. By 3 p.m., when one curious observer managed to get close enough to see, having arrived in the throng at nine, he was seen to be grovelling on his face on the bed. The observer, John Pare, reported 'a certayne swelling or rising under his clothes to the bignes of a mouse'. It moved around his body and was accompanied by a knocking from diverse places at once. Possibly it was the same or a similar incident described when he was thrashing around: when the buttons on his shirt opened and there was 'a rising, or swelling in bignes of a goose eg, or a halfe penie white loafe' which moved up his chest and into his throat where it made him gag without actually vomiting. It disappeared when he was suddenly thrown

³² Briefe Narration, Dii; Darrell, True Narration, 19.

over. He only spoke intelligibly twice, once when he cried 'in a great voyce, corne'. He spent more time crying out 'in a strange and supernaturall manner'; sometimes he 'roared fearfully lyke a beare, and cryed like a swyne' or, as Langford put it, 'he did scribe with 3. severall voyces so hideouslie as they were not like anie humane creature', one like a bear, one like a bull 'and the third a verie small voyce, and such as this Examinant thinketh cannot be counterfeyted'.³³

All these symptoms appeared before a gathering of an estimated 150 people, reported to be silent for most of the time. It seems that Darrell was accompanied by Aldridge, Aldred and one other minister, presumably Hallam.³⁴ Contrary to what seems to have been agreed the night before, it was Aldridge who began and, after prayer, gave an interpretation of Hosea 4:1-2, effectively a call to worship, a call needed because God has a controversy with the people of the land on account of their lack of knowledge, truth and mercy and their swearing, lying, killing and adultery, perhaps developing references to Sommers's smorgasbord of sins two nights earlier. He was followed by Darrell giving a disquisition of Mark 9:14-30, on a possessed child with many symptoms shared by Sommers. Darrell 'delivered the doctrine of possession, and applied accordinglie'. The disciples failed to cast the devil out because, as Jesus explained, this sort can only come forth by fasting and prayer. It seems that when he got to verse 23, 'all things are possible to him that beleeveth', the devil spoke through Sommers, saying, 'thow lyst'.³⁵

There is no record of Hallam delivering anything so it is not clear whether Aldred was the third or fourth leader of prayer.³⁶ He preached on confession and repentance, calling upon those present to confess and call upon God's mercy for themselves and

³³ Darrell, True Narration, 19; Briefe Narration, Dii, E; cf. John Darrell, The Doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniackes out of the Word of God, following on from True Narration, new pagination, 7. The opening in his doublet may have been during Darrell's treatment of Mark 9 as Sommers testified to ripping open his doublet at that time: Harsnet, Discovery, 124. The nearest we get to definition of what 'wallowing' consists of is in Darrell, Doctrine, 7: 'tremble or roule him selfe with his bodye stretched out to the full length'.

³⁴ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 2; Briefe Narration, B.

³⁵ Darrell, True Narration, 19; Triall, 51.

³⁶ Sommers suggested that there were two sermons, one by Aldridge and one by Darrell: Harsnet, Discovery, 124.

Sommers. His conviction was such that he made his own confession and broke down in tears. It seems others were given the opportunity to do so themselves, for Darrell mentions Robert Cooper crying as he confessed his sins.³⁷ Towards the early evening, the baton seems to have returned to Darrell and Sommers to have gone into the state of apparent death. The preacher was holding forth on Matt. 4:26, 'then the spirit cryed, rent him sore, and came out, and he was as one dead', insomuch as many sayd he is dead'. At this point Sommers was 'rent sore indeed' and cried aloud. The audience were sufficiently moved by the sight, 'affected in the bowele of compassion towards hym' that they broke their silence and cried as one for divine mercy. This continued for fifteen minutes, with five men holding him on the bed and he seeming to vomit, until he was violently cast so his face lay down to the ground at the foot of the bed, his feet at the head of the bed '& thus he lay as if he had ben dead for a season'.³⁸ At this point, the account in this text of the dispossession ends rather abruptly as Darrell's attention turns to the issue of repossession, with a preface to what will follow. That night, as Sommers lay in bed, 'a thing like a rat', patted on his mouth, presumably seeking entrance, and finding none, crept down his body 'untill it came to his privye partes, from whence it vanished away'. As with the Lancashire Seven the spirit visibly appeared and sought its 'former habitation', understood as alluding to Matt. 12:43-5 and suggesting that efforts at repossession began as soon as the spirit was cast out.³⁹

Ironically, there were depositions from Garland, Mistress Gray and Thomas Porter, as well as from Sommers and Robert Cooper that the threat of repossession was Darrell's topic as soon as he finished his sermon, although he denied this was the case. He was said to have given an account of the various 'similitudes, as of a Rat, a Catte, a Mouse,

³⁷ Darrell, Detection, 166-7.

³⁸ Darrell, True Narration, 20, The text is unclear as to whether the unitalicised section refers to Sommers, is merely the completion of the text Darrell was treating, or both, with Sommers fitting so completely the Scriptural model he has almost *become* Scripture. As Darrell put it in his testimony at Lambeth, 'the worde and the worke of God concurred together': Harsnet, Discovery, 125.

³⁹ Darrell, True Narration, 20.

&c.’ in which the spirit attempted its re-entry to the Lancashire Seven.⁴⁰ His preferred version of the immediate response seems to have been the desired result of the exhortations to repentance. Robert Cooper told of the company crying out ‘Lord have mercy upon us: Lord have mercy upon us’, as Darrell raised his hands high during the climactic moment and that there were none but ‘they quaked & trembled, & wept most bitterly’. Some confessed their sins to the throng and Darrell reported that ‘many were stricken with feare & and came unto me, confessing the same, and craving mine advice’. This heightened need for pastoral advice and enhanced market for preaching continued over the next week and was part of the impetus for Darrell being offered a preaching post in Nottingham at the end of that week.⁴¹

At the end of the fast on 7 November Sommers was taken back to Thomas Porter’s house. About three days later he moved in with his stepfather, Robert Cooper. Darrell was said to have emphasised the dangers of repossession, setting out, possibly again, the experiences of Wright, Darling et al. and the various similitudes adopted by the devil in his approaches. Cooper was warned to keep a close eye on Sommers for the fear of demonic threats and promises driving him to cast himself into the fire, to hang himself or attempt suicide in some other way. Within three or four days he seemed to be troubled again. He mentioned a black dog offering him gold and ginger and a mouse seeking entrance along with offers of ‘velvet breeches and a Satten doublet’. In this account from the later depositions, Cooper reported a remarkable variety of guises: from a general ‘rough ugly beast’ through being ‘like a cocke-chicken, Like a Crane, and like a Snake, like an Angell, like a Toade, like a Newte, like a set of violles, and Dancers’, and finally ‘with a fowre-forked cappe on his head’. With these temptations came fits with swellings and the sound of knocking. According to Garland, ‘I have found him doing the same fittes, as wallowing,

⁴⁰ Harsnet, Discovery, 128-9. Other extracts from the same depositions, immediately following these, from Garland, Porter, Cooper and Hallam are less clear in the timing, either being non-specific or suggesting it was over the next couple of days: *ibid.*, 130-1.

⁴¹ Harsnet, Discovery, 126-7.

tombling, staring, foaming, and the rest which I have seen him before to doe in his earlier possession.⁴² Robert Aldridge reported fits on 17 and 18 November where Sommers showed supernatural strength, 'swelling, stritching, roaring, and yelling verie fearfullie', with gnashing and foaming'. When he returned the following morning to hear how his progress was, he heard knocking from the parlour and rushed in, finding Sommers on his back, 'with his mouth drawne awrie', and his eyes staring. Aldridge knelt to pray and heard the knocking again, 'under his knees as he thought'. The set was completed with the shapes of 'five kitlings' under the coverlet and the bed clothes at the foot of the bed moving independently.⁴³

In itself, this repossession was not a bad thing.⁴⁴ It was not necessarily the source of conflict and it seems that it started without raising the stakes too much. The potential for conflict raised more substantially when the issue of causation shifted. In different ways and at different stages, witches had appeared in Cleworth and Burton as well as with the Throckmorton family as the secondary means of possession. It is not entirely clear what prompted Sommers to start naming witches as Robert Cooper mentions that when he told Darrell this had started Darrell responded with similar examples from Scotland along with the Throckmortons.⁴⁵ That much said, if Darrell was not the progenitor of the identification of witches he was not reluctant in its occurrence and pursuit.

The models Sommers later actually named as those with which he was tutored in terms of his behaviour were the Lancashire Seven and Thomas Darling. Once again, in itself, this did not necessarily lead to conflict but it raised the potential because it involved the local judiciary in a way that dispossession on its own did not. The problem arose because of the particular people accused. Reading Harsnet's account as if unaware of

⁴² Harsnet, Discovery, 132-3, 134-5. There is a longer list of potential similitudes with some common ground in Sommers's account of some tips for repossession he claimed Darrell gave him: *ibid.*, 101.

⁴³ Briefe Narration, Ciii.

⁴⁴ The texts are not entirely clear on Sommers's state. Later he was reported to have been repossessed in the middle of January which suggests that this phase was obsession, assault by the devil from the outside without the actual inhabitation of possession.

⁴⁵ Harsnet, Discovery, 138.

what was to come, it is noteworthy that ministers and laypeople like Robert Aldridge, Nicholas Hallam and Robert Cooper, later to be adversaries or at least among the deponents against his interests, do not seem to have expressed reservations to begin with.⁴⁶ Sommers started naming witches in his fits between 22 and 25 November and the numbers rose quickly, taking it to an unprecedented scale. Within three days, he identified Alice Freeman, Thomas Groves, William Bend and his wife, Widow Boot, Millicent Horseley and her sister, Widow Higgitt and his own aunt Else.⁴⁷ When they had been named, the suspects were brought to Sommers and the expectation was, if he or she was indeed a witch, that Sommers would have an intense fit as s/he approached, 'being hoysted up and doune' on the bed', lay still as though dead when they were close to him and then return to torment when they left or just turned their backs on him. This was the experience when Aldred brought 'widdow Else of Carleton' to Cooper's house: 'Upon her comming, the boy grew to increase in his fitte: but when she came neere, and that he saw her, he became quiet'. Once the suspects had seen the magistrate and been incarcerated he spoke of them no more, an established tradition where the godly authorities effectively contained the powers of witchcraft.⁴⁸

Robert Cooper testified that upon naming, the suspect would be sent for, tested and if the right reaction occurred, taken to prison. Darrell asked the mayor to make inquiry through the town as to whether there were any reputed to be witches thereabouts. Harsnet interprets this as a witch hunt with at least the implication that Darrell was conducting a judicial process in bringing the suspects to Sommers. While Darrell has his own concerns in his explanation it should be considered. The difficulty he identified was that the detection was being done by Satan, Satan of course being the Father of Lies and,

⁴⁶ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 138, 140.

⁴⁷ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 102, 140-1; Darrell, *Detection*, 109-10. The figures are not quite clear and the texts do not make a clear distinction between those who were accused, imprisoned or put on trial, with the general estimate being around six or seven although the names given here come to nine. There is, for instance, one Mrs Morris named and suspected, but not heard of again, elsewhere, there are seven (unnamed) from Nottingham, three from towns adjoining and others from further off: Harsnet, *Discovery*, 251-2; Darrell, *An Apologie*, ff. 37-8.

⁴⁸ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 102, 140-1, 252; Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 37.

naturally, not to be trusted. The intention was to test the possibility of them being witches rather than to act as Satan's agent in spoiling the reputation or worse of innocent townsfolk. Or, to put it another way, to see if there was already consensus within the town that saw the individual as dubious, if they had any sort of track record. Aldridge later questioned any sense that Sommers had 'extraordinary knowledge' because 'he named none for witches, but such as were commonly reputed so before'. Without wanting to paint Darrell as a 'saintly' persecutor of witches, it should be recalled that there was difficulty with getting a prosecution of the accused in Katherine Wright's case probably as a consequence of the problem of the value of diabolic testimony.⁴⁹ Hence Darrell tried to gain evidence of earlier reputations and sometimes earlier charges, first in private and then in the town hall, in public, or to conduct an examination alongside a JP. He accompanied William Aldred and a Master Perkins when the latter, a JP, went to nearby Bridgeford to examine Millicent Horseley after Sommers had named her. She seems to have protested that she was a cunning woman, had hurt nobody and helped many (a defence which would stand with most people but, to a godly minister, the source of such powers made them as much an agent of Satan as any other witch) and said one of her 'good prayers'. In addition to the already established symptoms, this particular incident provided one dateable occurrence of 'supernatural knowledge'. Joan Pie told how at one o'clock that day he said, 'Now they have her, and are examining her: and she sayth she doth all by prayer, & nowe she is saying her prayer' which no-one present knew of or had any means of knowing.⁵⁰

While the identification of witches as secondary causes of possession could serve as a useful source of godly propaganda, it was, as noted, raising the risk of conflict beyond 'mere' dispossession. The resultant questioning of Sommers and, eventually Darrell, came

⁴⁹ Harsnet, Discovery, 140-1; Darrell, Detection, 109-10; Harsnet, Discovery, 252.

⁵⁰ Darrell, Detection, 110; Briefe Narration, D. Cf. Harsnet, Discovery, 249-50 where Sommers's later version of the story explains it away as partly embellishment by Darrell, a lie or confusion as far as Pie was concerned and a fabricated vision on his part by calculating the distance to Horseley, the time it would take to get there and her most likely response.

on two fronts. Harsnet raised his eyebrows at the credit acquired by Darrell by 'this new forgery of Somers pretended repossession' and noted that 'manie of the wiser sort, that were not possessed with the giddie humor of novelties, (covered forsooth with zeale and sighings), did laugh this to scorne'. In Darrell's disdainful identification of the supposed wiser sort he also accidentally revealed the consequences of moving from the more tightly defined area of divinity into the judicial arena of witchcraft accusations. That this brought Sommers to the attention of the wider authorities is seen by two of the 'wiser sort'. The first was John Walton, the arch-deacon of Derbyshire, the second an unidentified Master Sales. In Darrell's estimation they fell short of the proper measurement of wisdom in that they were both non-resident clergymen and that Sales was 'guilty' of setting up a maypole and encouraging dancing on the Sabbath the previous summer, criteria that were not, of course, shared by those who did not share his mindset. On the local level, the greatest hostility came after the identification of Alice Freeman as a witch, as she was a cousin of the alderman William Freeman, albeit a relative with an established reputation as, at least, a ne'er-do-well. In fact her poor reputation may well have helped the particular direction of Freeman's efforts to rescue her. It was easier to denigrate the credibility of Sommers as a witness than to defend her on the grounds of her established record. As an alderman, he brought his colleagues, Richard Morey, Richard Hurt and the town clerk, William Gregory, with him and, perhaps hoping to defuse established rivalries within the corporation, the mayor, Peter Clark. Similarly, that Darrell could castigate Freeman as 'being in hart a papist', supposedly evinced by his absence from communion for eleven years, Gregory as his 'popish mate', Morey as 'reputed to be unsound and popish' and Clark, slightly more charitably described as 'a man very easy because of his simplicity' would cut little ice with unsympathetic readers.⁵¹

⁵¹ Harsnet, Discovery, 151; Darrell, Detection, 116-7, 120-1; cf. Darrell, An Apologie, f. 38 and, on her reputation, 40.

There may be signs of unease among Darrell's clerical colleagues in that there were later reports of testing the reliability of bringing the suspects to Sommers as 'proof' of their guilt. The first is from Sommers's own testimony. When Widow Boot was brought, he 'did shew myselfe to be greatly troubled, both at her comming in, and at her going away, as my manner was'. Some among the company, less than convinced, apparently smuggled her back in 'twise or thrice secretly under one of their cloakes' and he did not react, thereby revealing his fraudulence.⁵² When one woman was named, she 'was closely brought in for an experiment' by Nicholas Hallam without letting anyone know and Sommers made no reaction. Hallam suspected the extent of his access to special awareness when he asked Sommers during a fit whether one suspect could see and he mistakenly said she could. Similarly, after a proper reception for his Aunt Else, Aldridge, 'purposing to make triall, whether he dissembled in that point or no', took her away and returned with her hidden behind him. Finding Sommers well, he chatted and then stepped aside, revealing his guest, at which Sommers fell into a belated fit. There is some difficulty in the level of trust to be granted to these accounts. All three were given at the Lambeth trials and reservations might be held regarding Sommers, as we will see. Aldridge's account is interesting although the level of his disenchantment with the affair should be cautiously accepted as his testimony at the first Commission at Nottingham was far less critical. Hallam's suspicions may have gone back to this period; while Darrell drew attention to the changes in the depositions made for the different Commissions, Hallam is omitted and rendered as untrustworthy because at this time he had joined with William Freeman as one who 'gave it out that So. was a counterfeyt'. The critical (and unanswerable) question is whether the conviction of fraud produced the story or the experiment produced the conviction.⁵³

⁵² Harsnet, Discovery, 143-4

⁵³ Harsnet, Discovery, 252-3; Darrell, Detection, 104-7.

The impact of any suspicion or discomfort with the accusations was not immediate. Thomas Gray, the minor gentleman whose wife was influential at the beginning, testified of fits on 3 December at Cooper's house. Sommers lay on the bed, with his hands and feet being held by several people. Gray had been less involved than his wife and had heard about his earlier symptoms but part of the purpose of this visit was hoping for 'some manifest token' to aid 'his better understanding of the truth in that behalfe'. As soon as he prayed for such confirmation he noticed something moving under the coverlet. He asked what it was and when told it was Sommers's foot others pointed out that 'We have his feete here, and do hold them'. At this Gray took hold of the lump, felt it move and then deflate, 'like as a bladder being blowne full of winde falleth together after it is pricked'. Then it reappeared on Sommers's other side, moving under the coverlet.⁵⁴

The fits seem to have lessened for about five weeks after 6 December. Sommers later testified that some cited the example of Agnes Brigges vomiting pins and then being shown to be a counterfeit. Harsnet claimed that Darrell refuted this comparison and preached endlessly on repossession and the focus on devils 'so troubled his auditorie' that they voiced their boredom to his face. Darrell, however, responded that he had indeed preached a couple of sermons on Matt 12:43-5, that the said complaints were directed at his sermons on the law, with their preference being love and charity, and that, in any case, those who complained were two or three of the 'cheif frendes to counterfeyting', men 'not favouring of the spirit'.⁵⁵

While Sommers was having a quiet period, Darrell was not left with nothing to do. Shortly before 16 December Alice Freeman visited Cooper's house. It does not appear that this was one of the summons to test Sommers's reaction; if it was this would be surprising in this period of inactivity. She was, in any case, understandably unhappy with the accusations circulating. She fell into a row with Mary Cooper, Sommers's sister, and

⁵⁴ Briefe Narration, Dii-Diii.

⁵⁵ Harsnet, Discovery, 144-5; Darrell, Detection, 113. This runs counter to Gibson, Possession (95) where she accepts Harsnet's citation of Darrell's admission at Lambeth of six or seven sermons.

Mary called her a witch. Shortly after, possibly the same night, Mary felt something stir within her and within a week or thereabouts, 'shee had a belly as bigg as if shee had bene 20 weekes gonne with child', a symptom attested to by Robert Aldridge. Sometimes she would have pains in her belly or chest and at times the swelling would disappear, only to return on other days. She lactated, sometimes producing milk, other times water, and shared her brother's symptom of being ice cold. On occasion the inverse of the swelling appeared, with a trough appearing in the middle of her stomach. 'Out of her belly hath bene h[e]ard a loud whurping, also a noyse like unto the whurring of a cat'. She had fits, showing extraordinary strength, complete lack of feeling, and supernatural knowledge, 'telling of divers thinges done a good way off[f] her, and at the same instant they were done'. One named instance was her prediction of the return of her long-absent husband, two or three days before his actual arrival, he having been at King's Lynn unbeknown to the company. Along with this came visions. Most nights she would have an apparition of Alice Freeman, sometimes engaging in conversations with her. Sometimes she was also visited by Widow Boot and the two apparitions would take her out of bed and she would mime making a fire; 'it may be thereby prognosticated ther burning, if they be such as wee have cause to feare', despite the fact that, if found guilty they would be hanged rather than burnt.⁵⁶

About 14 February Mary was joined in her torments by William. Some of his fits were echoes of Thomas Darling with Darrell's tuition, according to Harsnet. In one fit Sommers said, 'hee fel and I caught him', and Darrell explained that this was proof that he was now repossessed. In another he said, 'the saide stone is softe and the bolder, and flint is hard', which Darrell explained was a reference to the hard hearted nature of some of the magistrates in being so slow to credit God's work and the more receptive nature of

⁵⁶ Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 38; Darrell, *Detection*, 196; *Triall*, 24. It may have been at this point that she was accused of murdering Mary's child by witchcraft, one of the charges brought against her at the assizes and, given the symptom of Mary's that gained the greatest attention, typical of the inversion/perversion of maternal and female ideals associated with witches: Darrell, *Detection*, 109-10; cf. Harsnet, *Discovery*, 321.

others. Finally, he said, 'he that runnes on the Ice, let him take heed, least he slippe' and 'he that standes on a hil, let him tumble downe, and he will be the sooner at the bottome', but there was too much noise for the witness to hear the exposition.⁵⁷

While Darrell does not engage with this account other than in his general dismissal of the allegation of tuition, there are earlier, dateable accounts of fits. As depositions to the Commission in Nottingham the emphasis concentrates on the physical symptoms impossible to feign. On 17 February William Langford and Thomas Gray's servant were restraining Sommers in a fit and Langford found him senseless and cold, and could not find a pulse, despite the exhibition of extraordinary strength. He also mentioned that he heard Sommers 'make rime of the Scriptures' and sing in a strangely small voice beyond his capacity out of his fits. On the same day, John Wood of Lenton visited in the company of friends to see how the fits matched the reports he had heard. He found four men struggling to restrain Sommers, and, being suspicious, pitched in but found it impossible, losing his hat and cloak in the efforts of the next hour but, to his surprise discovered that all this made Sommers neither pant nor sweat and without 'anie rednes in his cheekes'. The whole time the possessed had his mouth and eyes tightly closed.⁵⁸

The following day the gentleman John Strelly similarly responded to reports of the repossession and found Sommers in a fit during a session attended by Darrell and Aldred. Four men, one of them Strelly, could not restrain him and once again Sommers neither sweated nor breathed heavily. When Strelly returned two days later Sommers seemed well until someone exhorted him 'out of the word of God', whereupon he was thrown from the place where he sat to 'the furthest post of the chimneie' with such violence that they thought his neck was broken. He proved unnaturally heavy to move but they managed to lay him, still in a trance, upon the bed. There his neck 'being doubled under him', 'tormented in his inward parts, with one of his legs being of a verie massie weight', Strelly

⁵⁷ Harsnet, Discovery, 103; Darrell, Detection, 200(ii). This is the second of two page 200s; returning to normal pagination on the following page.

⁵⁸ Briefe Narration, Dii-Diii, Diii-Diiii.

saw the mobile swellings. There was something the size of a walnut moving around his body and into his face. After a period of recovery he was suddenly flung towards the fire without any harm, then 'foaming, wallowing, gnashing his teeth, shrieking, roaring, and seeming to be stranglie tormented in his bodie with the same swelling through his bodie, and face as before uttering in his trance divers strange speaches, his mouth wide open his tongue drawne into his throate'. He was silent when his tongue was retracted although there were 'other things which be nowe out of memorie'. Unfortunately Strelly fails to tell us anything about the speeches but Darrell mentions the same day with Sommers giving 'many sententious speaches' and the examples fit in with those given by Sommers's own testimony.

I bayted my hooke often, and at last I catcht him. Heere I was before, and heere I am againe, and heere I must stay, though it be but for a short tyme. I leade them to drinck, carouse, and quaffe, I make them to sweare. I have leave given mee to doe what I will for a time. What is wightier than a king in his owne land? A king I am in whome I raigne, heere I am king for a time.⁵⁹

The combination of three factors made possession more confrontational, more fascinating, and likely to be drawing in wider audiences with different agendas. The naming of witches, and the particular witches who were named, has been noted. The spreading of rumours and allegations about fraudulence meant that the number of those making visits with as much questioning curiosity as godly intent was likely to increase. It may have been noted that some of the witnesses cited above came to see for themselves what they had heard from friends and family. Mary Cooper's symptoms in themselves, the physical ones, the apparitions and performances and the conversations with the apparitions, and supernatural knowledge matched, possibly topped those of her brother with the exception of his enactment of sin. There is a possibility that some of his more

⁵⁹ Briefe Narration, Diiiii; Darrell, Doctrine, 10 recte 12. It is likely that 'wightier' is a typographical error for 'mightier'.

extreme later performances and some of his undateable ones may have been, on some level, almost competitive. In addition, the fact that it was, upon his repossession, a double act must have added to the attraction. An important part of this was that for a few days around 20 February they had alternate fits. When her fits ended his began immediately and when his ended, 'hers began presently in the twinkling of an eye, notwithstanding they were in severall roomes'.⁶⁰

The most public dimension to the speculation surrounding the possession, and one which many people must have wanted to see and probably express opinions about, was the potential pregnancy associated with Mary's swellings. The variable swelling first appeared in the middle of December and lasted until the final third of February. At times it was the size of that of a woman halfway through a pregnancy and would switch from being very large to scarcely being noticeable, very quickly; it was initially very soft, then becoming hard, then soft again. Through this time 'midwife after midwife and neighbour weomen were called in and sent for' with the only consensus being that it was strange. Towards the end she seemed to be going into labour which lasted for two or three days and put her in such a state that her attendants despaired for her life, 'causing the bell to be toled for her'. She did not give birth but Darrell mentions, rather gruesomely, 'that lumpes of flesh came from her' that were taken to a physician who said that she could not live. However throughout and after she was up and about and understandably very confused.⁶¹

These conditions of crowd-attracting symptoms, mysterious dramas and freakshows and heuristically attractive demonic behaviour continued until 24 February. Then came a swift switch in fortunes. Shortly before, one Sterland of nearby Swenton had been in Nottingham at the market but returned home very sick and quickly died of what a physician said was 'bastard plurisie' which consists of a dry cough and pain from

⁶⁰ Triall, 24; Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 39,

⁶¹ Darrell, *Detection*, 197-8; Darrell, *An Apologie*, ff. 38, 39; cf. Harsnet, *Discovery*, 317-8.

aggravated muscles between the ribs.⁶² In his deathbed scene he told his wife and others present that when he had been in the market Sommers had trodden on his heel and thereby bewitched him. This suggestion went through the gossip mills with some success although Mrs Sterland scotched the rumours and it fell away. We know that William Freeman and William Gregory visited London on unspecified business around the middle of February.⁶³ Since spreading allegations of fraudulence had not been completely successful, when Freeman and Gregory returned from London they saw this as another, possibly complementary tactic. The widow was brought to Freeman's house with some neighbours and seem to have encouraged the perception that the bastard pleurisy was started with Sommers's bewitchment. She repeated the accusation at the town hall before the mayor and aldermen, charging him with felony and he was duly arrested. He was imprisoned in St John's, the town bridewell, with his stepfather and/or his uncle Randolph Milner providing bail and guaranteeing his appearance at the assizes.⁶⁴ He seems to have been released but under the close custodianship of Nicholas Shepherd and John Cooper. Harsnet gives the impression that Sommers voluntarily moved to St John's because he was weary of the counterfeiting, promising John Cooper that he would be quiet 'if he might get out of M. Darrells fingers, and be at S. Johns'. Darrell's response is almost dismissive, making it clear that St John's was a house 'where vagrant and ydle persons are sent and kept very straight to worke' hardly an attractive option for someone with Sommers's established record of the easier pleasures of life.⁶⁵

What emerged from Sommers's time in the keeping of Shepherd and Cooper was a confession to counterfeiting possession. The manner in which he came to make the

⁶² If Sterland was sufficiently wealthy to call a physician it may have been against his interests as bastard pleurisy was sometimes treated with venesection, endless bleeding to try to purge the sickness.

⁶³ Darrell, Detection, 131-3. There is a possibility, no more, that part of their business was to recruit assistance to their cause. While at this stage it can be no more than a guess, they would find, eventually, common ground with those whose interests it served to discredit Darrell as well as Sommers. There is no evidence to suggest that they made efforts to reveal the former as Sommers's tutor; indeed, as we will see, there is evidence to the contrary.

⁶⁴ Harsnet, Discovery, 149; Darrell, Detection, 131-2; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 8; Briefe Apologie, 17.

⁶⁵ Harsnet, Discovery, 152; Darrell, Detection, 117-8.

confession, as presented in the tracts in defence of Darrell, some of the depositions at the subsequent Commission and only partly contested by Harsnet, is revealing. An apparition of a dog came to him and offered a bag of gold if he said he was a counterfeit; if he did not either he would be hanged or the dog would tear him in pieces. Then 'he would come to me like a Mouse, & would helpe me'. Then an ass appeared and threatened that if he would not affirm his fraudulence 'hee would cast me into the well'. 'Thus a new stipulation being betwene them, the Devill entred'.⁶⁶ In each of these accounts the demoniac threats and temptations are followed by Nicholas Shepherd telling William that if he was to have another fit, 'he would fetch a paire of knipknaps and a rope, and he would make me confesse'. Then Shepherd was joined by John Cooper and they told him that if he said he was a counterfeit the mayor and the aldermen would give him £10 and 'I should set up any trade that I would'.⁶⁷ The combination of demonic temptation and intimidation with human threats of torture and bribery was, from Darrell's perspective, an important accommodation to the explanation of what had happened and what was to happen later. If Sommers could be induced to stop his fits simply on the basis of threats, no matter how attractive this option would seem, this would be of little help to Darrell. It would suggest human agency in the fits, that Sommers's will would be effectual in their prevention. Once Satan is part of the plan it adds two things. First, this explains how Sommers could seem to be free from torments while he had confessed his fakery. Satan was gaining nothing from the perception that Sommers was possessed; in fact, he could see that before the affliction was contested, Nottingham was acquiring sermons and an appetite for godly reform. By refraining from exercising his powers in Sommers for a while and later by enabling him to have fits upon command and, as importantly, to desist from them when he was told, this

⁶⁶ Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 8; cf. Darrell, *Detection*, 122, 127, 130; *Briefe Apologie*, 6, 17; *Briefe Narration*, B where the mouse threatened that if he would not let him re-enter him he would be hanged; if he 'would yeeld to him, he could save him'.

⁶⁷ Darrell, *Detection*, 127. Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 8 adds a whip to the pincers; *Briefe Apologie*, 18 feels the need to make it clear that Shepherd and Cooper were 'two most lewd and evil disposed persons'. *Briefe Narration*, B contracts it to 'howe the Devill and also certayne persons had advised him to saie, that he was but a counterfeyt and what promises they made unto him'.

made the demonstration of counterfeiting much more credible. Who could be a better assistant for feigning the supernatural than the Father of Lies? Finally, it provided an opportunity to sully the naysayers by the company they kept: these 'were fit instrumentes for Sathan to worke by'; the scheme to discredit the possession and dispossession could be seen as an example of how 'the Devill and his agents conspire in one complott against this mighty worke of the Lorde Iesus'.⁶⁸

The short term impact of the confession was a competition over its nature. Sommers wrote a letter to Darrell, pleading to be left alone and confessing to his counterfeiting. He explained that he had learned the tricks of his trade before Darrell's arrival by general chat about possession cases and had broadened his repertoire since his arrival by listening attentively to Darrell's disquisition of possession as he, Sommers, lay completely sentient during his fits. The letter advised Darrell that it was best to let it go and warned that the more he meddled the worse it was for his credibility. The tone was apologetical, almost embarrassed, with Darrell more in the role of gullible straight man than tutor and conductor of the charade and no sense of him as the mastermind behind the scheme. With access to Sommers limited and any control over his voice or at least the interpretation of his voice, gone, Darrell later confessed to employing one powerful means of countering the new understanding of William's condition: the pulpit. He told his congregation that not only was Sommers repossessed in body as before but now his soul was possessed. His proof for this was that Sommers's confession ran counter to his own conscience and contributed to 'the dishonor of God, & hurt of his Church'.⁶⁹

One testimony survives giving evidence of the unsettled perceptions consequent upon the conflicting voices. John Wood, who had seen Sommers in his fits, heard of the confession and decided to 'make triall whether he counterfeited, or not'. He thought that if Sommers had been faking then he would remember Wood's contribution to the session at

⁶⁸ Darrell, *Detection*, 122; *Briefe Apologie*, 6.

⁶⁹ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 185-7.

which he was present. He visited Sommers, accompanied by a neighbour, Mr Forster, 'a verie honest man, and one fearing God', with Shepherd and Cooper present throughout their visit. When Sommers was asked if he remembered Wood's actions, Sommers said he did, that Wood had nipped him, presumably as a test for feeling. Told that this was wrong, he said Wood had bent his fingers, which was also wrong, and he admitted he had no recollection. Wood gave him 'a short exhortation', telling him 'to serve, and feare God' and the visitors left. When they had gone 'as far as a man may rove an arrowe', John Cooper caught up with them and said that Sommers had now remembered, reporting that Wood had read from a book and prayed over Mary. Wood told him that this, too, was inaccurate; he had read from no book and that, while he had prayed for Mary, this was no more than a guess as 'no Christian man, seeyng them in such extremities could forbear to praie for them'.⁷⁰

The exchange of statements, and the circulation of stories may have shifted the focus a little as the first forum of debate was no longer the assizes but the calling of a Commission under the auspices of the Archbishop of York, Matthew Hutton. The exact circumstances of the calling of the Commission are unclear. Harsnet suggests that John Walton, the archdeacon of Derbyshire, hearing of the allegations and counter-allegations, wrote to Archbishop Whitgift, presumably to alert him to the conflict. Fearing the consequences of Whitgift and his allies being brought in as adjudicators, a not unreasonable fear given the established record of Whitgift and Bancroft, 'it was thought good to use some prevention, and to procure a Commission from the L. Archbishop of Yorke for the examination of such witnesses, as should be produced in the behalfe of M. Darrel, to prove that Somers had not dissembled'.⁷¹ While Harsnet's account is not completely clear, at least part of the impetus for this Commission to have come from the pro-Darrell camp makes sense as an effort to find an adjudicator less pre-disposed to

⁷⁰ Briefe Narration, Diii-Diiii.

⁷¹ Harsnet, Discovery, 7.

interpret in what they would see as an 'ungodly' fashion.⁷² This was to take the level of competition and the stage upon which it was to be settled to an unprecedented height in the public domain, one which was to be closely monitored and fiercely fought. It brings different demands for critical engagement and so will be treated separately.

⁷² This is contrary to Gibson's (*Possession*, 96) suggestion that the Commission was the result of Walton's correspondence in being his choice, rather than a least worst option taken by Darrell's supporters. It could be pointed out that Nottingham was part of the archdiocese of York and therefore Whitgift's response to a call for such a Commission would be to put it in the hands of Hutton as it was under his aegis. However, the later Commission at Lambeth shows that, when push came to shove, he was willing to place religio-political issues above archdiocesan boundaries as a determinant of control. In addition, the acquisition of Sommers's confession of his fraudulence would probably have been sufficient to remove the threat to Alice Freeman: if he was not possessed, then she could not have bewitched him.

The Reality of William Sommers on Trial

Whether they were central to the calling of the Commission summoned by Archbishop Hutton or not, those against the confession of fraud were well prepared. One of Harsnet's complaints against the Commission was that sixty witnesses were lined up to give testimony supporting the reality of Sommers's possession, seventeen of whom managed to set down their depositions, while 'but no one witnesse was sought out to be deposed for Somers', that is to support the case for counterfeiting. In addition Arthur Hildersham, with George More and John Brinsley, the curate and schoolmaster from Ashby-de-la-Zouch, attended, presumably willing to offer support from their own experience, their understanding of possession as well as the support inherent in their mere presence. There was a late effort to shift the balance of the twelve Commissioners on the part of William Freeman as the original line-up was felt to be too much inclined to Darrell's interests and the group was accordingly reconstituted.¹ When they met on 20 March the Commission consisted of John Thorold, the High Sheriff of Nottingham, Sir John Byron, John Stanhope, Robert Markham, Richard Perkins, and Peter Clark, Nottingham's mayor, effectively the upper echelons of the county's gentry. There were two ecclesiastical officials in John Walton, the archdeacon of Derbyshire, and Miles Leigh, his equivalent for Nottingham, and four ministers, John Ireton, John Brown, Robert Evington and Thomas Bolton, Byron's chaplain. While Harsnet was overstating his case when he suggested general credit, 'preposterous affections', given to Darrell from the start as well as the increased likelihood

¹ Samuel Harsnet, A Discovery of the Fraudulent practises of John Darrell (London, 1599), 207-8; A Briefe Apologie Proving the Possession of William Sommers. Written by Iohn Dorrell, a faithfull Minister of the Gospell: but published without his knowledge (n.p., 1599), 4-5. Harsnet, Discovery, 7, suggests that it was Evington who made the motion to have the Commission adjusted, which would be a surprise as he was a consistent defender of Darrell.

of credulity consequent upon their unfamiliarity with Sommers, so too was Darrell when he claimed that 'all the cheif of them (one only excepted) being meere strangers to me'.²

The seventeen deponents, many of whose testaments have been cited above, built a fairly compelling case for the reality of William's demonic possession.³ The Commissioners came to be 'wearied with examinations and witnesses' and called upon Sommers to take the stand, perhaps for a change of tone as the comparisons to different loaves and nuts to describe his swellings might have become a little repetitive. He maintained his fraudulence. Thorold 'exhorted him in the name of God to tell the truth' and, as on earlier occasions, such a calling sent him into an immediate fit.⁴ He 'wallowed to and fro on the chamber floar, or swiftly rowled with his body stretched out to the full length' and as he lay before them his body became swollen. 'His intralles were shot up and downe along in his body, much like to the shootinge of a weavers shuttle'.⁵ Throughout this fit he spoke '(as it were in the throate)' over and over again, saying 'a black dogg a dogg a dogg'. Three unfortunately unidentified Commissioners said that they saw such a dog snapping at his face which, Darrell reasoned, must have been an apparition as, had it been a real dog then everyone would have seen it.⁶ To test whether the fit was genuine or not, the company pulled on his ears, made 'greate violence' to him 'to make tryall if he had any feelinge' and stuck pins in him which neither made him stir nor produced any blood.⁷

When the fit ended and Sommers emerged from his comatose trance the Commissioners asked him what he had done and what had been done to him during his fit

² Ibid., 208-9; John Darrell, A Detection of that Sinful Shamful and Ridiculous Discourse of Samuel Harshnet (n.p., 1600), 143. It is not clear, but certainly likely that the Richard Perkins on the Commission was the same JP who had accompanied Darrell to interrogate Millicent Horsely.

³ The depositions are reproduced in A Briefe Narration of the Possession, dispossession, and repossession of William Sommers (n.p., 1598), Ciii-E and extracts and summaries recur through many of the tracts defending the possession, for instance in Darrell, Detection, 147-8, 150-2, 258 (recte 158), 163, 166-7 and Briefe Apologie, 35-40.

⁴ Ibid., 4; Briefe Narration, B.

⁵ Darrell, Detection, 136; cf. Briefe Narration, B; Briefe Apologie, 4; John Darrell, A True Narration of the Strange and Grevous Vexation by the Devil, of 7. Persons in Lancashire, and William Sommers of Nottingham (n.p., 1600), 32 recte 23.

⁶ Darrell, Detection, 130.

⁷ Ibid., 136-7; Briefe Apologie, 4.

and he had no reply. One of the Commissioners asked if he had been pricked with pins and he responded positively but when asked which hand had been pricked he held up the wrong one. He was asked why he had holes in his other hand and claimed that they had been there before. He was pressed further, asked why he fell down and replied that ‘a qualme come over his stomack’, still maintaining that he was not possessed. He was then taken away from the Commissioners while they weighed up what they had got from the depositions and the spectacle.⁸

At the later Commission at Lambeth, Harsnet countered the appearance of these undesirable symptoms in two ways. The first was that he lessened their nature, making them sound less spectacular and hence more easily designated as fraudulent; the second was denying Hildersham, More, Ireton, Evington and Brinsley the chance to testify. In his account of the trial he produced the testimony of Sommers, Clark, John Cooper, William Freeman and Nicholas Shepherd, claiming that they had encouraged Sommers to feign a fit. Upon the word of the mayor, and no-one else, Sommers was supposed to end the fit immediately. Unfortunately Clark either forgot or was too intimidated (the witnesses differ) and so Sommers carried on, regardless of the pins and other physical tests.⁹ How convincing this sounds depends on two things. If the reader had access only to Harsnet’s account and was willing to trust the testimony of these deponents more than the conclusions of the first Commission (which, of course, Harsnet’s account encourages the reader to do) and if the reader did not know of, or discredited, what followed, then it would be an acceptable reading. Effectively, this is to say that, on either side, readers had to be predisposed to believe in order to believe, something to which I will return.

While Sommers was away from the court, he was subject to further fits, being ‘fearefully tormented by the divell’. News of these attacks, supposedly worse than his earlier fit, was brought to the Commissioners and he was called back to answer further

⁸ Darrell, Detection, 138 , Briefe Narration, B.

⁹ Harsnet, Discovery, 200-3; Darrell, Detection, 115.

questions. As he was brought along a gallery before descending a set of stairs, he attempted to throw himself headlong over the gallery but was restrained. Once he was back in court, it seems that the Commissioners were convinced of his possession as the only recorded request was to identify 'who had perswaded him to say he did counterfeit'. He went into a fit, trying twice or three times to answer but with 'his winde seeming to bee stopt', 'he stutteringlie answered, That the blacke dogge which brought him the bag of golde, did bid him say so'. From here he went from fit to fit, 'the spirit vexing him indeede, and shewing his rage & malice against man, and not in subtilty as he did at the first'.¹⁰

Having seen these sufferings, the Commissioners and all present were said to be satisfied that his possession was genuine. Apparently even archdeacon Walton 'acknowledged it was the finger of God uppon this rare accident'. This impression of unanimity, as well as the report that there 'was generallie great reioicing in Nott: insomuch as it had pleased God thus to manifest the truth when it came to triall' is likely to be hyperbolic, for it is certain that Freeman and his allies retired to lick their wounds.¹¹ As far as Darrell and his allies were concerned, there was cause to celebrate but also to return to the greater task of dispossessing Sommers again. For the next ten days, Sommers was moved into Edward Garland's house where he could be given the proper means to assist him in his spiritual struggle. The following morning Darrell attended Sommers along with 'divers ministers' and like-minded laity. Garland and others asked him why he had claimed to be a fake when it was so evidently untrue. Sommers told of the behaviour of Shepherd and Cooper and of the appearances of the devil. Probably with a heightened sense of

¹⁰ Ibid., 138; Briefe Narration, B; Briefe Apologie, 4; Harsnet, Discovery, 196; cf. John Darrell, The Doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniacs out of the Word of God, following on from True Narration, new pagination, 9. In Harsnet's version others heard Sommers say 'the blacke Dogge with the bag of golde' and only George Small heard him add 'had induced him to say, that hee had dissembled', Small being blessed with 'a quicker eare'.

¹¹ Briefe Narration, B. Darrell's Detection, 116-7 records Walton and Sales as the only two clerics involved who maintained their conviction of counterfeiting as the time moved toward the Commission. He may, of course, have had a brief and temporary change of mind. Triall of Maist Dorrell, Or A Collection of Defences against Allegations not yet suffered to receive convenient answers (n.p., 1599), 66 agrees with Briefe Narration. Darrell, An Apologie, f. 25 may have been referring to Walton when he writes of the possession to be a work of God 'as sometyme it was acknowledged by one of the first and greatest adversaries to this cause, though since he hath gonne from it, and cheifely caused all this sturr'.

covering their tracks, aware of the forthcoming assizes, the company got him to write down the details so that, should he be taken from their company, they would have something more than the oral testimony of witnesses unlikely to be given much weight.¹²

The next step was to turn to his recovery and there were three strategies identified, one of which is more certain than the other. The first, taken from Sommers's later testimony, was that it was suggested that after the assizes, Thomas Bolton, the Commissioner who was chaplain to the other Commissioner Sir John Byron, should be approached to take Sommers into his household for six months and then he would become servant to Byron's grandchildren. This can be seen as a counterbalance to the economic securities that were the bright side of Sommers's relations with Freeman et al.; with such a promise it might have been hoped that he should find the offers of secure trade easier to resist. Similarly evident of a desire to batten down the hatches is the warning delivered by Robert Aldridge and his wife, among others, that, should he ever confess to counterfeiting again, the mayor and the rest of the Commissioners would be determined to see him hang '& that they had a commission from the Queene so to doe'. Harsnet, of course, read this as an urging to maintain his pretended possession; a more charitable reading would be to read it as a caution against being open to the temptations of the devil and earthly reward again. The readings are not mutually exclusive, so much as a matter of emphasis.¹³

The third dimension was to reclaim completely the godly reading of Sommers's experiences. Aldridge reported Darrell planning another fast for dispossession, a suggestion backed by Mrs Aldridge and both agreeing that it should come after the assizes, presumably hoping for any remaining doubts regarding his repossession to be cast aside by the successful prosecution of Alice Freeman. Darrell told not only that 'we were purposed now to have used the meaines [sic] for his dispossession' but also that it

¹² Darrell, *Detection*, 116, 127, 130-1; Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 2.

¹³ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 204-7.

was to be delivered 'publicly in the Church' and that this news was bruited around town.¹⁴ Attention to Sommers's treatment was high on the agenda; since his arrest the spirit had 'lurked and layne hid' but after the Commission Sommers's 'vexation by Sathan was most grevous to behold'.¹⁵ We have a record of one such vexation. Robert Evington asked George Richardson to join him at Garland's house because Richardson had doubted his possession. When he got there he found Darrell, Evington, Hildersham, John Dod, Aldridge and others and as the ministers began to speak to Sommers, presently at quiet, he went into a fit and then 'foamed exceedingly'. In the course of this fit his legs went completely rigid and Richardson was called over to lift him and to bend his legs, primarily as a test to show the authenticity of the symptoms. Accordingly, he found him unnaturally heavy, although he later claimed to have remained unconvinced.¹⁶ One noteworthy point worth making before returning to the consequences of this breaking news is that Robert Aldridge was still very much on board with Darrell, particularly in the decision to hold the second fast in St Mary's. We have no indication of what overcame earlier concerns about holding it in a parish church or any particular parish church although one plausible suggestion is that the desire for 'respectability' accrued from the institution may have overcome fears of credit being given to the site itself.¹⁷

The immediate result of the news of the planned fast was to spur the local opponents of Darrell into action. According to Darrell they were 'abashed and confounded' at 'satans discovery' in front of the Commissioners but the news of the fast drove forward the process of them gathering 'hart and incouraging one another'. They had already intended, in confirmation of the fears noted above, to get Sommers back in their hands and 'doubtles they did the more speedily' for they hated the consequences of 'ther great

¹⁴ Ibid., 205-6; Darrell, *True Narration*, 24.

¹⁵ Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 2; cf. *Briefe Narration*, Bi.

¹⁶ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 233, 245-6.

¹⁷ Aldridge's involvement is given added credibility by it being Harsnet as the source in that his earlier suggestion that Aldridge had parted company with Darrell over the latter's appointment as preacher and Aldridge's importance as a deponent to counterfeiting added weight to his argument. Clearly the testimony of what could be construed as threats and promises intended to keep the fraud going out-weighed the disadvantages as far as Harsnet was concerned.

shame', as naysayers, should Sommers be successfully dispossessed, and this time at the primary religious locus in the town.¹⁸ They or, more likely, higher authorities had already been in action. Darrell had only spent the one session with Sommers after the Commission, taking himself off to Ashby-de-la-Zouch to preach and to be with his family. However, he was also called to see Matthew Hutton, the archbishop of York, once Hutton had had time to acquaint himself with the depositions. Apparently he was satisfied with the proof that Sommers was indeed possessed but, 'having received letters from some great personages', he silenced Darrell. The grounds were that he held that the 'Devil might be dispossessed by praier, and fasting' which Darrell said was his own private opinion and that he was willing to alter it if he was better informed. However, as far as Hutton was concerned that was the end of the matter, for he 'never indeuoured to informe him better'. The reader is encouraged to conclude that the writer wants to give the best impression of Hutton, a prelate well-inclined to the godly whose hands were tied by more nefarious (unnamed) authorities, presumably Whitgift and Bancroft, for 'after good words, as that he was an honest man', Hutton 'sent him awaie silenced'.¹⁹

The next stage was for Sommers to be taken from Garland's house and hence the control of the godly and back into the hands of his former keepers Shepherd and John Cooper 'or such like'. He was 'free from being tormented in his body by sathan, as other men' and returned to his confession of counterfeiting. A new ingredient appeared, although the exact timing is unclear. Darrell notes that he has stuck to his confession since then, the end of March, 'and of late added this, that I was confederate with him therin, and for these last 4. yeares instructed and trayned him up therunto'.²⁰ The change in the physical possession of Sommers, as it were, changed the balance of power in influencing his meaning, whether he was possessed or fraudulent, whether his accusations carried

¹⁸ Darrell, True Narration, 24.

¹⁹ Darrell, Detection, 115; Briefe Narration, Bi-Bii; cf. Trial, 59-60 which mentions 'the letters of some great personages (it may be the Bb of Cant. and London)'.

²⁰ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 3.

any weight and so forth. It seems that the middle ground was in danger of being drawn back in the direction of questioning his authenticity. This weight of opinion was certainly favoured in a second Commission established swiftly and with a different complexion to its predecessor. The named Commissioners were Peter Clark, Richard Morey, Samuel Mason and William Gregory, all established enemies to the authenticity of Sommers. When Darrell was dismissing Harsnet's criticism of the first Commissioners as simple men getting above their station, he added Richard Hurt and Arthur Jackson to the list so they may also have been lined up, the former appearing in Harsnet's account. The meeting of the Commission and the depositions given were kept under tight wraps, with Darrell complaining that Aldridge and Barnaby Evans, his curate and an early figure in Sommers's diagnosis, were forbidden to let anyone know what they had deposed in response to the questions asked, suspecting that their examination tried to find any evidence that he had uttered any seditious doctrine or treasonous statement. We know that Robert Cooper, either deliberately or accidentally, set the wrong tone as far as the Commissioners were concerned, when he opened the meeting by reading from Psalm 94 on the judgement of the wicked and God's defence of the righteous who stand against them. Apparently this 'so galled them' because it could be read against them, that Cooper was called to Lambeth to answer for his impudence.²¹ The Commissioners were on strong ground as they were acting under the direction of the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, Lord Anderson, and on 31 March they interrogated Sommers regarding why he had told the earlier Commissioners that he had not dissembled and why he had continued his fits during his residence with Garland.²² Plainly, such an interrogation could only be required on the assumption that he had lied to the Commission and the implication of agency carries with it an implication of fraudulence.

²¹ Ibid., ff. 35, 36; Darrell, Detection, 145; Harsnet, Discovery, 205; Briefe Narration, Aiiiii; cf. Trial, 63. The possibility of the broader target of the examination of Aldridge and Evans may be signalled in the initial reason given for Darrell's arrest. He was first imprisoned on charges of undefined 'heresy' charges later changed to fraudulence and teaching Sommers to counterfeit: Darrell, Detection, 13-14.

²² Harsnet, Discovery, 205, 8.

This examination served as a preface for the meeting of the assizes on 2 and 3 April, headed by Lord Anderson. He was both a passionate hunter of witches but also a scourge of puritans and, on this occasion, it was the latter that was to the fore. William was called before Anderson and ‘there shewing his tricks before his Lordship, & divers others, in some extraordinarie sorte, to those that had not seene him before’. When Anderson told him to stop, he did so and ‘shewed himselfe to bee as well, as he was before’, thus demonstrating his agency, his control, and therefore his fraudulence.²³ Darrell engaged with this fairly creatively. The ability to end the unspecified tricks was not a matter of Sommers’s agency so much as evidence of the ‘subtlety of the spirit thereby blyndeing the eyes of men’, that is, by giving the impression of counterfeiting they would not appreciate the work of God and respond with proper thanksgiving. More importantly, Harsnet had not made clear the nature of the fits; they were extraordinary only in that they were not as clearly supernatural as in his earlier fits, ‘as of the swellinge he had then in his body, though nothing so bigge as in former times, of the exceeding waight of his legg & arme like iron’. This meant that the observers could conclude that these were fits clearly within human capacity and shake their heads in a self-congratulatory fashion, smiling wryly at the credulity of others.²⁴ For Darrell’s arguments to work, of course, requires the reader to start off willing to be convinced rather than to start with a more cynical suspicion of puritan casuistry; the quality of the argument is almost irrelevant. That this is a more complex issue than we tend to think is something to which I will return. Mary Cooper gave her testimony and Darrell ‘was one amongst divers that gave in evidence against the woman [Freeman], grounding himselfe much uppon Somers detecting of her for a witch’. Mary Cooper later testified that she had been encouraged and even financed by Mistress Grey,

²³ Ibid., 205. This was the means of exposing the fraudulence that readers were told had been planned for the first Commission. We cannot know whether it was a late performance of what had been planned or if the assizes performance provided the model for the report of the earlier failed performance.

²⁴ Darrell, Detection, 141-2.

George Small and his wife, Darrell and Mrs Aldridge.²⁵ Clearly local opinion was not completely settled on the issue of the authenticity of the possessions of Cooper and Sommers or at least swayed by Alice Freeman's established reputation as two juries condemned her for wilful murder. Almost certainly at Anderson's behest, a third jury was called which acquitted her.²⁶

To a degree, with Sommers being sent to London, not least to avoid the risk of his falling back into 'pro-possession' hands, with greater control over local voices and with the tightening grip of central authorities dictating local outcomes, Darrell's cause was at the very least on the back foot, if not doomed. Anderson was corresponding with Whitgift and the second Commission delivered a warrant calling Darrell to Lambeth to appear before the High Commission.²⁷ The game was not up but the power politics had shifted substantially. I will not deal at any length with the trial, partly because this has been done splendidly elsewhere, partly because the details are not the central interests here and partly because the space would be better employed returning to the symptoms of Sommers and the longer term consequences of his experience.²⁸ There are six aspects that I will draw attention to as they are pertinent to issues more central to concerns here, some of which will be picked up immediately, others which will return below.

The first aspect is the one which is more a matter of placing a marker to be taken up later. Upon Darrell and More being arrested and placed in close prison there is no

²⁵ Harsnet, Discovery, 321-2.

²⁶ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 39 Darrell is a little more politic and merely says 'how it came to passe I knowe not'.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 35.

²⁸ Marion Gibson, Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy (London, 2006), 128-35 provides a clear guide through the ways the High Commission operated, what was and what was not legal and the ways in which witnesses were allowed, excluded or generally treated in the proceedings. This includes the gathering of evidence through painstaking interrogation of the cases and individuals around Thomas Darling and Katherine Wright (but not the Lancashire Seven). This gets across the 'normal' strong-hand practices of the High Commission, the intimidatory tactics of questioning witnesses, all within the law, as well as the more legally dubious issue of whether the charges were appropriate for an ecclesiastical court and the close relationship between the agents gathering evidence (particularly Harsnet) and those among the judges, such as Bancroft and Whitgift. In short, Darrell and More 'stood no chance of receiving what we would now consider to be a fair hearing, much less of acquittal. But by the standards of their time, their position was not unusual' (131). This provides a very useful corrective to the more trusting account that tends to dominate the literature.

impression that his allies thought the battle was not worth fighting. Harsnet judged it worthy to draw attention to 'how many of his friendes were kindled, and, what choler they shewde by depraving, not onely of such lawful courses as were taken to finde out the truth, but also of those persons that had to deale therein'; 'Diverse of them came up to London, & in secret corners exclaimed bitterly against his committing to prison', defending his record and practices. Letters were written 'to sollicite great personages in his behalfe'. A letter was also written to Bancroft, 'threatning him with the authority of great persons' in Darrell's defence. Unfortunately Harsnet fails to name the great persons and turns instead on the writers of the preface to Darrell's Apologie and the Briefe Narration, but we do know that letters in defence of his upright nature were written and delivered to the High Commission from Burton. We may doubt the insinuations of Harsnet's mention of 'a combination or association: the intent whereof may be left at large' as this is a preface to his suggestion of a Presbyterian plot while accepting the organisational energy as evidence that Darrell was not abandoned by his allies as a black sheep.²⁹

The second aspect is the question of dubious judicial practice. Darrell holds forth at some length about the operation of the court in terms of being told the charges, having access to depositions, the witnesses called or refused, and their and his treatment in the examinations. The bulk of Triall of Maist. Dorrell was devoted to an appeal to common lawyers against the practices of civil lawyers, a well-established set of grievances.³⁰ The point is not to enter the quagmire of equitable legal practice or judicial etiquette, so much as to emphasise the gap between the trust we may, in our innocence, grant to judges and lawyers and the harsher sieve of the High Commission, particularly in a trial of such political weight. The related third aspect is to return to ground touched upon with regard to Thomas Darling. While Darrell was being held in the Gatehouse, Sommers was brought to London and, according to the Briefe Narration, first committed to a barber of East

²⁹ Harsnet, Discovery, 9-14; Darrell, Detection, 182-4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-17; Triall, *passim*.

Smithfield, 'a man of evill report' and then taken into the relative luxury of Bancroft's house. In this environment he was encouraged in his confession of counterfeiting and, eventually, 'grew to be so impudent, that he said Mr Dorrell had hired him to counterfeyt' and spent four years training his acolyte. This, of course, is contrasted to the terms by which Darrell was characterised, as 'the most impudent varlet that ever came before them: asse, heretick, a Devil, one that had seven Devils: that he should be the Devils m[a]rthyr, & either recant, at Pauls, crosse, or be burnt in Smithfeild'.³¹

The fourth and fifth aspects are the means of examination and accusation, both of which, to different degrees, have had an impact of early modern understandings of possession and on the more current historiography. In Darrell's refutation of the allegations made against him several of them simply receive the sharp note of 'false'. As a matter of 'straightforward' truth or falsity, these are less important than those such as his affirmation that it was the devil and not Sommers speaking in his fits or that Darrell set out the nature of diabolic possession, drawing upon Scripture and his own experience. To these he adds 'what followeth?' or 'what of this?' This is as much as to suggest that some of the allegations are intended to work by cumulative suspicion, that they are nothing in themselves but depend upon pre-established suspicions in the reader. As he suggested later in dealing with Harsnet's treatment of the first Commission in Nottingham, he intends 'to cast a myst as it were before the eyes of his Reader, and to put some scruple and doubt in his mynde'.³²

This sense of encouraging the 'common sense' conclusions of the hypothetical reader pervades Harsnet's treatment and representation of the depositions at Lambeth. He provides a series of 'excuses' for the gullibility of the first Commissioners, pointing to their unfamiliarity with the case, to their operating beyond their expertise, and their being 'simple men'. He lays most of the blame at Darrell's door regarding the witnesses and the

³¹ Briefe Narration, Bii.

³² Darrell, Detection, 92(ii), 143.

consequent depositions given to the Commission. Darrell having explained everything to them, effectively having indoctrinated them, then the smallest curiosity becomes a symptom of possession. Given Darrell's persuasive powers 'who seeing a man lye, in his conceite, as senselesse as a blocke, would not admire the very shaking of his toe: especially being perswaded, that the Devill made the motion'.³³ Having established these grounds, Harsnet then devoted 45 pages to the 'ordinariness' of the symptoms and the means by which Darrell convinced his audience that they were 'extraordinary' and thereby supernatural.³⁴ Were this the only text available to readers and, given the illicit printing, the unauthorised publication and therefore limited distribution of the pro-Darrell texts, it often was for those beyond the godly circulation network, it comes across as a well-put, entirely plausible argument.

The quality of Harsnet's argument, his tactics and rhetorical styles, to which I will return at much greater length below, is reflected in the space given by Darrell and his supporters to the gaps between the earlier depositions and those given, along with those reproduced in edited versions, in Harsnet's Discovery. The Triall sets out the ways in which some witnesses had changed their testimony. Some were presented with Sommers's confession before they were examined. If this failed to persuade they were called before Bancroft, an exercise of intimidation. Similarly, Henry Butler 'was commanded to prison in the sight of others, Ad terrorem'. Some lessened the scale of the physical symptoms, as when Richard Mee did not deny the swelling of William's tongue but 'lesseneth the bignes'. This applies especially to the swellings, represented as being under the coverlet (and so more easily counterfeited) or exposed as tricks with hands and feet. In any case, Darrell argues, statements from some that, on occasion, Sommers's strength was ordinary, does not prove that the contrary assessment of others, regarding other occasions, to be false. The author expresses doubt as to whether the full versions of

³³ Harsnet, Discovery, 207-18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 219-64.

the statements would take the reading in the other direction. As Darrell describes Harsnet's evidence, it is 'what his owne deponents (of his owne culling, and of his own sifting and examnation, and some of them of his owne stampe and affection, whose depositions also are produced by his owne selfe, deposinge more or lesse as he pleaseth) doe saye'. The bottom line is that for contemporaries, as for us, the conclusion depends as much on the perspective of the reader as actual evidence.³⁵

Darrell takes the issue of the differences in depositions further, pointing out that Harsnet gives the impression that all recanted or modified their earlier statements but that not all did so. In addition, based on the seven whose new statements are cited, that 'tenne of them have either not bene reexamined at all, or els being reexamined have resisted all their temptations, threats, and allurements, and doe through gods mercy continue stedfast and unmoveable'.³⁶ Similarly, he reads the earlier depositions of such as Aldridge against their more recent ones, arguing that the shifts are more matters of emphasis than retraction, suggesting that fear or interrogatory style encouraged the toning down of their statements.³⁷ A slightly different means to the same end places the depositions employed by Harsnet next to earlier ones by individuals not selected by him and running counter to the watered down descriptions encouraging the conclusion of counterfeiting. Finally, in a slightly less successful tactic, Darrell reads Harsnet's depositions against the grain, pointing out that the number of witnesses who open their testimonies by explaining that they came to have a look because they had heard of wonders could be taken as proof that there must have been wonders to attract such naysayers.³⁸

The sixth aspect is the flip-side of Harsnet's representation of the 'ordinariness' of the symptoms, particularly the physical ones. The response of Darrell et al. is central to the task of refuting the confession of fraudulence from someone deemed to be diabolically

³⁵ Triall, 34-8; Darrell, Detection, 105.

³⁶ Ibid., 258 (recte 158)-159.

³⁷ Ibid., 147-8.

³⁸ Ibid., 104-5, 106.

possessed. If 'it is as impossible for So. by art to have done those things he must have done, if he be a dissembler, as it is for him to walke upon the sea, or to goe to Rome on a day', then his confession is valueless. In a favourite phrasing, 'If Som. should saye that he (by good footemanship) hath gone on foot in one day from Barwick to Dover, none would beleve him: why then doe any credit him in this his confession? for it is no more possible for him to goe that journey in that time, then by his owne will & power to doe those things which are above specified'.³⁹ Hence a recurrent trope in the defensive tracts is that the symptoms of Sommers were beyond the means of a fraud: 'that he uttered some 40. or 50. straunge and elegant sentences, which in a trance he delivered with his mouth with [sic] open, and tong drawn into his throate'. The task was to 'prove such admirable things to be done or suffered by the saide Summer, that neither Art nor Nature can compasse the like'. Many of the symptoms testified to 'are impossible to be counterfeited, that is to bee done by any arte of man how cunning soever he be: as the extraordinarie & supernaturall Actions or passions of his body, strength, and knowledge'.⁴⁰ The execution of this task was broadened so the same criteria were employed in the analysis of Mary Cooper's experience and proof was given that, in the case of Thomas Darling, the 'things which he did or suffered in his fits cannot be counterfeited'.⁴¹

Two of the consequences of this shifting forum of analysis were that the qualifications for discernment of possession, the badges of qualification for veracity, became stricter, and that the appraisal of past and future cases became more contested. The first will become clear as I return to the less temporally specific symptoms of Sommers; the second when I look at the previous and contemporaneous cases which appear in the exchange over Sommers.

I will divide the symptoms into three categories of physical, behavioural and spiritual manifestations although it will become clear that these will not be hard and fast categories.

³⁹ Ibid., 143; A Briefe Apologie, 15-6.

⁴⁰ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 25; A Briefe Apologie, 4, 10.

⁴¹ Triall, 24, 22.

To start with the physical manifestations, a common testimony was that, often after a fall, his limbs would be inflexible, as rigid as iron.⁴² This was often accompanied with extraordinary weight, either of the particular limb or his whole body mass.⁴³ In terms of facial expressions, his mouth twisted or moved 'awry' often enough to become a familiar symptom,⁴⁴ along with his eyes staring, sometimes fearfully, sometimes as though they would 'start out of his head'.⁴⁵ Much less frequent were the occasions when his height seemed to stretch unnaturally⁴⁶ or his neck turn further round than seemed humanly possible.⁴⁷ It was far more common to report his weight being disproportionate to his size⁴⁸ but this disappeared in the shadow of remarks about his extraordinary strength. This last took in two levels: the first was 'merely' unnatural strength, measured by the number of men and/or women unable to restrain him;⁴⁹ the second was when it was noticed that despite the action of physical power, there were no consequences like heavy breathing or panting.⁵⁰ A similar move from subjectively measured, unusual characteristics to the same with uncanny undertones, in this case identifying the agent, can be found in Sommers's being cast to the ground. In itself it was fairly frequent⁵¹ but its meaning was made more explicit when he was cast down by the name of Jesus, with the implication being that it was devilish revulsion to the name that caused the action.⁵² A trinity of physically straightforward actions, albeit ones whose meaning was enhanced by Scriptural authority, was wallowing, gnashing of teeth and foaming. The former was fairly common,⁵³ gnashing

⁴² A Briefe Apologie, 11, 39; Briefe Narration, Diii, E.

⁴³ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 11; Harsnet, Discovery, 244-7; Triall, 29, 33; Briefe Narration, D, E.

⁴⁴ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 19; Briefe Apologie, 14, 36; Briefe Narration, Ciii, Ciiii, D.

⁴⁵ Darrell, True Narration, 19; Briefe Apologie, 36; Briefe Narration, Ciii, Diii; Darrell, Detection, 147-8.

⁴⁶ Briefe Narration, Ciii, D; Briefe Apologie, 37.

⁴⁷ Darrell, True Narration, 19; Briefe Apologie, 14, 36, 37; Triall, 28; Briefe Narration, D, Diii.

⁴⁸ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 11; Harsnet, Discovery, 244-7; Triall, 29, 33; Briefe Narration, D, E.

⁴⁹ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 19, 20; Briefe Apologie, 12, 25; Harsnet, Discovery, 244-7; Triall, ff. 29-30; Briefe Narration, Ciii, D, Dii, Diii, Diiii; Darrell, Detection, 28, 147.

⁵⁰ Darrell, True Narration, 16; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 36; Triall, 29-30; Briefe Narration, Dii, Diii, Diiii.

⁵¹ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 20; Briefe Narration, Cii, Diiii.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Cii, Diiii; Darrell, Detection, 27.

⁵³ Darrell, True Narration, 16; Darrell, Doctrine, 7; Briefe Apologie, 4, 14, 36; Briefe Narration, Dii, Diiii.

more frequent⁵⁴ and foaming almost requisite to a fit, often with its profusion taking it beyond human expectations.⁵⁵

There were three physical symptoms that were, in turn, a variation on established practices, fairly normal, and almost unprecedented.⁵⁶ One occasion when he rolled himself into a ball and bounced high off the bed could be dated to 30 October. Testimonies which describe the same activity cannot be dated and so it is not entirely clear whether he did this several times or if they are all describing the same event. On several occasions his whole body became swollen, a symptom he shared with Mary Cooper although the readings it was given were gendered; for him it was just generically strange while for her it the centre of attention.⁵⁷ The symptom that was almost unprecedented in the English context was the presence of particular smells during his fits, with only Margaret Cooper of Ditchheat having a similar manifestation. Richard Mee mentioned that 'hee felt such exceeding sweete smells' in the room where Sommers lay, and that the witness 'could not endure the same for the exceeding swetnes thereof'. In the opposite direction, Joan Pie mentioned more appropriate 'smells like brimstone'. Such experiences, Darrell implies, were not uncommon in Sommers's case, mentioning 'sundrie smels there were sometymes most sweet and delectable, at other tymes most noysome and stinkinge, no man knowing from whence they came'.⁵⁸

Lying as dead, unfeeling and insentient, in a trance state, particularly at the end of fits, was an established part of possession discourse, and was a regular part of his

⁵⁴ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 19; Darrell, Doctrine, 7; Briefe Apologie, 36; Briefe Narration, Ciii, Ciiii, Dii, Diiii; Darrell, Detection, 147.

⁵⁵ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 19; Darrell, Doctrine, 7; Darrell, An Apologie, ff. 4, 14; Briefe Apologie, 11, 36; Harsnet, Discovery, 233; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, Ciii, Ciiii, Dii, Diiii; Darrell, Detection, 28, 147.

⁵⁶ Darrell, True Narration, 15, 19; Briefe Apologie, 14, 37; Triall, f. 28; Briefe Narration, Ciiii.

⁵⁷ Darrell, True Narration, 15, 19; Briefe Apologie, 14; Harsnet, Discovery, 241; Triall, ff. 28-9; Briefe Narration, Ciii; Darrell, Detection, 147.

⁵⁸ Briefe Narration, Diiii, D; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 14; cf. Briefe Apologie, 39. For Margaret Cooper, see above, 61. There is a possible parallel in Margaret Byrom emitting stinking breath during one fit and upon the spirit's exit and Mistress Kingesfielde smelled brimstone at the start of her troubles: see above, 94, 42-3.

experience.⁵⁹ Perhaps this was taken a step further in reports of no detectable breathing⁶⁰ or, more commonly, that he was as cold as ice.⁶¹ There is a possibility that the liminal space between life and death, as well as the temporary ownership of his physical body by a spirit associated with death and judgement, played a role in parts of his skin, most frequently his hands and face, turning black.⁶² (On one occasion, one of his eyes, according to one witness, momentarily turned black.)⁶³ Along the same vein, but decidedly more orthodox and less sensational or sensationalist, was his frequent inability to feel pain during his fits. It occurred at several points in the narrative and here it is evinced in the numerous tests, largely by pricking with pins, of the veracity of his condition.⁶⁴ The other side of this was his unawareness of his fits or of his activity during them, most significantly encountered during the first Commission.⁶⁵

To return to his facial symptoms, dated examples of Sommers's tongue sticking out, often compared to the size of a calf's tongue, have been noted in the narrative, but they were relatively commonly testified to.⁶⁶ The same is true of its opposite, when his tongue was retracted so far in his throat that, at times it could not be seen, with a candle held close to allow the onlookers to see for themselves.⁶⁷ As with some of the physical symptoms mentioned earlier, the stakes were sometimes raised. Many noted noises being made while his mouth remained shut.⁶⁸ Likewise, onlookers naturally remembered the times when he managed to speak with his mouth wide open, 'gaping'.⁶⁹ A fairly orthodox symptom which has already been encountered and will be returned to under divine and

⁵⁹ Darrell, True Narration, 17, 20; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 11, 39; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, Ciiii, D, Dii, Diiii-E, E.

⁶⁰ Darrell, True Narration, 17.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 17; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 39; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, Dii, Diiii.

⁶² Darrell, True Narration, 17; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 40; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, Ciiii, D, Diiii, E.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Ciiii.

⁶⁴ Darrell, True Narration, 16; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 4, 12; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, B.

⁶⁵ Darrell, True Narration, 16; Briefe Apologie, 38; Harsnet, Discovery, 233; Briefe Narration, B, Diii.

⁶⁶ Darrell, True Narration, 19; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Brief Narration, Ciiii, Diiii.

⁶⁷ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 19; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 12; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, Ciiii, D, Dii, Diiii.

⁶⁸ Darrell, True Narration, 16; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 11-12, 40; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, E.

⁶⁹ Briefe Apologie, 12, 39; Triall, 29; Briefe Narration, D, Dii-Diiii, Dii, Diiii.

diabolical messages when the messages were more comprehensible is the vocal communication. Often this is described in broad terms as 'strang & fearfull shrieking as cannot be uttered by mans power', that 'Divers times he scriched or cryed aloud in a strange and supernaturall manner' or that 'he exceded in ... roaring, and yelling verie fearfullie'.⁷⁰ Often the testimonies would characterise the symptoms in animalistic terms, perhaps emphasising the dehumanising effects of possession. His 'heideous crying' was 'like a bull beare, or swinne'; 'sometimes like a bull, bear, swine, and in a small voyce impossible to be counterfeited'; 'sometimes he roared fearfully lyke a beare, and cryed like a swyne'.⁷¹ The almost plaintive, if appropriate, image taken from Mee, the butcher, appeared earlier; Sommers would 'sodenlie scrich like a swine when he is in sticking'.⁷² Both Barnaby Evans, in his letter pleading for Darrell's presence, and Robert Aldridge in his deposition to the first Commission, attached the screeching to Sommers's loss of sentience. He 'skriketh and cryeth, and after he is able to speake, he saith he did not skrike'.⁷³

The second to last 'physical' symptom is particularly difficult to categorise. This is the sound of 'knocking' encountered earlier. Harsnet devoted four pages to demonstrating how the knocking sounds reported during Sommers's fits 'were done and made by himselfe, and were not as M. Darrell hath reported, extraordinary or supernaturall'.⁷⁴ The suggestion that the noises were made by his feet, hands or fingers determined the tone of the undated references in the defences of Darrell, although it should be noted that they are in concord with the depositions to the first Commission. Indeed, Darrell reproduces Aldridge's deposition to support his assertion of their uncanny nature.⁷⁵ Similarly A Briefe Apologie cites Aldred, Pie, Milward and Pare to support the affirmation that a 'straung

⁷⁰ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 19; Briefe Narration, Ciii.

⁷¹ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4; Briefe Apologie, 39; Darrell, True Narration, 19.

⁷² Briefe Narration, Diiii.

⁷³ Darrell, Detection, 27, 147.

⁷⁴ Harsnet, Discovery, 238-41.

⁷⁵ Darrell, Detection, 147-8. There is a possibility that this has something of an echo of the 'knocking' that preceded, almost announced the start of John Starkey's fits.

knocking' was heard around his bed when his and his feet were 'beeinge helde unmoveable'. Triall simply states that in the room where he lay, there was 'a strange rapping as upon wainscot with a finger, Sommers handes and feete being held immoveable'.⁷⁶ Darrell engages at slightly greater length (and with disdain), stating that, 'as every childe may see', it was impossible that the 'thumping or knocking' was 'caused by his fynger thrust under his thigh, or by the filliping of one toe with an other uppon the bed, or yet by the tapping of one of his nayles upon an other'. This is shown partly by the frequency of the sounds and that Sommers was usually 'helde by some, armes & legs, his armes also (he being in his cloaths) on the day time above the coveringe, and seldome or never under it'.⁷⁷

This brings us to the symptom which needs a little more lengthy treatment, at least because Harsnet was so successful in his portrayal that its difficulty is under-appreciated. This is the mobile lumps appearing between his flesh and his skin mentioned above. Harsnet's approach was threefold. He would lessen the strangeness of the symptom, thereby minimising the task of explaining it away. He would draw attention to the appearance of the lump under the coverlet or under Sommers's clothes (and stressing Darrell's unwillingness to expose the flesh) thereby lightening the task of counterfeiting and encouraging sceptical readings. Thirdly, he would give depositions of successful attempts to find him out, sometimes to embarrassing, occasionally comical effect. For instance, he cited the testimony of Edmund Garland.

Catching on a time at that which I saw move the cloathes, I got holde of it, and offering to cast uppe the cloathes, to see what I had in my hand, it slipped from me, and I did then suspect, and doe now believe it to be true, that the thing I had holde of was the boyes privie members, and that I offering to pull up the cloathes, he

⁷⁶ Briefe Apologie, 39; Triall, 32.

⁷⁷ Darrell, Detection, 106. The italicised phrases are quotations from Harsnet's Discovery.

shrinking in his bed pulled them out of my hand, I not holding fast, because I then suspected so much.⁷⁸

The summary provided by the author of Triall was pretty much representative.

Some doe depose, that indeavouring to try the manner of Kitlings, & suddenly putting their handes into Sommers bed, one at one tyme caught his hande or foote, another his privie partes; Another sweareth that he desiring to have throwen off the Coverlet to have seene what it was, Mai. Dorrell forbad, saying, that Sommers sweating, it was enough to cost him his life.⁷⁹

The first response was straightforward denial. 'It could not be his handes or feete, for his armes and feet were held, and there were 4. or 5. supposed Kitlinges: nor his privie partes (a ridiculous matter) for the kitlings stirred a pretty space from his body'.⁸⁰ A similar tactic draw attention to the number of swellings, that if he had been using his hands 'then he had five hands in bed with him for there seemed to be five kitlings some time', citing the witness of Aldridge. To cover the bases, such evidence could be assigned to the time 'that he pretended to counterfeyt, some confederate of his might catch his hand under the coverlet to delude the former accidents'.⁸¹ On occasions when the swellings appeared under the bedclothes and disappeared at their removal, only to reappear upon its restoration, this was interpreted as part of the wonder in itself, not least in the frequency of their appearance. When 'there were certayne thinges sometime foure or five at one instant stirring & moving under our handes as if they had ben kitlings, whelpes, or such living creatures', they disappeared upon their exposure and on being covered, 'they were presently there againe, and this continued about tenne dayes and nights by tymes'.⁸²

⁷⁸ Harsnet, Discovery, 241.

⁷⁹ Triall, 35.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 36; cf. Thomas Gray's deposition stressing that Sommers was held by sundry persons 'at his feete, and also at his head' and went on to report observers suggesting that it was his foot but others replying, 'We have his feete here, and do hold them': Briefe Narration, Diii; cf. Darrell, Detection, 106.

⁸¹ Briefe Narration, Biii; cf. Ciii.

⁸² Briefe Apologie, 13.

A rather more persuasive approach for readers not already on board was to combat the trivialisation of the swellings. Darrell describes a 'varyable swellinge or lumpe to a great bignes swiftlye running up and doune betwene the flesh and skyn through all the parts of his body'; the swelling 'did not only run from eye to eye, from cheke to cheke, and up & doune along still in the body: but besides being now in the one leg presently it wold be in the other, and so of the armes in like manner'. In addition to their appearance in his face, presumably exposed, speeches were also reported: 'Being in his eye or toe, & he uttered these wordes, I will goe out at his eye, or, I will goe out at his toe, it was seene presentlie to vanish, or remove out of that place'.⁸³ Similarly, the task of explanation was made more daunting by emphasising the scale and speed of the manifestation, that swellings were seen 'removing immediatlie from one legg to another, and so into the bellie, making it as big agayne as naturallie it is, thence into his throate, cheek, forehead, tong, eyes, thrusting them out extraordinarilie, and causing a great blacknes in or upon the same'.⁸⁴

The 'behavioural' symptoms can take up less space, partly because they were not so central to the contested explanation and partly because they are open to the chosen interpretation of the observer or reader, then and now, and must remain so. There are two main phenomena. The first is Sommers being cast towards the fire, frequently lying in or nearby the flames and always emerging unscathed. Harsnet gives this short shrift, offering Sommers's explanation that the fires were usually small, that there were always people handy to pull him out, that his clothes protected him or were themselves singed, contrary to some of the testimonies.⁸⁵ The accounts printed to be read against Harsnet mostly draw upon the testimony of Joan Pie, Richard Mee and John Strelly, each of which up the stakes a little, adding that he was very heavy when they came to remove him and

⁸³ Darrell, True Narration, 16; Briefe Apologie, 10.

⁸⁴ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 3; cf. Trial, 32-3.

⁸⁵ Harsnet, Discovery, 242-3. He adds statements of Master Bernard, one of the witnesses to the dumbshow, and James Alwood, which reiterate the protection of clothing and add a memory of an occasion when he fell into the fire and withdrew himself quickly when nobody responded quickly enough.

stressing that a hand or, as often, his head or face lay in the fire and that 'neither his head heire, nor anie part of his bodie was hurt, or burned by the fire'.⁸⁶ To this I would only add that being cast into or towards the fire was a symptom that occurred early in his fits, as it was reported to Darrell by Hugh Wilson when he delivered the letters calling for the minister's aid.⁸⁷ The second phenomenon has been mentioned in the narrative, Sommers's appetite for self-harm. Evans reported that the spirit 'perswadeth him to spoyle himselfe, and them that pray for him' in his letter.⁸⁸ In his survey of the symptoms Darrell stated that Sommers would 'beate his head and other parts of his body against the ground and bedstead in such earnest manner and so violentlye that, the beholders did feare that thereby he would have spoyled hymselfe, if they had not by strong hand restayned hym'. He was sometimes 'cast violently against the ground, & agaynste the wall or poastes of the house without any hurt of his body'.⁸⁹ There are other reports of 'a violent beating of his face & head to the ground, and casting of him self headlong against the walles, and postes of the house' without bruising.⁹⁰ This could be taken a stage further and Joan Pie's account of his attempt to hang himself and the effort to throw himself out of the window on being returned to the first Commission will have been noted above.⁹¹ Darrell claims that so great were his efforts 'to destroy himselfe' that his caretakers 'were driven to take away his knife, gyrdell, garters &c' and 'were constreyned to watch him continually even day & night'.⁹²

In the course of the narrative details were given of his dumbshow regarding the sins of the land. Early symptoms of inordinate or at least unexplained laughter, excessive dancing and tears 'in great abundance' followed by laughing 'aloude & shrill'.⁹³ In the spiritual symptoms verbal blasphemy will be encountered. There remains one behavioural

⁸⁶ Briefe Narration, D, (quoted), Diii; Briefe Apologie, 11, 37; Triall, 29; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4.

⁸⁷ Darrell, Detection, 28.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁹ Darrell, True Narration, 15, 16.

⁹⁰ Briefe Apologie, 14; cf. Triall, 28.

⁹¹ Briefe Narration, D, B; cf. Darrell, Doctrine, 9..

⁹² Darrell, True Narration, 16.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 15, 16.

action which has a much more 'hands on' dimension to sin. Unfortunately the act or acts are not dated or described in detail so it is, to a degree, a measure of the reader's judgement as much as of the evidence to surmise the details. Darrell mentions that this sin occurred after his repossession, so probably between February and March. He mentions a 'monstrous blasphemy' committed by Sommers, and 'his strange and unnaturall uncleannes especially in acting the syn of whordome in that manner he did', and in the presence of many. Then he mentions, possibly as a separate incident, 'his filthy and abhominable carriage of himself with a bitch before divers'. A slightly clearer idea emerges when Darrell returns to the same when he discusses the actions of unclean spirits. Surrounded by company, presumably godly company, Sommers 'acted in most uncleane and vyle manner' the sin of whoredom. He committed 'such uncleannes, first with a dog, then and specially with a bitch, as is not fitt once to be named, he then got the bitch into the bed with him, and there would have committed you may ymagine what abomination'.⁹⁴ If this was an act of bestiality, once with a male and then with a female dog, that would be the epitome of animalistic behaviour.

To discuss the 'spiritual' symptoms, the most important part of the preface is to make clear the ambiguity of the term. 'Spiritual' can carry the positive connotations of piety and devotion but 'spirit' is certainly not bound in this way. Reduced to the noun, it requires an adjective and the same indeterminacy can be retained when 'spirit' becomes 'spiritual'. The inherent need for interpretation opens the field for contest. At the experiential level, for observers and participants alike this is the blurry space between demonic and mystic, between negative and positive, or positive messages and examples from negative sources, that were discussed in the introduction. This particular instance has an extra level of contest of course, in the particular understanding and means of understanding employed by those interested in fraudulence and tutored fraudulence. In this context the

⁹⁴ Darrell, *Doctrine*, 10, 99.

grounds of debate were shifted and it was about authenticity and the supernatural rather than divine or demonic voices.

It is worthwhile opening with Harsnet's assessment because that is an aid to understanding the parameters of the texts that appeared after its publication and the trial, to understanding the interpretive emphases placed on the earlier depositions, if not the depositions themselves. This is partly about the interpretive strategies employed with some hope remaining of revealing the perceived reality informing witness's statements and the later accounts, both by witnesses and those employing them. Harsnet sets out his aim clearly in the précis for the relevant chapter: 'Somers knowledge in his fits was not extraordinary, as M. Darrell and his friends have falsly pretended: neither could hee speake Greeke, Hebrew, or Latine, otherwise then hee had learned'. He goes on to dismiss the predictions of the arrival of Aldridge and Darrell as things that he had overheard while in his fits and therefore presumed deaf or as deductions from the behaviour of people always keeping an eye out the windows to see who was on their way, interpretations supported by Sommers's testimony. Similar explanations are made regarding his identification of and responses to alleged witches in his presence. Effectively, the predictions and perceptions are reduced to party tricks which only work on the credulous.⁹⁵ There is a similar tone to his treatment of the linguistic abilities of Sommers, stressing the inability of the witnesses to judge his ability, citing revised depositions and those by better-educated witnesses along with Darrell's trust of witnesses regarding events that occurred in his absence.⁹⁶ Finally, for Sommers's lengthy account of the Creed, Harsnet refers the reader to his earlier engagement with it, which consisted of a preface about popish mountebanks, followed by Darrell's efforts to make it seem wonderful, 'a very glorious interpretation' based on a 'commendation' which 'did proceede

⁹⁵ Harsnet, *Discovery*, 247-50.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 253-5.

from the simple people'.⁹⁷ It will come as no surprise to hear that, in addition to disdain, Harsnet used a tactic of simplification or understatement (to be matched by Darrell's overstatement and perhaps casuistry) but it will also emerge that some of his sins were of omission as much as misrepresentation.

As may be recalled from the narrative, and as will be reiterated and added to here, the reports were rather more diffuse, grander and thereby more difficult to dismiss than the impression given by Harsnet suggests. Firstly there were accounts of 'a strange noyse or flapping from within his body', 'a straunge voice which was sensibly heard to come out of his bodye' and a 'strange noise was sensibly hearde to come out of his belly'.⁹⁸ In addition to the voices mentioned earlier predicting which parts of the body the spirit would leave by and the admission on 7 November that 'I must begonne',⁹⁹ there were more substantial statements. One reported by Darrell, 'as spoken by an evill spirit possessing him', was 'that his dame had sent him, that his name was Lucye, that he was king, that he was prince of darknes. You thinke I have no power of him, yet I can use his tongue, his teeth, lypes, handes, legges, his bodye and all partes of him', moving each part as he named it, apparently a common activity.¹⁰⁰ There were statements of intent and prophecies given earlier,¹⁰¹ and another 'Strange speeche' delivered during a fit in 'a strang voice' asserted that, 'I will use W. So. tonge and members for 3. dayes', adding 'Ego sum Rex, ego sum Deus' and that 'there was no God, that he was King and Prince of darkenes'.¹⁰² Witnesses mentioned diabolic conversations with the company. Robert Aldridge recalled Sommers saying 'in a strange hollowish voyce, that he was his', upon which Aldridge denied this and told him that he was God's as he had promised in baptism. The voice answered, 'that he was god Christ & a kinge, & that he made baptisme, and that he had made him his by a

⁹⁷ Ibid., 248,

⁹⁸ Darrell, True Narration, 15; Briefe Apologie, 14; Trial, 28; cf. Briefe Narration, Ciii, Diii.

⁹⁹ Darrell, True Narration, 16, 18; Briefe Apologie, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Darrell, True Narration, 17; 'Lucye' presumably, was an abbreviation of Lucifer.

¹⁰¹ For instances, see Darrell, Doctrine, 12 (recte 10); *idem*, True Narration, 19; Briefe Apologie, 10.

¹⁰² Ibid., 38.

new covenant'. The spirit claimed to have given Sommers three pennies which were in his sleeve; when the pennies were shown not to be there, he claimed they were in his glove, an interesting mixture of covenant theology and devilish playfulness.¹⁰³ There are brief accounts of the spirit being quizzed by John Sherwood about who sent him, and upon being told simply 'a woman', whether she was dead or alive and why she sent him, that is, the spirit. John Wiggin recalled being asked, presumably in a bragging tone, 'was I... never in heaven?' (Wiggin accepted his former residence but pointed out that 'God for thy pryde thr[e]we thee downe into hell there to remayne'.)¹⁰⁴

Darrell reported that in generic terms Sommers's demeanour to all who came 'was very pleasant, most impudent also & shamelesse with much uncleannes'. His speeches were usually vain, in 'a scoffing manner' and frequently 'filthi and uncleane, very unfit to be named, or blasphemous swearing most fearfully, using one bloody oath after another'. Sometimes he would say 'I am god' and at others that 'there is no god'. When being taken through the Lord's Prayer, when they arrived at 'Lead us not into temptation', he 'would say leade us into temptation'.¹⁰⁵ The claims to be God and King needed no assistance to be termed blasphemous but it helped to take them into the category of extraordinary when they were reported to have been delivered with his 'tongue drawen into his throate & his mouth wide open'.¹⁰⁶

Some of the accounts of his ability to speak in Latin and Greek have a note of caution about them. One examinant mentions the claims to be Deus and Rex 'with some other speeches, which he... could not understand well for that he is no good Latinest: and this was done in the sight of many'. Henry Nussie uses a similar defence of numbers when he deposed that Sommers 'spake certayne words unto Jhon Wigan in Lattin', admitting

¹⁰³ Darrell, Detection, 147; Briefe Narration, Ciii.

¹⁰⁴ Darrell, True Narration, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 16; cf. Briefe Apologie, 38. In this context, 'pleasant' means facetious, over-familiarly humorous, often with connotations of drunkenness. Going through the Lord's Prayer was a common test for suspected witches but neither account gives contextual detail.

¹⁰⁶ Trial, 29 (this appears straight after a fifteen minute speech with 'his mouth being shutt close'); cf. Briefe Narration, Dii; Briefe Apologie, 12; Darrell, An Apologie, f. 4.

that he, Nussie, could not understand them, and adding that neither his jaw nor his tongue moved, perhaps to emphasise or bolster the claim to the extraordinary.¹⁰⁷ Darrell states that 'direct answeares he mayde in lattyn to those speaches' made to him in Latin and adds that 'a little greeke also he speake, beyng ignorant in those Languages, altogether in the one, and understanding little or nothyng in the other'.¹⁰⁸ This gives a stronger sense of actually being familiar with the languages, or at least Latin, than the impression of recited phrases given in the specific instances. Darrell perhaps felt that the poor delivery needed some explanation, for he ended his other portrayal with the get-out clause 'that he spake no more came from the subtiltie of the spirit: for if he had spoken at large in a strang tongue, then had not this controversie, and contending agaynst the worke bene: wherby in the end much glory will come to God and good to his Church', plainly against Satan's interests.¹⁰⁹

Sommers's supernatural knowledge came in three forms, some of which appeared above, such as his prophecies regarding visitors and accounts of the interviewing process of suspects, particularly of Millicent Horseley. In the defensive texts there are general statements of 'supernatural knowledge', that 'he told of those things which were done and spoken divers myles off[f] him at the same instant they fel out' or that he made predictions, described things happening elsewhere and added that he knew of the secret sins of spectators.¹¹⁰ Darrell gives slightly more detailed instances, perhaps partly to be read against Harsnet's manners of dismissal. Not only did he foretell of people coming when they were miles away, he instructed the company to open the door upon their arrival and invited strangers in by their names. He also told a stranger of 'a secret act he had done

¹⁰⁷ Briefe Narration, D, Dii.

¹⁰⁸ Darrell, True Narration, 17.

¹⁰⁹ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 13. This seems to have been an established line, as one of the witnesses cited by Harsnet told how he had, on several occasions, informed him of his surprise that, if Sommers was indeed possessed by the devil, he could only speak English; Darrell 'answered me, (as hee did generally to any argument that was alledged of the boyes counterfeyting) that the Devill did it to hinder the glory of God in his dispossession': Harsnet, Discovery, 255.

¹¹⁰ Darrell, An Apologie, f. 10, cf. f. 24; Briefe Apologie, 13, (a similar statement [37] later on names Pie and Milward as sources; Triall, 30).

20. yeares before' and another, from Harsnet's account probably Edward Beresford who been central to Katherine Wright's possession, the details of his journey, where he had been and the characteristics of the stiles he had crossed and the roads he had walked.¹¹¹

There were also a few more Darlingesque moments of good divinity. William Langford recalled that he heard him 'make rime of the Scriptures, and heard him sing so small a tuneable voice', a voice that he could testify, having heard him sing on many occasions before, that this voice was beyond his capacity out of his fits.¹¹² Darrell mentioned that 'it came that he uttered some 40. or 50. straunge and almost elegant sentences, which in a trance he delivered with his mouth with [sic] open, and tong drawn into his throate, as in part is deposed'.¹¹³ The central occasion disputed was the hour Sommers spent expounding the Creed. One account straightforwardly states 'that divine-like he continued his speach in expounding the Creed for an houre together', while another keeps the adjective 'divine-like' while adding, 'save that he intermixed an error or two, as of Christ his Soules descent into Hell'.¹¹⁴ Darrell's own account adds little other than to make the general claim that 'he spake most profoundlie off some mysteries of religion'.¹¹⁵ In his direct engagement with it he concentrates on the allegation that Sommers was merely recycling the material that he had taken in by the, evidently very effective, tutelage given by several ministers on the Creed during his fits, pointing out that they are not named, something he finds surprising given Harsnet's usual assiduity in finding and naming witnesses to suit his purposes.¹¹⁶ The interesting absence is that he chose not to address the criticism of his willingness to take accounts on trust, particularly relating to the languages, regarding manifestations in his absence. The willingness, in itself, fits in with the practice exemplified in the account of Thomas Darling of a communal arena of truth

¹¹¹ Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 24; Harsnet, *Discovery*, 250.

¹¹² *Briefe Narration*, Dii.

¹¹³ Darrell, *An Apologie*, f. 25.

¹¹⁴ *Briefe Apologie*, 13; *Triall*, 31.

¹¹⁵ Darrell, *An Apologie*, ff. 24-5.

¹¹⁶ Darrell, *Detection*, 165.

(albeit one with its own hierarchy);¹¹⁷ perhaps his neglect of this criticism shows that it was thought unworthy of address; perhaps it shows that by the time he was getting to the end of the whole process of legal and literary exchanges, this trust had been so damaged by former allies and colleagues away from the centre of the most closely identified godly that it was an open sore. It is always dangerous arguing from silences so at this point I will put it on one side to be returned to in more concrete form later.

For now, there are three issues to be raised, the first of which is the consequence alluded to at the start of this section. The nature of the debate as well as, to a lesser degree, the nature of Sommers's possession, raised the standards of possession, that is, made a shift in the discourse of possession. The symptoms expected and the time spent between possession and dispossession became, respectively, more intense and longer. This will be seen in the accounts of possession, real and counterfeit, genuine and embellished, which are covered below. The second thesis, to be illustrated shortly, is that the possession of Sommers et al. and the resultant furore certainly raised the attention and possibly, at least in the short term, increased the number of curiosities defined as diabolic possession; alongside this, more cases were seen to have witches as their secondary cause: Satan seems to have become more inclined to employ humans as a means to create further earthly dissension. The third and final thesis, to be enlarged upon in a variety of ways below, is that, contrary to the dominant thread in the historiography, the fall of Darrell did not hail the dawn of scepticism. It did not rule the possibility of diabolic possession out of court but it raised questions and changed habits on several levels. It was recognised as substantially more confrontational than it had been earlier. As a consequence, those involved in dispossession would prove to be much more careful in terms of managing publicity, indeed working against or at least controlling publicity. Similarly, on the judicial level, in terms of ecclesiastical and common law, possession as

¹¹⁷ This is discussed with particular insight in Gibson, Possession, 63-8.

an element of proof and dispossession or at least employing the means to ask God to grant dispossession had much more rigid boundaries set. This should not be taken as a proto-Enlightenment scepticism, as a foetal David Hume, as it were, so much as a recognition that possession, diagnoses and treatments of possession, were hermeneutic minefields which needed to be much more clearly cordoned off and controlled.

To close by casting an eye back over most of the texts explored here will be done for two reasons. The first is to see the references to precedents within early modern English cases and to see how the same cases shifted in their meaning in the new context. The second is to momentarily build a broader perspective, partly as addressing the second thesis above and giving some preface to the development of the third. The cases discussed through the trials at Lambeth were predominantly Sommers and Cooper, of course, along with, to a much lesser extent, Wright and Darling, with the notable absence being, as the pro-defendant literature never tired of pointing out, the Lancashire Seven. However, in the trials and in the emergent literature, earlier cases were drawn upon and referred to.

The possessed within the Throckmorton family appeared among the models drawn upon by Sommers. According to his confession, John Sherratt told him of their experience and he overheard Sherratt telling Barnaby Evans of the manner of their fits. Robert Cooper claimed that Darrell had mentioned them as a precedence for witch detecting. For Harsnet, this put the case in dangerous company. Formerly it had been the model of orthodoxy to early modern readers but its ex post facto associations turned it into a target for dismissal. Hence it became 'a very ridiculous booke' parts of which he had heard or read which was about children (and the contraction of the victims' ages is noteworthy for Harsnet's rhetorical purposes) 'supposed to have been bewitched by a woman of Warbois'.¹¹⁸ To counter the suggestions of immaturity, Darrell drew the reader's attention to the late victim,

¹¹⁸ Harsnet, Discovery, 97, 138, 93.

the jailor's man at Huntingdon, who was 'in all respects handled as the five children were'.¹¹⁹ A precedent that was both easier and harder to employ was the case of Rachel Pindar and Anne Brigges. Sommers told of 'a certaine maide in London, that had deceived many by avoiding at her mouth pinnes and needles', that she had proven to be fraudulent, therefore he was a dissembler.¹²⁰ This was a good candidate as a precedent for counterfeiting, as the judgement stood, but less so in terms of the sentence. The accused were made to confess at Paul's Cross but John Foxe was not troubled. So why was Darrell being punished for having been deceived by Sommers? (Admittedly Foxe was not as closely associated with them as Darrell was with Sommers but for the purposes of Darrell's defenders that was not the point.) This analogy not only placed Darrell, very flatteringly, in Foxe's company but it gave Bancroft et al. the place of either hypocrites or, if they stuck to their principles, men who would have martyred the martyrologist. 'Yea further, admit Sommers to have counterfaieted: Why should M. Dorrell deceived by him, be punished? Was that good man, of reverend memorie (M. Fox) deceyved by Anne Brigges & Rachel Pindar, called into question for the same? Hee was not'.¹²¹ Along with them appeared an unidentified fraud in Cambridge and Mildred Norrington, cited both by Harsnet and by John Deacon and John Walker.¹²²

To counter the alleged counterfeits, Darrell draw upon his familiarity with English cases to give examples of what he judged to be 'genuine' possessions. In addition to Darling, Wright, the Lancashire Seven and the Throckmortons, he added Margaret Harrison of Burnham Ulpe in Norfolk and Susan Boyton of Saffron Walden in Essex. Alice Bentley was found guilty of bewitching Boyton and the Quarter Sessions at Walden on 13 April 1602 and Susan was 'lately dispossessed, the meanes being used which God hath to

¹¹⁹ Darrell, Detection, 22.

¹²⁰ Harsnet, Discovery, 146.

¹²¹ Trial, 83; cf. 76. Foxe appears in John Deacon and John Walker, Dialogicall Discourses of Spirits and Divels (London, 1601), 352-3, as a source of humility for the character 'Exorcist', confident of his ability to distinguish: 'Was not the reverend father Master Foxe, and many others besides, as grossly beguiled by such counterfeit crankes as ever was you with this your falsely possessed patient?'

¹²² Darrell, An Apologie, f. 9; Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 327-8.

that end appointed'. He had a cautionary tale for sceptics relating to Clemens Charles, 'a maid of Woolroytch commonly called Wullage in Kent'. She was 'at this present very grevously vexed by Sathan' and was staying with James Charles, her father, once she was 'reputed to be possest with the devill'. A 'couple of such merrie or mercillesse companions as your selves', that is, similar characters to Deacon and Walker, visited her and left on horseback, visiting Master Hook, at Darlton, who had recently employed Clemens. As they sat on their horses as they left, they were 'sporting themselves with him about the counterfeiting of this new upstart', when both horses 'staled bloud' which gave them a fright. 'How it farde with their horses I know not, but he day following they caried themselves as M. Charles more soberly'.¹²³

He could give a slightly longer account of Thomas Harrison of Northwich in Cheshire, more by report and documentary evidence, than by experience. The case had come before the Commissioners for Causes Ecclesiastical in the diocese, and the bishop, Richard Vaughan, had sent advice to the boy's parents, a copy of which Darrell had. The bishop had seen the boy's 'bodily afflictions' and was not sure whether it was caused by 'naturall unknowne causes or of some diabolical practise'. For Harrison's ease Vaughan commended prayers from his parochial minister to lead prayers for him and authorised seven ministers, Garrad, Massey, Coller, Harvey, Eaton, Pierson and Brownhill to visit him by turns. They were allowed to use fasting and prayer but, because he was not certain the boy was possessed and because the 'calamitie is particular, and the authoritie of the allowing and prescribing such meetings resteth neither in them nor in us, but in our Superiors, whose pleasure it is fit we should expect', such exercises should remain private, perhaps expressing caution in anticipation of the shortly to follow change in canon law. Deacon and Walker give some impression of the symptoms, such as generic 'fittes', 'supernaturall actions and passions' and supernatural knowledge and strength, with

¹²³ Darrell, The Replie of Iohn Darrell, to the Answer of Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker, concerning the Doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniackes (n.p., 1602), 54, 22.

specific physical symptoms as endlessly nodding his head, lacking sense and remaining deaf, dumb and blind. He was said to have 'spake many wonderfull things in every of his traunces'. To complete the picture, Darrell added an extract from a letter from Master Harvey, 'a man of great learning and godlines', to a friend. He had seen Harrison and his condition was 'so strange and extraordinarie', in terms of his 'passions, behaviour, and speeches', that he and others who had seen more of the boy thought the devil was involved in his fits and the whole county was consternated. 'The Divines with us generally hold, that the child is really possessed'.¹²⁴

Some flesh can be put on the bones of this account by adding a later account from the biography of John Bruen, the devout iconoclast of Bruen Stapleford. Thomas Harrison suffered for a year and two months, between 1599 and 1601. His condition drew a great deal of attention, with one Roman Catholic priest attempting to exorcize him. The priest was brave to try to intervene in Northwich, a puritan stronghold in the area, with John Huet as a minister and Thomas Pierson newly returned to his roots from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as the lecturer.¹²⁵ Initially there was much contention over his condition. Everyone agreed that he was 'strangely and wonderfully afflicted and tormented' but some felt him 'to bee really possessed with a Devill', others thought 'he was bewitched' and some 'ascribed all to natural causes'. His behaviour was such, and perhaps the controversy was becoming fierce that Richard Vaughan called him in and he was brought by his parents. Vaughan prayed over him which drove the boy to be 'so outrageous, that he flew out of his bed'. Those attending were poorly prepared; one fainted and others so

¹²⁴ Ibid., 20-22; Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer to All[] The Material Points in Any Of Master Darel his bookes (London, 1601), 70-77. The conclusion of Deacon and Walker was a mixture of natural disease and fraudulence with the more difficult symptoms dismissed as not having appeared in the presence of the contributors to the debate in their tract. As the tract is a conversation between six characters whose status as fictional or real people with nicknames shifts, it is difficult to ascertain how much 'reality' is involved in their alleged absence or presence, a question to which I will return below.

¹²⁵ Some of the context is provided by Jacqueline Eales, 'Thomas Pierson and the transmission of the moderate puritan tradition', Midland History 20 (1995), 78, 81-2. I am grateful to Jackie for having reminded me of the case and especially the license granted. The full account is William Hinde, A Faithfull Remonstrance of The Holy Life and Death, of John Bruen of Bruen-Stapleford (London, 1641), 148-54 from which the quotes are taken.

astonished that Vaughan was fortunate to be quick enough to grab him as he started 'ramping at the windows to have gotten out that way'. He was certain that Harrison was no counterfeit and concluded that he must respond in a manner that offered relief but prevented sensationalism.

Probably with a wish to err on the side of caution Vaughan joined with the High Commissioners and issued a license for public prayer in the parish church and a private fast in the boy's home, despite this preceding the change to canon law which required such a license. The fast was to be attended by Richard Gerard, the rector of Stockport, Christopher Harvey, the preacher from Bunbury who later wrote to Darrell to give the latest report, and Thomas Pierson. There is an '&c' added which possibly masks Richard Eaton, the minister of Great Budworth, just north of Northwich, William Brownell, recently appointed rector of Gawsworth. They had been the moderators of the exercise at Northwich in the 1580s. Also attending were Thomas Coller of Swettenham, former moderator of the exercise at Nantwich, and Gerard Massye, son of a local gentleman, at this stage either studying at Brasenose College, Harvey's alma mater, or having just become rector of Wigan who was to go on to be nominated as bishop of Chester but dying shortly before his consecration.¹²⁶ The adjective 'private' was understood liberally: Bruen notes his own presence 'and some 20 or 30 more', according to 'the tenour of these directions'.

The nature of the account by Hinde, contracted from Bruen's fourteen sheets of folio, offers little by way of a narrative, extracting the highlights on a thematic basis. He divides 'his violent and wonderfull fits' from 'his strange and horrible gestures and actions' and his admirable and almost incredible sayings', all of which were performed 'without any naturall understanding, sense or feeling'. He had lost a great deal of weight, being nothing

¹²⁶ The exercises in the north-west had a good working relationship with the bishop of Chester. Within the archdeaconry of Chester they were predominantly moderated by ministers to the godly end of the spectrum and showed a remarkable capacity for survival: R. C. Richardson, Puritanism in north-west England: a regional study of the diocese of Chester to 1642 (Manchester, 1972), 61-70.

'but skin and bones', staying in fits for most of the day, being granted but half an hour when they tried to feed him. Despite being so frail, 'he shewed himselfe to be of that extraordinary strength, that he would fold his arms together, no man could pull them asunder, if he did roll his head, or tosse his whole body (as usually he did, no man could stay, or restrain him'. He had a variety of bestial noises, howling like a dog, mewing like a cat, roaring like a bear and foaming like a boar. His violence was at its greatest when anybody prayed and he would 'drown their voyces by his clamours, yellings and outcries'. He had a particular aversion to the Bible, attacking people who brought it even hidden under their clothes, attempting, with frequent success to rip it to pieces, sometimes lying in complete rigidity 'as if he had been stark dead'. He was also very active at other times, skipping from his bed to the table, to the window and back again 'with nimblenesse and quicknesse' and this was all the more remarkable in that his legs would stay tucked under him, not unlike the Throckmortons. He was also prone to gurning, at times to such an extent that he had 'his chin and brows drawn almost together, like a bended Bow', at other times making his 'countenance fearfull, by yawning, mowing, &c'.

Hinde gives three sides of Harrison's curious speeches, each of which was prefaced by 'Jesus saith' and all of them during his fits without any understanding of what he was saying. The declarations Hinde chose cover a number of targets. There are some explaining the devil's intentions, preventing him from praying or being able 'to glorifie God' and that although 'God puls the Devill back with a ring in his nose, yet the Devill shakes my faith as if it would go out of me' and some mocking the observers, stating that they were too proud of their faith and that if they hoped to cast out the evil spirit 'they should have come better prepared'. Some address those who doubt his possession, explaining how they 'may know there is some ill thing in me' and that 'The Devill is affraid when hee heares any word that he must be cast out, then he quakes'. For those who ask how the devil can be accommodated 'in so little a room' he pointed out that 'the Devill is as the

wind', that is, a spirit, and that 'he came in at the little hole'. Although there is no record of the pursuit of a human suspect for having sent the devil, an unnamed witch appears in some of the statements. He explained that a witch will not look her victim in the face but evade his eyes and, surprisingly he defends a suspect who speaks to him in his fits. 'The Witch saith shee hath done mee no hurt that she nows of. A witch may overlook a child, but shee cannot make him in such a case as I am'. This is clarified in terms of agency: that 'the witch would faine undo that which she hath done; but now shee cannot undo it'.

Being in a sore fit and a great rage, biting his own hands, gnashing with his teeth, foming like a boare and casting blood and filth out of his mouth, he uttered these words, Proud witch, witch proud, I will tell you who these witches work: upon all life, all upon life, all upon life; but they cannot take my life from me.

Appropriately for the religious conditions of the region, he took the chance to show the ultimate control of God as a means of abusing the priest who tried to exorcize him.

The Papist that brought the stinking weed and laid it to my nose, if God had not had a stroke in this, would have cast out the Devill. And a boy was confederate with him. Now the Devill is possessed of their soules; And he must continue a little while with me, but a great while with them.

This was broadened to make himself a lesson or a speaker for morality generally. 'Well, there are some Papists, and some Atheists, and some of no religion; woe be to those that dye suddenly, for they have no time to repent, and especially those that live in drunkennesse, or whoring, or swearing'. For 'drunkards & whoremasters' who remained unrepentant, he had a warning, that there 'is no drunkard that doth drink some one spooneful or drop of drink more than doth suffice nature, but the Devill doth pen it down in his book' and, lest listeners should underestimate the record-keeping skills of Satan, he added, 'it is a great book, and he doth keep it close untill the day of Iudgement'. If such people looked upon him with pity, thinking his troubles were lengthy, he reminded them

that 'it was better to be so, than to wallow in drunkennesse, swearing, and whoring; for the Divell doth worke in their soules'. Although Thomas was not delivered at the first attempt, he was willing to reassure those present that he had confidence in the means employed, telling them to ignore those who 'say hee will not come out of me' for 'when God comes he will strike home'. One can only hope he was right, for the account by Hinde and the material available to Darrell, Deacon and Walker give no resolution to the attempts at dispossession.

Finally, Darrell mentioned the cases of Joan Jorden and Joan Nayler, two cases with particular resonance in terms of assessing the shifting discourse, both of which were given more attention in Trial.¹²⁷ Joan Jorden was a servant of Simon Fox in Stradbrook, Suffolk. On 8 June 1599 she was troubled by a spirit and it seems to have been sufficiently worrying for a number of respectable neighbours, including the vicar, Mr Randall, the constable and representatives of the gentry to be there the following night to see if the spirit returned. The level of the sensation is shown by the fact that only three, Randall, Fox and John Sheereman, knew her. A spirit did indeed appear, 'in the likenes of a cat', coming down the chimney about 11 p.m., scraping on the walls, knocking and 'shuffling in the rushes'. He 'clapped the maide on the cheekes' about ten times in an attempt to wake her and '(as oft times els he did) he kissed her 3. or 4. times and slavered on her'. Then he lay on her chest, pressing her down so she could not speak, at other times holding her hands so she could not stir. It is not entirely clear, but it seems that at this stage only Joan could see him. The shape in which he appeared to those present was an interesting modification of a turn of phrase common in the accounts of Sommers's swellings. 'The Shape... was a thick darke substance about a foote high; like to a sugar lofe, white of the top'. Presumably, given they could see the colour of his top, he was still on rather than in Joan. Upon being attacked, he doubled in size.

¹²⁷ Darrell, The Replie, 54.

Once he occupied his victim, he acquired a voice, 'by which he spake and uttered many thinges'. The voice was not Joan's and, although Joan denied this, 'she & the spirit were heard to speak both at once'. In any case, her lips were static when the spirit spoke. Spectators were concerned, but also suspicious, for they searched the house, now filled with 'divers who came to see and heare these strang accidents', but found neither accomplices or devices in any of the adjoining rooms.

The company set to question the spirit, seemingly led by John Sheereman. He seems to have been quite chatty and open. Among other unrecorded speeches, he said,

Joane, loane, I come for thy life; I will have it, I am a Boy, a Boy; my name is Gyles;
an old woman that dwells in the streete gave mee that name, to wit, Doll Barthram;
She sent me; I have served her 10. yeares, yea 20. yeares; She is now in prison,...
Nan Barthram sent me now; I will kill loane to morrow night; I will teare her in peeces,
She hath given her life and soule to mee.

Joan acknowledged this last, and Gyles laughed. Sheereman denied that he could have her life and Gyles responded: 'I wil have thyne then; I come to thee, I come'; & with that, offered towards him, to the great astonishment & feare of him and the rest present'. With that, he vanished.

Shortly after, he returned, coming down the chimney and knocking. When those present were talking about a Mrs Cavers, he spoke, telling of going with Tom, another of Olive Barthram's spirits, in order to hang Mrs Cavers upon Barthram's orders. At first Gyles took her into a ditch but could not get the water over her chin so he brought her out. Then Tom brought a rope and put it under her jawline and Gyles pulled her up and hanged her. 'Which seemeth to have ben so, because of the strangnes of it. For, the rope werewithall Cavers wife was hanged, was but put under her chaps, not about her neck: and the noose was so bigge, that three mens heds might have slipt through it at once'. Gyles went on to brag of his feats, claiming to have killed an unborn child 'by nipping out

the braines' and to have torn the heart of a man to pieces, thus killing him. His appetite for blood was not yet sated, for after many speeches he said, 'that hee would kill lone, and teare Iohn Sheereman in pieces; that he was their God; and that he would not be content with the life of Iohn only, but would have also the lives of Fox, his wife, children, and Doll Barthram'. These threats were his last words of the night.

Nicholas Bacon was the nearest magistrate and four of his men were sent to investigate the nature of her experiences. They saw a lump 'arise in her body as big as a mans fist', moving up into her throat and 'there settled as big as a mans arme'. Joan started thrashing around and was bound into a chair. The spirit's strength was such that the chair was quickly broken. They bound her more tightly to another chair and six men tried to restrain her. Despite this, while she stayed in the chair, she managed to move it 'round about the house, a yard at a time, they hanging thereon'.

After this fit ended, she was put to bed but the spirit returned at 11 p.m. This time his presence was announced by 'a great stroke on the bo[a]rdes, like the fall of a greate stone'. This woke the company and she cried for help and 'a thicke shadow was seene to goe up to the maides bed'. Once the spirit had entered her, she was thrown violently against the wall and then was stuck beneath the bed, with the company unable to remove her, as she had grown unnaturally heavy. During this fit, her eyes were sunk an inch into her head and her head and body 'were bent backwards, almost to her hips'. She lay as if dead with her teeth clenched shut to such an extent that a man could not part them even though, with all his strength 'he assayed it with his dagger and a key'. Similarly, they tested her state by pushing 'a stiffe dry Rush' into her nostrils so far 'as it might touch her braines in the iudgment of them that were present' with no reaction, violently bent her fingers back and poured Aquavita into her mouth. After half an hour of this trance she opened one of her eyes, staring 'very strangely', then the other, saying, 'ô Barthram, thou hast killed mee'. Evidently she had not, for she recovered, and, understandably, given the forms of testing

her condition, struggled to escape and those present were unable to hold her. Though there is no account of her dispossession, Olive Barthram was brought before Lord Anderson, condemned, and executed at Bury St. Edmunds on 12 July 1599.¹²⁸

The second case of possession seems further from the godly drama of fasting and dispossession. The accused was one Anne Kerke, who lived in Castle Alley, near Broken Wharf in London. She had an established reputation as a witch, having been suspected of killing one toddler and, when she enquired with her sibling how her sister did, the latter was stricken down, 'her mouth beeing drawne aside like a purse', foaming and staring, with the rest of her body being strangely disfigured'. She recovered but had acquired recurrent sufferings. When the case came to court, she was asked to show the nature of her troubles but said she was incapable of mimicking the actions without being in a fit. There were similar cases of children being tormented, with medicine proving useless and, on two occasions cunning folk being called upon. One advised the client to cut some cloth from Kerke's coat with shears and burn it, which proved successful. The second case was less fortunate: the man was told she was a witch, shared this with a neighbour when Kerke was out of earshot but, as a consequence, 'fell sick and dyed'.

Things came to a head with the Naylor family in neighbouring Thames Street. A son named George was tormented and died. Then his sister Anne 'was oftymes vexed w[i]th a frenzines'. When the father quizzed her of the cause in one of her fits, 'the spirit which was within her said, that one would come after who should "discover the causer, and the truth of all[""]'. Accordingly, at the funeral of Anne, when Kerke received no alms despite being of the parish and was grieved at this, she turned her attention to another sister, Joan. The following night she was distraught and 'tormented with an evil spirit'. Her parents heard the spirit 'spake in her oftymes', saying things like the following:

¹²⁸ Trial, 92-8.

Give me thy liver, thy lights, thy heart, thy soule, &c; then thou shalt be released,
then I will depart from thee: also; Goe, take thy lace & hang thy selfe: Go into the
next roome and hang thy selfe in the iack rope, and thou shalt be released.

She was often in trances and physical sufferings, 'during which her mouth was turned to th'one side, her ioynts so shrunke up that the soles of her feete did beate together, her shoulder bones did strike one against another, so, as that they were heard to rattle, to the terror of them present'.

When the spirit named Anne Kerke as the bewitcher, some of those present encouraged Nayler to scratch her but her hands were 'so fast closed' that she could not. Such efforts were reproduced, with a warrant from Sir Richard Martin, with similar results. In his house and in the homes of two other gentry she fell into a trance as soon as Kerke arrived. She was also reported to have fallen into a trance in the fields when Kerke was released from prison on bail. Sir Richard tried another popular way of tackling witches, sending a servant to cut Kerke's hair but the barber's scissors 'turned round in his hand: and the edges were so battered, turned, & quite spoiled, as that they would not cut any thing'. When they finally extracted some hair and threw it into the fire, the fire moved away and it sat there unburnt.¹²⁹

For the author of Triall, the climax of the story was twofold. Kerke was arraigned on 30 November 1599 and condemned by, among others Lord Anderson, an ally of Bancroft's against Darrell, showing that belief in possession was not a monopoly of puritans. More importantly, Bishop Bancroft was present at the trial and, after hearing evidence about grievous sufferings and seeing a young girl in a fit, 'yet he smiled (at no laughing matter,
as som of the Bench tolde his L[ordship].) saying, That hee sawe nothing that might not be counterfeited, and tolde, how many Counterfeits he had lately discovered'. Upon hearing this, Anderson and others felt it necessary to explain to the jury that there was Scriptural

¹²⁹ Ibid., 99-103.

evidence for witchcraft and to tell 'of sundry bewitched, yea possessed out of whom Divels spake: and of a childe bewitched to death whose eyes were fast closed, yet when the Witch came in presence they opened, and (as it were) stared upon the Witch'.¹³⁰ This was an effort to present Bancroft and his cohort as an uncaring minority, willing to laugh at others' misfortunes and unwilling to let Scripture dictate their appraisal of reality, hardly a flattering image. How successful this was beyond the already convinced we have no evidence.

In the effort to enhance awareness of loyalty to the genuineness of Sommers's possession, and to Darrell's honesty, surviving under pressure until the pressure moved beyond the local and, for some, through the trials at Lambeth, I hope to have established the case for a less than homogenous official diminution of belief in the reality of demonic possession per se. However, one unintended consequence of this may be the impression of an equally homogenous response among the self-identified godly, with the weaker, self-interested, such as Robert Aldridge, eventually bending under pressure to toe the party line of disowning Sommers and, at least, by implication, the probity of Darrell et al. As a corrective to that, and as an identification of tensions to which I will return, some attention needs to be paid to contributions to the debate which have been merely touched upon. In themselves, the two publications of John Deacon and John Walker took the debate down a dead-end road, but for our purposes, this can be read as symptomatic of a search for a way of coping with the consequences of the success of Lambeth's efforts to taint the efforts of the godly at dispossession with fraudulence and gullibility, albeit not the way finally taken. Before examining the textual strategies of Deacon and Walker, along with those of Samuel Harsnet, it is worth turning attention to another case involving the godly, both as those offering aid and those seeing an opportunity to advance their cause. As well

¹³⁰ Ibid., 87-8.

as being noteworthy in itself, it is also another occasion where the witch-hunting appetite of Lord Edmund Anderson overcame his hostility to puritanism.

The shifting sands of assessment: the trials of Mary Glover

The sufferings of Mary Glover, their treatment and the resultant controversy tend to appear as an epilogue to the grander conflict over the activities of John Darrell and his supporters. After the theatricals of Burton, Nottingham and Derbyshire, the grand drama of the trials at Lambeth, and the caustic literature that they produced, the historiography tends to treat her demonic possession almost as an afterthought, as an anti-climax undeserving of much attention because the political realities of dispossession as a stage for puritan propaganda had been settled.¹ This underestimates both the cast and the location of the process. The possession was in one of the richer parishes of the capital, involved families of the aldermen and the College of Physicians and merited the renewed attention of Richard Bancroft, creating a new effort at discrediting puritan claims, employing different means to discourage them being given credit and making it harder for them to exercise control over the script. It is, I hope to show, an important step in the politics of demonic possession although less so in the discourse of possession as such.

Mary Glover was the fourteen-year-old daughter of Timothy Glover, a merchant whose brother was William Glover, alderman and former sheriff of London. Early in 1602 she had a quarrel with Elizabeth Jackson, an elderly charwoman, for having told one of her employers of a 'certaine fashion of her subtile and importunat begging'.² At the end of April Mary was sent on an errand to Jackson's house and, upon her entry, Jackson locked the door. Despite Mary's protests, Elizabeth kept her in and threatened and cursed her for

¹ Michael MacDonald (ed and intro.), Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case (London, 1991) is the exception to this, providing an analysis along with copies of the relevant publications and a transcript of the manuscript account. What follows is indebted to this work, despite occasional disagreements.

² BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 3r. This is Stephen Bradwell's 'Mary Glover's Late Woeful Case, Together With Her Joyfull Deliverance'. Hereafter references will appear in the text. It is transcribed in full with minimalist editorial intrusion in MacDonald and for ease of readers wanting to chase references I will give the foliation, followed by MacDonald's pagination. I have compared his text with the original. As will emerge below, Bradwell's first real encounter with Mary was not until the examination in the chambers of John Croke in October 1602, and so the earlier stages of his account must be dependent on the statements of her family, friends and supporters.

about an hour. Upon her departure Mary felt ill at ease and said as much to Elizabeth Burges, a servant from a neighbouring house. Burges, 'perceiving her countenance and colour much altered, had asked her how she did'. Jackson reportedly went to the house where Burges worked, bragging that she had rattled the busybody and that 'I hope an evill death will come unto her' (f. 3v, 3).

There seems to have been no immediate significant effect on Mary other than a certain lethargy but the troubles stepped up a gear the following Monday. Mary was sat in her father's shop, eating a posset, possibly for medicinal purposes. Elizabeth Jackson appeared at the door wanting to see Mary's mother. Mary told of her absence and, according to Bradwell, Elizabeth 'snappishly replied' that she must speak with her, and left. Mary returned to her posset but could not swallow anymore.

Hereupon she went to a familiar neighbours house for succour, where she was taken moreover speechles, and blynde, and so was brought home to her fathers house.

The same hower her necke and throat did swell extremely, and very deformedly, and so did it thereafter every day at sundrie times, depriving her of speeche, but not much impeaching breathing (f. 4r, 4).

These outbreaks recurred over the next eighteen days, three or four times a day. In this time she could take very little food or drink 'save by way of injection, or forcible powring downe with a spoone', and even these means accomplished little. Although her health and strength remained, her parents worried. After one of the fits, on the Wednesday after the first, they were so concerned that they had the bell tolled for her. When Elizabeth heard this she went to a neighbour's house and said, 'I thanck my God he hath heard my prayer, and stopped the mouth and tyed the tongue of one of myne enemies'. Perhaps ill-advisedly, she made similar declarations at William Glover's house and elsewhere. Mary's mother heard of this and confronted her. Elizabeth denied the remarks, or boasts, but likely encouraged by the confrontation of an angry mother, ended up telling her, 'You have

not crosses ynow, but I hope you shall have as many crosses, as ever fell upon woman and children' (ff. 4v-5r, 4).

It is noteworthy that all the symptoms reported to this stage were physical and passive. There was no suspicion of witchcraft or possession recounted and the first port of call for the Glovers was a physician rather than a divine. They brought in Dr Robert Shereman, a fellow of the College of Physicians who, with the aid of 'a Chirurgeon', tried various remedies with the early diagnosis being 'squinary', a set of swellings consequent upon tonsillitis. These efforts, however, achieved nothing, with Mary's only relief coming from pushing a finger or an 'instrument' down her throat. In this time, and it is unclear whether it was before or after the confrontation with Mistress Glover, Elizabeth Jackson sent Mary an orange 'as in token of kindenes'. This gift, probably intended as an indication of neighbourly concern, was open to different interpretations. Initially, Mary seems to have appreciated the gift, holding on to it and enjoying the aroma. However, a common trope in witchcraft narratives is the intrusion of a possession of the suspect into the home of the bewitched and the gift was turned to this purpose. Bradwell notes that afterward the same hand which held the orange, along with the arm and that side of her body 'were deprived of feeling and moving in all her long fitts, and not before' (f. 5r-v, 4).

After these eighteen days, and apparently after the exchange between mother and charwoman, Mary's symptoms shifted. She recovered the ability to swallow and ate well for a while. However, 'now her belly swelled and shewed in it, and in the brest, certaine movings, often in the day, with fittes of dumnes, blyndnes and deformed swelling of the throte'. Shereman 'suspected som supernaturall cause to be present' but was, as yet, unsure. His diagnosis shifted to hysteria, a condition caused by problems of the womb, or at least he wanted to test this possibility. Unsatisfied with the efforts to prove this to be the case he concluded that something more was involved. Interestingly, considering later conclusions, the parents do not seem to have shared this conclusion, for he was replaced

with Thomas Moundeford, an even more senior physician and an expert in melancholy, another possible natural disease or natural means employed by Satan as well as a condition in itself.³ He contributed his analysis over the next three months. In this time, the symptoms grew more active and became more clearly associated with Elizabeth Jackson. In the middle of June, Mary was given the 'new wheaten lofe' she asked for and was eating it in the shop. At this point Elizabeth passed, pausing to look at Mary but not speaking, and moved on. Then she returned, stared again, and left, with the account allowing implications of 'the evil eye'. At this moment the bread Mary was eating fell out of her mouth and she fell off the stool and into 'a grievous fitt'. From this point on, she had a fit every time she ate and whenever she went to bed on every second day. She moved into a pattern where fits occurred every day when she ate and every other day, 'her worser day' she had 'a long fitt, which began at a sett hower' (ff. 5v-6v, 5). The connection was made clearer in Bradwell's account of a Sunday shortly after. When Mary arrived at church 'to hear the sermon', Elizabeth was already there, which suggests that the Glovers avoided the earlier part of the service using the prayer book and so probably a sign of godly inclinations. Elizabeth stood up in her pew to look upon Mary and after that '(as though she would shun the occasion of being noted) looked at her, under the arm of another woman, which stood leaning upon the pew'. Mary started to feel 'amisse' and was taken home 'and fell into a grievous fitt, which was through repetycons of the witches view, increased both in strength and strangnes dayly' (f. 6v, 5).

Despite Bradwell's efforts to stress Jackson's culpability in his account which was written after the resolution, it seems Mary's parents were yet to be completely of this mind because they persevered with medical efforts. Her symptoms were becoming a greater test for a diagnosis of natural illness. She was turned 'round as a whoope, with her head

³ Bradwell draws attention to the time it took to consider turning to aid other than medical aid as evidence against the affair being a family-driven counterfeit: 'Phisitions and Chirurgeons were used seriously from her affliction, and for ten weekes space continued, untill they pronounced that there was something in it, beyond the compasse of naturall causes': BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 93r (MacDonald, 75).

backward to her hippes' and would roll and tumble around the chamber with such violence that the three women working to protect her from crashing into the furniture would be sweating from the effort. Mary, however, was 'all over colde and stiffe as a frozen thing'. After the period in this form she would turn round the contrary way, 'that is, her head forward betweene her leggs, and then also rowled and tumbled as before'. After a few days of this, Bradwell reports her mouth having 'exceeding wyde gapings' and spectacular halitosis that, when it struck her mother's face or her sister's face, caused swelling and blistering. This, he makes clear, was caused by some 'unlawfull meanes' used by Moundeford and takes the opportunity to reprehend the doctor for employing dubious medicine to seek the glory of a cure and to make it obvious to the reader that it would have been 'easier for him, if he had joyned in praier and fasting, which he so scorned and reproched, for moving it'. Such means would have been more effective (although Bradwell grudgingly grants that Moundeford's treatment lessened Mary's fits) and should have been undertaken regardless of whether 'he had reaped the imputation of a Puritan' for having done so (ff. 6v-8r, 5-6).

In this period of mitigation, Mary's mother took her into the City of London. At this stage the family had apparently told few beyond their neighbours and medics. Bradwell implies that what followed took it a stage further and required more preemptory action. The cause of the exacerbation of Mary's woes is made plain. As they went into town, 'they met with that wretched woman Elizabeth Jackson'. Upon seeing her, Mary was so troubled that her mother felt they should return home and 'so relinquish their further intended Journey' (f. 8r, 6-7). This encounter provides the preface for Bradwell's first detailed examination and analysis of Mary's symptoms along with the first steps toward juridical proceedings.

Mary's symptoms seem to have settled into a broad pattern at this point, 'a double encreased fitt' which 'dayly proceeded with many uncouth novelties'. At 3 p.m., every second day, she 'sodenlie changed in her countenance', becoming pale and wan, her

eyes deadening, her chin sinking into her chest and her body becoming rigid. She was lain on her bed, on her back and 'there appeared in her brest, a notable heaving, or rising, with successive fallings, very frequent, and fast going'. From this position of enclosed passivity, insensible and detached, she would shoot down the bed to the foot, with her head and shoulders low. Then she would slowly sit upright, very slowly, with her chin still resting on her chest, 'her face and neck somewhat swolne'. Once upright her neck would stretch, 'much longer then naturall, and thinner then presently before'. While remaining 'dumbe, blinde and senceles', she regained movement and showed signs of some emotion. With her eyes shut close, she would turn her head, sometimes smiling and sometimes frowning. Her limbs recovered their motion and she moved her arms, 'somtime as though she floorished like a fencer, sometime as though she drew a bow to shoote, and that towards sondry places'. She moved her fingers as if she was playing a harp or the virginals. After a spell of this, she set her fists to her sides and raised her shoulders, 'as though she would dance', moving on to 'perform very nimble and strange motions of her hands, and fingers', sometimes in front of her, sometimes behind. Suddenly she would become rigid again, still sitting, while her head and breast 'writhed about, slowlie', moving back up the bed. Once there her mouth 'made many strange anticke formes', moving from side to side, 'and then gaping strangely wyde delivered out of the throte a vyolent blast with this sound (*tesh*) in a long accent upon the end'. This would occur three times, followed by a spell when her head would move swiftly, and when her 'mouth was abused with the same distortions, gapings and blastings, in figure and number, as before'. Then she returned to slow movement, with her chin sinking into her breast and gently, slowly, lying down. This would recur six times before she returned to her self at 6 in the evening (ff. 8r-10r, 7-8). Bradwell took the account of symptoms set out to make three points to the reader. The first was partly to make clear the willingness of those present to test the authenticity of Mary's movements. Thus, as she was slowly sitting up, one witness would push her back down

and found that the nature of the rigidity that ran through her body meant that the consequence was that, as her back went down, her legs rose and that when pushed contrary to the speed and direction of movement, when the external forces were removed, her body went back to its former position, and resumed its movement. The second point was to introduce, for the first time, physical responses to religious activities, clearly raising the challenge for solely natural diagnoses. When she was lying passively, between fits, some of the company would begin prayer. When the speaker arrived at the sixth petition in the Lord's Prayer, deliver us from evil, 'her body would be thrown from the place where it lay, sometime to the beddes head, sometime to the beds side'. In these responses, 'her body would be strangely writhen, and crooked, backward, or sideway' and resumed its 'abused motions and deformed gestures' characteristic of her fits. The third point was to accentuate the nature of her movements as at least difficult to achieve with normal human capabilities (ff. 10r-12r, 8-9).

The stage shifted, possibly from a combination of concern in wider circles, a desire within the Glover family and friends for progress, and perhaps in response to suggestions of doubt regarding Mary's authenticity. The stage was more public than the Glovers' home, with respectable authority but certainly not an open stage where they surrendered their means to influence the perceptions. Elizabeth Jackson was called to meet Mary Glover at the house of her uncle, William Glover, an alderman and former sheriff. Mary's experience went according to the established expectation. Under the eye of the magistrate, albeit a presumably sympathetic one with family ties, she responded appropriately. Once Elizabeth arrived, before Mary could speak a few words, the girl fell into an extreme fit, 'a farre differing fit' such that she was to have 'at sundry other times, by occasion of bringing that old woman to her', thereby reinforcing the impression of Elizabeth's causal connection (ff. 12r-v, 9). Bradwell chose to make this the point at which to elucidate the categories of fit, ordinary and extraordinary, with the latter being like the former but 'strengthened and

lengthened, yea with som new addicions' and occurring 'at all howers and dayes when the old woman came to her and not els' or, more graphically, 'augmented by her contagious coming to her' (ff. 12r-v, 9-10). Following Bradwell's structure, I will set out the character of the ordinary fit first, moving on to the extraordinary afterwards.

The ordinary fits came every other day and started at about noon. Her eyes were 'drawen up into her head' and her tongue cleaved to the bottom of her mouth. Her mouth opened 'with uncouth wideness' and closed again with her neck stretching out. She would walk up and down, with the assistance of two people, until her left leg 'becam senceles'. At this point she was laid on a bed and her left hand became a clenched fist, held tight to her side and hard to shift. The whole left side lost tactile sense and mobility and her hearing on that side was lost. By contrast, her right side retained hearing and understanding and her limbs on that side 'were so limber and light, to move, as no resolved members use to be' and her right hand would lift 'towards heaven ... as craving ayd from thence'. Suddenly 'there would arise a swelling in her belly, as great as a football', larger than earlier swellings and moving back and forth between her belly and breast five or six times. Then 'the mover' seemed to glide along her breastbone, 'to mount up the channell bone' where it stayed for half a minute until it passed into her throat, taking her breath away for a moment and pushing her head right back. When she recovered her breath, her right leg would beat upon the bed and, if not restrained, her right hand would beat her throat while she was 'roaring with a hoarse and quavering voyce'. After many of these 'roaring cries and tossings', the swelling would 'geve a suddaine joulte', move back to her breast as before and then return to her throat, leading to 'an other crying fitt, beating her body, all as before'. This pattern repeated about a hundred times 'and allwayes when the last came, she gave a signe, at the very moment of the concluding of it, by lifting up her right hand'. The calm lasted for between fifteen and thirty minutes before the fit returned, continuing,

with intermissions until six, seven or eight at night, when its decline was signalled the same way each time (ff.13r-15r, 10-11).

At the end of the last fit, when she raised her right hand it lost its mobility, taking on 'the form of a dyall hand', that is, with the thumb and forefinger extended and the rest clasped in. She became stiff on both sides and was 'deprived of all maner sense and feeling'. Her hand very, very slowly began to move towards her mouth, so slowly that movement could not be immediately discerned. After about forty five minutes, her forefinger touched her neck, traced up via her chin and come to her lower lip. Her lower jaw was locked, jutting forward in a version of the gurning seen before and when her finger touched her lower lip, 'both the lipps deformedly grinning, did open'. When she touched her teeth, 'the mouth flew wyde open' and she inserted her finger as far as her hand would allow, perhaps with an echo of her earlier self-medication, as it were. Then it withdrew, her mouth locked again and her hand returned to her side, slightly less slowly, and rested, keeping its shape. This was followed by the same action from her left hand, unclenching the fist for the first time since the start of the fit, with the left hand a little more speedy and less hesitant in its motion. Once it had been inserted, it too returned to its place. Bradwell notes similar tests to those noted above; when onlookers tried to hasten the movement the hand would return to where it was supposed to be, and continue its progress at its own pace. Once her left hand had returned to her side, then the clasped fingers on the right would open and stretch forth, 'which no sooner doe obteyne their former libertie, but she retourneth againe her understanding, the same moment'. Her left fingers followed and then her eyes opened, 'but with many workings and motions of her forehead, twinckelings of her eylidds, and turning of the head to every side'. Her hands rose and met in a prayerful position in the middle of her chest, her right hand rising heavenwards. Her mouth opened and her tongue gradually became serviceable (ff. 15r-17v, 12-13).

Then would she instantly lift up her eyes, and hand, to heaven, and with the signes of a devote minde, and fervent spirit, utter these words: O Lord I geve thee thanks, that thou hast delivered me, this tyme, and many more; I beseech thee (good Lord) deliver me for ever (ff. 17v-18r, 13).

As soon as she had prayed, and it should be noted that this is the first vocal demonstration of piety, her mouth locked again, her eyes were 'vyolently drawen up' and her left hand clenched again. The 'risings and reboundings in her brest, and belly' returned, more briefly but more violently than before. In addition, 'there falleth a visible motion like a bird flickering, or mouse running behind a Curten, downe from the Cannell bones, into the belly'. Then her eyes opened and she recognised those around her although she could not speak, lying for about half an hour. Then there was one last set of pangs and movements, short but intense, 'a most lamentable spectacle to behould' (ff. 18r-v, 13-4).

The final purgative phase of her fits would start in her fingers. Each digit would be tentatively released, stretched and shaken. In this process, taking about fifteen minutes, onlookers saw that 'somthing appearinge imediatly under the skinne, made an eminent stirring, and working, betweene the litle finger and the ring finger'. This stirring would continue until the finger was fully under Mary's control. The same process followed for each of her joints, moving from the left to right, starting with wrists, elbows and shoulders. As Mary regained each limb, the movement under her skin became more central, and more rigorous, 'swiftly boutling down from the Canell bones at the gayning of their liberty'. This came to a climax as each part was delivered 'out of their former servitude' with their 'proud tyrannous Lord' taking each limb and marking it with 'a new livery of abusion' (ff. 19r-20r, 14-5).

Her arms would be cast above her head, stretched out and the backs of her hands together with the fingers with as great a distance between them as possible, followed by

her legs and body similarly stretching. Then she would be taken 'in a suddaine strange motion; that made all the bed to shake'. Her hands would move in circular patterns, facing in and facing out. Bradwell describes her hands over her head as 'this uncouth position' and the movements of her hands as having 'such Luciferian ostentation', although he is careful to make it clear that this was done 'with an absolute voydenes of all sence and understanding'. Mary's sentience was restored, 'by an arme of power incomparable; even the arme of him, who hath sett just and sure boundes, to the swelling surges of the Seas'. Order was restored, first shown by her arms being 'layed down, decently, by both her sides'. Her eyes were restored and she lifted her hands in thanksgiving. She struggled with her mouth and throat until 'there falleth an extraordinary great, and swyfte warbling joulte, downe from the throat, to the belly'. With this her jaw become unlocked and her voice gradually returned. To begin with her voice was so soft that only those closest to her could decipher it but as she went on for about thirty minutes, her capacity increased until she could be heard by all the attendees. Bradwell stresses the *ex tempore* nature of the prayer and the joy of its simplicity, 'sutable to the ignorance of a simple mayd' (ff.20v-22r, 15-16).

For example: Lord teach me a good use of this thy affliction, yet not as I will, but thy will be done. Otherwise, and for the most part, her prayer was very fervent, to good purpose, and with great variety of spirit: As for the pardon of her sinnes, the manifestation of the truth, the glory of God, and satisfaction of his Church. Also, for the conversion of the woman, calling God to witnes, that her selfe added nothing to her owne afflictions. Againe, for patience and deliverance in Gods good time, and by his owne holy meanes. Likewise for the curbing of Sathan, if he were an instrument or otherwise, for curing the imperfections of her body. So did she geve God thanks, he had redemed her out of the opinyon of Counterfetting; and in part, satisfied the world in that behalfe. All these, and many mo[r]e benefitts, she craved, and thanks giving offered, only in the name and mediation of our Saviour and Redemer Jesus

Christ; disclayming her owne merites, and submitting her selfe wholly to the will of God; who hath promised, that all things shall worke togeather for the best, to as many as feare him (ff. 22r-23r, 16-7).

Effectively, in Bradwell's account, Mary Glover delivered a crisp, humble and orthodox expression of the orthodoxies of the right response to demonic possession.

The complete recovery was marked by Mary walking again, with assistance, as she had at the start of the fits. This was usually around midnight, making a total of twelve hours for an 'ordinary' period of possession. Of this time she could recall no more than her senses going suddenly and then coming back, having no idea of the time or her actions. In addition, despite the physical demands of the movements by and within her body, she felt very little pain after she had emerged from her fits. The devil had one encore when she was put to bed. For an hour she would have another 'Crying fitt' when she would remain conscious but lose control of her eyes and tongue, 'together with a huge extension in her throate' and she would thrash around, with four people working to protect her from the 'stryvyng with her body'. As before, the end of the fit would be marked by her fingers, first from the right hand, second the left, being inserted into her mouth and withdrawn. After this, she had a well earned and probably much needed rest (ff. 23r-24v, 17-8).⁴

Bradwell's account of the 'extraordinary' fits is briefer and the focus different as he is as concerned to prove the connection to Elizabeth Jackson as to detail the symptoms. To cover all possibilities, he stresses that these fits descended upon Mary 'only at such times, as that wretched old woman came within the roome where she was' and that, with variations, they occurred when Mary was already in an ordinary fit or when she was, before Jackson's arrival, in fine fettle. In the latter circumstances, Mary would 'dye away, by degrees', losing her senses, her eyes closing and her jaw locked, with her upper teeth

⁴ Bradwell gives the impression that this was the 'normal' length but there is a suggestion that they grew in length; when he recounts the meeting at William Glover's house Mary's condition is described as newly recovered from an ordinary fit 'which in those dayes, was not past fower howers long': *ibid.*, f. 26v (MacDonald, 19).

so far over the lower that 'the nether could scarcely be seene'. If Elizabeth was 'merely' in the room, Mary would lie completely rigid but with no signs of stress. If Elizabeth approached her, touched her or her clothes (or was made to do so), Mary's body would often 'wallow over unto her' or, 'rising up in the middle, rebounding wise turne over, unto her' with 'her elbowes being then deformedly drawn inwards, and withall plucked upwards, to her Chin' with her wrists turned outwards and down, 'a position well becoming the malice of that efficient [cause]'. On the first occasions the action was very visibly towards the suspected, more indiscriminate at later times. Despite her mouth being shut fast, 'there cam a voyce through her nostrills, that sounded very like (especially at some time) Hange her, or Honge her', a voice to which we will return. The voice remained while Elizabeth was in the room and ceased when she left. When Elizabeth was brought in when Mary was already in an ordinary fit, 'her fitt would alter, all motions in the belly and breast cease, all returnes of her panges geve over, her understanding depart, and all outward feeling be abolished'. In the new condition, gradually the voice would be heard, at first very quietly, auditors 'perceaved a voyce whisperingly com through her nostrills; which both then, and when it atteyned to the height of it woonted audibiltie, sounded, hang her, or honge her'.⁵ Similarly, the voice remained until Elizabeth's departure and after an hour 'those ougly distortions of her parts, and totall stiffnes, proper to this fitt only, by easie and visible relentings, [would] go away' and she would return to the pattern of an 'ordinary' fit (ff. 24v-26v, 18-9).

Bradwell then provides four specific instances, gradually building a case intended to support the empirical veracity of Mary's condition. The first is the meeting at William Glover's residence, noted above. The second was shortly after, when Sir John Harte, former Lord Mayor of London, called Elizabeth in by warrant, seemingly to sample the means for himself. Upon her arrival, Mary fell into such a fit and lay comatose until

⁵ This was the first time the voice was heard: *ibid.*, f. 27r (MacDonald, 20).

Elizabeth touched her, whereupon Mary's body was cast upon her, a response repeated when Elizabeth was taken back, moved round the other side of the bed and touched her again. As far as Bradwell was concerned the conclusions were clear. 'And this was now first observed, as a second challenge the oppressed senseles creature made, to this wicked mediatrice of her wofull affliction' (ff. 26v-27v, 19-20).⁶ The 'third experiment' was for 'Lady Brunckard', 'in the presence of many Divines and Phisitions'. 'Lady Brunckard' as far as can be ascertained, was Anne Brouncker, the daughter of Henry Parker, the second Baron of Morley and married to Henry Brouncker. The named and unnamed company offers social respectability, professional and spiritual grounding. Mary's body, already senseless, 'was cast, with great violence, towards Elizabeth Jackson, when she touched her, and towards her only'. The detail is spent on Elizabeth's shock, fear and trembling, along with 'aboundance of outfacing speeches, and impudent lying', as far as Bradwell is concerned, plainly 'notes of a ruyned conscience' (f. 27v, 20).⁷

The lengthiest account is that held in the chambers of John Croke in Inner Temple. Croke was coming towards the end of his spell as Recorder of London as well as being a former judge on the Brecon circuit, MP for the City of London and Speaker for the Commons in 1601. In his judicial capacity he called Mary and Elizabeth to his chambers on 18 October 1602.⁸ Upon the arrival of Mary, her mother 'with certaine other weomen', they were sent into an upper chamber. This was a new stage and less automatically in favour of Mary's pleas. Croke voiced his doubts when he spoke to Mary, telling her that,

⁶ A mediatrix is a female mediator, in this case, between Satan and Mary.

⁷ Bradwell returns to this occasion later, telling of 'a certaine gentlewoman' who was willing to 'ascribe whatsoever she saw; to the passions of the mother', effectively suggesting that Edward Jorden, the physician who worked to prove the naturalness of Mary's condition who will be encountered below, was of a similar cast of mind, equally 'manifestedly possessed with præjudice' when he later diagnosed Mary as suffering from suffocation of the mother. This gentlewoman was persuaded of the supernatural nature of Mary's condition by the voice from her nostrils: BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 135v (MacDonald, 110-11).

⁸ According to Lewis Hughes, Croke was ordered to call them together by Edmund Anderson, the Lord Chief Justice, having been informed by Richard Bancroft, that Jackson was wronged. Hughes phrases it awkwardly and it is not clear whether he is suggesting that the call was made after Jackson had been convicted, which would be inaccurate. It is certainly likely that Bancroft was unhappy to hear of a demonic possession in his diocese, less so that he would have given instructions to Anderson who, as seen above, shared Bancroft's dislike of puritans but parted company on the credibility of possession: Lewis Hughes, Certain Grievances, or, The Popish Errors and Ungodlinesse of the Service-Book, 5th edition (London, 1642), 17.

'she should looke up unto God, feare him, and not make her selfe a false Accuser of any body'. His detachment was also evident when Elizabeth arrived with 'sundry weomen', her own supporters. He addressed her, 'with like gravitie, also admonished her, not to out face the truth, but rather to acknowledge her fault'. His first ploy was to choose an aged woman, 'homely, grosse bodyed, and of lowe stature', 'very comparable to Elizabeth Jackson'. He dressed her in the accused's hat and a muffler to prevent her being recognised. She was taken up to the chamber and Mary was made to walk past her two or three times, touching her twice. When there was no response he said, 'I am glad to see this Mary; I hope thou shalt touch her freely many times hereafter, and never be affrayde', implying that fear had caused her reported reactions on the earlier encounters.⁹ Then he took the woman downstairs and returned with Elizabeth, with the accused wearing the former's hat, with a cloak and muffler 'so as none could know who she was'. If the plan was to re-enact the earlier test, it was preempted for no sooner had Elizabeth appeared at the lower end of chamber 'but the Maydes Countenance altered'. They were brought together, whereupon 'was this senseles image throwen upon the bed, having that voyce in her nostrills, spoken of before' (ff. 27v-28v, 20-1). Lewis Hughes, a minister who had been present among those concerned with Glover from early on, states that as soon as Elizabeth entered the chamber Mary 'suddenly fell down backwards on the floore, with her eyes pluckt into her, her her [sic] tongue pluckt into her throat, her mouth drawn up to her eare, her bodie stiffe and sencelesse, her lips being shut close, a plain and audible loud voice came out of her nostrils saying Hang her, hang her'.¹⁰ Not as yet, it seems, satisfied with this evidence, Croke sent for a candle and heated a pin. He applied it to her cheek and then held it near her eye to see if she reacted or made 'any semblant of feeling, but she did not'. According to Hughes he 'thrust the head of it into her nostrils, to see if that

⁹ Indeed, Bradwell later explicitly used Mary's lack of response to the first woman who could have been Jackson and her active response to the second who she did not know to be her as evidence to counter Jorden's suggestion that her reactions to Jackson were driven by fear: BL Sloane Ms 831 ff. 80v-81r (MacDonald, 65-6).

¹⁰ Hughes, Certain Grievances, 17-8.

would make her neese, or wink, or bend her brows, or stir her head, which she did not, but lay still as one dead and sencelesse'. Croke then took some crumpled paper, setting fire to it and holding it to Mary's right palm until the paper was burnt, repeating the test for feeling with two more pieces of paper until her hand 'was effectually burned, in five severall places', concluding that she had 'setled insensibillitie'. This seems a reasonable conclusion given that, according to Hughes, Croke held the flame to her hand, 'till her hand did blister, the blister did break, and water came out, and dropt down on the flore' with the voice continuing the call for hanging.¹¹ He then tried the same test (with little apparent purpose) on Elizabeth who pleaded that he would not burn her. Croke asked her, 'Why cannot you as well beare it as she, Who (as you say) doth but counterfett? Oh no (quoth the Witch) God knowes she doth not Counterfett' (ff. 28v-29r, 21-2). Hughes told Croke that he had prayed often with Mary and that when he closed with the Lord's Prayer, as soon as he spoke the petition to be delivered from evil, Mary 'was tost up, and shaken, as if a mastive dog should take a little curre into his mouth, and shake him'.¹² At this Croke demanded Elizabeth should kneel and say the Lord's Prayer. On the first effort she skipped the crucial petition and Croke told her to try again. She initially refused but acquiesced eventually. She probably knew what was to come, for when she used the phrase, 'the body of the mayd rebounded in the middle, as at other times also, when any prayed by her, and used those wordes, in time of her totall senselessenes' (ff. 29r-v, 21-2).¹³ Hughes suggested one final demonstration of the connection between Jackson and Glover's symptoms, explaining the consequences of the suspect touching the girl when she was in her ordinary fits. Croke tested this with some care, having Mary taken and placed on a bed, with cloths over her, particularly over her head so that if her blindness and deafness was feigned, she would be deprived of the means of judging the right time to

¹¹ Ibid., 18.

¹² Ibid., 18.

¹³ Hughes' account has Elizabeth steadfast in her refusal to deliver the Lord's Prayer and so was required to recite the Articles of Faith, which she did, until she came to the phrase 'our Lord' but 'would by no means be drawn to confesse that Jesus Christ was our Lord: ibid., 18.

react. He gestured the women, including Elizabeth, to surround the bed 'and that every one should lay their hands upon her softly. There was no response 'till the Witch laid her hand upon her, then all the clothes were thrown off, and the maid tost towards her'. For Croke, this collection of experiments was sufficient for an answerable case and he turned to Elizabeth and said, 'Lord have mercy on thee woman' and sent her to Newgate to await trial. As soon as she was gone, 'the voice that came out of the maids nostrils ceased, and the maid came to her self' and was taken home.¹⁴ Bradwell emphasised two lessons to be drawn from this experiment. The first was directly aimed at one alternative explanatory means for Mary's behaviour, that her symptoms were a reflection of her fear of Elizabeth Jackson; if she responded physically to Jackson's presence without knowing of her arrival and, as importantly, if she failed to respond physically to the presence of a woman who seemed to be Jackson then it could not be a matter of perception, it must be a more direct reaction to the suspect's culpable association with the demonic. He happily noted the support given to this reading by 'divers weomen of credit' who knew both Glover and Jackson, who were equally unaware of the identity of the women brought to meet her. The second was a stronger sense being broadcast from a stage that was less under the control of Mary's family and supporters that 'all might know, the mayde did not counterfett her misery' (ff. 29v-30, 22).

The fifth instance of the extraordinary fit was in the court on 1 December 1602, when Mary was brought to testify against Elizabeth who was being charged with witchcraft. This was the most public and official stage upon which she was to be tested. Unlike some of the cases involving witchcraft accusations that have preceded this one, and some that will follow, there is no evidence of a preliminary examination before the proceedings began. Mary was brought to the Sessions House on a 'good day', that is, one between her days of ordinary fits. She was placed facing the bench, unable to see the suspect among

¹⁴ Ibid., 18-9.

the prisoners in the dock. Upon her arrival, she 'felt a commanding power seaze upon her' and lost the ability to continue her intended speech, crying, 'where is shee? where is she?' Some of the bench responded by claiming, 'shee counterfetteth' and told her to continue giving verbal evidence. She endeavoured to do so but proved incapable, and gave the more voluble evidence of such incapacity, saying, 'where is shee, that troubleth me?' Her speech faltered and sank down before she had delivered forty words of her testimony 'into this aforesaid dead and senseles case'. Her body and her face writhed, contorting her face as 'in all respects as it is her described' during her extraordinary fits. 'Now also was the accustomed voyce, hang her, audible in her nostrills'. She was carried into an adjoining chamber by three men who remarked that 'they never caryed a heavier burthen'. With proceedings obviously halted and conditions to be discussed, the justices took a break for dinner. At this point Elizabeth was taken out of the dock and returned to Newgate and it was noted that 'for this time, the foresaid voyce in Maries nostrills ceased' (ff. 30r-31v, 22-3).

An hour later, Elizabeth was brought back to the Sessions House and the voice returned, although Mary's physical condition had not changed. The Justices, having finished their dinner, decided to visit Mary to assess her condition. Before they went to her chamber a group of officials went ahead, with 'thundring voyces' crying, 'bring the fyre, and hot Irons, for this Counterfett; Come wee will marke her, on the Cheeke, for a Counterfett', presumably to see if the fear of such treatment would make Mary reconsider any fraudulent play-acting. For all the noise, Mary seemed unaware of the clamour. Lord Anderson and John Croke arrived in the chamber, along with Sir Jerome Bowes, Sir William Cornwallis 'and divers other Justices'. Anderson is familiar from earlier cases, as a foe to puritans but an avid prosecutor of witches. His named companions are far from the zealous witch-hunters which might be presumed. Bowes was an experienced diplomat, having conducted lengthy negotiations with Ivan the Terrible in the 1580s, and a client of

Robert Cecil, while Cornwallis was a young essayist and courtier. They looked at Mary, examining the conditions and rigidity of her body. Then Croke repeated his test with fire and paper, holding the flame to her hand 'untill it blistered', with no reported effects. At this point Elizabeth Jackson was brought to the room and upon her arrival the voice was heard crying, 'as plainely to be discerned, Hang her, as any voyce, that is not uttered by the tongue it selfe can be', apparently louder than usual. Anderson commanded Jackson to approach the bed and to touch Mary; 'the maides body (which untill then, had never removed from the place where it layed) was presently throwen, and casted with great vyolence'. He ordered Elizabeth to recite the Lord's Prayer and she began but could not say 'forgive us our trespasses' or 'lead us not into temptation'. He tried the creed as an alternative and she managed the opening but with the omission of 'our Lord'.¹⁵ Similarly, when she should have been saying, 'the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins', it kept coming out as 'The Comunion of Sainctes, the Comission of sinnes' and she could not deliver it properly until led through it word by word. It was also noted that when she was forced 'by anothers inducement (as taking the wordes out of their mouth)' she spoke the petition from the Lord's Prayer, Lead us not into temptation, 'the maids body was tossed as before'. And the final addition was that, '[i]n like sort, was the mayds body tossed, whilst the woman said the beliefe, at the words, he descended into hell' (31v-33r, 23-4).

With Mary Glover's physical evidence and the empirical tests having been taken as a replacement for her intended verbal evidence, the bench sent Elizabeth away and turned to assessing the evidence against her. The first five points were based upon the reports of Mary's symptoms, alongside the connections that cast Elizabeth as the causal factor as treated above. The sixth and seventh were evidence suggesting Elizabeth's powers, evidence given by a unnamed minister, probably Lewis Hughes. He had visited her home,

¹⁵ There is sufficient resemblance between the proceedings here and Hughes' account of the efforts in Croke's chamber for the later account to be confusing or conflating the two.

intending to admonish her for 'her lewde tongue' but as soon as he went in, 'she very intently fixt her eyes upon him'. He started to speak but suddenly he had 'his speech taken from him, his necke became stiffe, and his Chin borne inwards into his bosome, his knees (withall) yeelding under him'. He roused himself, 'in speciall maner', drawing upon his faith and 'God have him to pravyle' but he had to leave without speaking and could not do so for two more hours. His second testimony was from visits he made to her when she was in prison. She could not go through the creed without the omissions as seen in the interrogations at William Glover's house and under the eye of the judges. She offered to go through the Lord's Prayer instead but fell at the plea to be delivered from evil.¹⁶ The eighth point was also a generic proof of a suspect being a witch, the marks found 'in divers places of her body' found and identified as unnatural when she was searched by women. The tenth was an earlier occasion of successful cursing when she wished for a client to pay for his laundry only to find he had left town. She wished for him to break his leg or neck and accordingly he broke his leg on that journey, Satan evidently judging that he only deserved the lesser punishment. To this was added a tendency to visit fortune tellers (ff. 33r-35v, 24-6).

The ninth point is worth paying a little more attention to as it has a semblance with demonic possession. Elizabeth Burges, one of the first to notice Mary was ailing, and who received a threat for having spoken against Jackson, gave additional testimony. When Jackson had cursed her, Burges came across Jackson when the former was eating prunes. She was 'suddenly so taken, that she was not able to swallow one downe' and started to vomit. She suffered in this manner for three weeks. When Jackson came across her in this time, the suspect 'wished that she might cast up her heart, gutts and all', adding that, 'Thou shortly, shalt have in thee an evill spirit too'. The following night Burges was 'troubled with a Vision, in likenes of a fox'. The next night, it came 'in likenes of an ougly

¹⁶ Part of the likelihood of 'the minister' being Hughes is based on his later dogmatic statement that witches were incapable of delivering the sections of the Lord's Prayer and the Creed where Jackson struggled: *ibid.*, 14-5.

black man, with a bounch of keyes in his hand, intysing her to go with him, and those keyes would bring her to gould enough' and on the third night 'in the likenes of a mouse, which troubled her more then any of the former'. With the support of her employers, she saw off the visions with prayer, 'through the mercy and goodnes of God'. When she was called to give evidence to the jury, while Jackson was in the dock, the accused seems to have warned her that 'thou wilt be sicke, and cast againe anon'. Immediately her speech was taken from her and 'her mouth drawen to a side'. With 'much contension of spirit' she managed to recover her voice but was so weakened that she was taken to another chamber, 'where she was very evill, as the witch had threatened'. When she was taken home, she was 'weake, faynte and Casting, benumbed in all her body, hardly able to stand, and never yet to this day recovered her perfect libertie againe' (ff. 34r-35r, 25-6).

The twelfth point brought the exchange that has received the greatest attention, the arguments between the physicians. Bradwell described it as 'a testimonie, geven in disproofe of their opinions, that held this maydens case but a naturall disease'. It opened with the testimony of a gentleman relating to one occasion when Mary was in an extraordinary fit in the presence of Elizabeth. She had been incredibly heavy, with her head too weighty for two to lift; 'upon a suddaine (being againe assayed) she was found more light then a naturall body'. To prove this 'a godly honest gentleman, putting his armes under body, not only lifted her up from the bed, easily', but turned around with her in his arms and remarked that she seemed to him 'but as a curten throwen overthwart his armes'. Once he laid her down and the company tried again, they 'found as much admirable heavines as is aforesaid'. The evidence was given and assessed by the unnamed gentleman and two physicians, Francis Herring and a Doctor Spencer.¹⁷ The

¹⁷ As yet, I have been unable to identify Dr Spencer. Francis Herring was of good godly stock, as it were, having graduated MA from Christ's College, Cambridge in 1589 and going on to practice there. He became a fellow of the College of Physicians in 1599 and went on to have a worthy career. One of his two publications was to discourage the use of amulets as a protection against the plague, effectively a warning against trusting cunning folk: William Munck, The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London, Vol. I, 1518-1700 (London, 1861), 116.

medics stated their judgement that this was a case 'which proceeded of som cause supernaturall; having stranger effects, then either the mother, or any other naturall disease hath ever ben observed to bring forth'. Francis Herring expanded on this, drawing attention to, among other things, the movement of her hand to her mouth and so forth in her ordinary fits 'at so strickt a measure of time' and to the words she spoke, the strange manner and their invariable nature. He moved on to the impact of the presence of Elizabeth Jackson, that Mary would fall into 'a farre differing fitte' upon her arrival. In addition, he noted that if the suspect was brought in secretly during Mary's ordinary fits, 'she would be changed presently, into that extraordinarily senseles fitt, and that uncouth voyce in her nostrills would never cease, so long as Elizabeth Jackeson remayned in the house, where the mayd lay' and finished with the way in which, whenever anyone said the petition to deliver us from evil from the Lord's Prayer while Mary was in an trance, her body would 'rebound up in the middle'. Dr Spencer 'argued for the improbabilitie of necessary causes', that is, natural causes, 'in so young a mayde', which was as much as to cast doubt upon the possible diagnoses of hysteria, or the suffocation of the mother, or other predominantly female maladies usually associated with post-pubescent or menopausal women. He then concentrated on the 'moving in her belly, which was not so so uniformly a risinge or bearing upward, but in a rounder and narrower compasse, playing up and downe, as with a kinde of easie swiftenes, that certainly it did not truly resemble the mother' and finished with 'the varietie of the fitts, upon the occasion of the womans presence' (ff. 35v-37r, 26-7).

This assessment was contested, however, by four other physicians and an unnamed 'Doctor of Divinitie'.¹⁸ In contrast to Herring and Spencer, the second physicians were not called by writ and their presence was a continuation of an earlier discussion at

¹⁸ MacDonald identifies him as James Meadowes, the rector of St James, Eastcheap but gives no grounds for this suggestion. Later in his critique of Jorden, Bradwell refers to a Dr 'Meddowes' as Jorden's 'familiar' which may suggest a connection but this merely opens possibilities rather than conclusion: BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 44v (MacDonald, 34).

the College of Physicians. After Croke's examination in October had given the prosecution impetus, it seems Richard Bancroft had sought to turn to other means for support, probably recognising that Edmund Anderson shared his dislike of puritans but was singing from a different hymn-sheet when it came to the reality of demonic possession. After Anderson's having taken umbrage at his knowing smile during the trial relating to Anne Kerke's bewitchment in 1599, Bancroft would have been aware that to directly intervene in a secular court would risk causing offence and not serving his cause. What is certain is that when Elizabeth Jackson petitioned the College of Physicians, questioning the judgement of Herring, Bradwell and Moundeford regarding her part in Mary's possession, on 13 November, this was not the action of a washerwoman without influential support. Moundeford was absent but Herring and Bradwell told of their first full encounter with Mary at the examination in Croke's chambers. They were present at the request of her parents and Herring had not been sure of her possession when he arrived but convinced by the events of the day. At the College they were examined by about a dozen of the fellows. Bradwell had drawn attention to the voice and to Mary's reaction to Elizabeth's presence, citing these as proofs that there was a supernatural causation. It is of interest that there were statements given by Elizabeth's friends and neighbours defending her reputation, an action more expected in the assizes than a discussion about the natural or supernatural origins of symptoms. It seems the majority of the examiners at the College concluded that Mary's conditions had natural origins.¹⁹

Of the minister's contribution in the court, we know no more than that he laboured to clear Jackson 'of being any cause of Mary Glovers harme'. Bradwell's attention is more on the physicians, of course. The main speakers were Edward Jorden and John Argent, both fellows of the College of Physicians. Jorden was something of a rising star, having become

¹⁹ MacDonald, xv. Bradwell refers to Jorden 'laboring to strengthen himselfe, and make his faction strong, from all sydes; and to daunt and discountenance us, that were of the contrary judgment, by the reverent Colledge of Phisitions', which suggests that it was at Jorden's immediate request but also allows the possibility or the suspicion of Jorden acting with the encouragement of someone else by adding, 'and som besides, of greater power': BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 45r (MacDonald, 35).

a Fellow in 1597 and his performance in his examination before this appointment was praised, but his greater years were ahead of him, aided by his stance on Mary Glover. Argent was at a similar stage, having become a fellow in the same year but having taken his first office as Censor in 1601.²⁰ The two 'sought earnestly, to make the case a meere naturall disease'. The other two physicians, according to Bradwell, seemed inclined to agree 'though after a wavering sort ... as though they would not, though they could, be contrary'. Jorden's primary effort, it seems, was less on natural explanations than on allegations 'of dissimulation, and counterfetting, in the afflicted partie'. In addition, they worked to 'proove it naturall' by foregrounding 'certaine Symptomes which they picked out of her ordinary long fitt', symptoms which they suggested had common elements with symptoms of the mother. Obviously Bradwell is not to be completely trusted in his assessment that 'they gave no man, that we know of, any satisfaction at all' but Lord Anderson, for one, was not convinced. He seems to have disliked Jorden's unwillingness to make it clear whether he thought Mary was feigning or suffering from a natural disease. It may be that he was suggesting a combination, that she had some genuine affliction upon which she was building some feigned elements to encourage the diagnosis in the direction she favoured. Anderson pressed him 'to answere directly, whether it were naturall or supernaturall' and Jorden said that 'in his conscience he thought it altogether naturall'. Asking for the natural cause to be identified, he was told that Jorden thought it was 'Passio hysterica', that is, the mother. When Jorden could express no certainty of a cure, Anderson returned to asking if the medic thought she counterfeited and Jorden laid his cards on the table and stated that he did not think she was fraudulent, probably a more definitive answer than he would have preferred to give. Anderson, accustomed to the more clear cut convictions of a court room than the probabilities of the medical world and of a generally brusque demeanour, concluded, 'Then in my conscience, it is not naturall: for if

²⁰ Ibid., viii, xiv-xv.

you tell me neither a Naturall cause, of it, nor a naturall remedy, I will tell you, that it is not naturall' (ff. 37r-38r, 27-8).

Anderson turned to address the jury and gave very clear directions. He told of his own experience of the abundance of witches in the land, claiming to have sent twenty six of them to the gallows and that some of those who refused to confess had proofs as manifest as those who confessed. He explained about witches marks as evidence of a contract with the devil, marks such as Elizabeth possessed. He told the jury that prime candidates for the temptations of the devil were such as were 'full of cursing' and that Elizabeth was such an individual. Should courts only convict people who confessed to witchcraft or those with direct proof against them, then soon they would 'overrun the whole land'. He told them of his own experiments upon Mary and then turned to the various physicians who doubted the supernatural cause:

you talke of the mother, I pray you, have you ever seen or heard of the mother, that kept it[s] course unchangeably, every second day, and never missed; and yet that chaungeth his course upon the presence of some one person; as this doth, at the presence of this women. Divines, Phisitions, I know they are learned and wise, but to say this is naturall, and tell me neither the cause, nor the Cure of it, I care not for your Judgement: geve me a naturall reason, and a naturall remedy, or a rush for your phisicke.

Having played the hand of responsibility, his own authority and conviction, he finished. Croke told the jury of his own examinations and his conclusion 'that it was neither upon fear, nor counterfetting', and his own agreement with the medics who identified a supernatural source. The jury were sent away but, as might be expected after such a clear briefing, they returned quickly. Elizabeth Jackson was found guilty and sentenced to a year in prison with four appearances on the pillory to make confession. As she was taken away, the voice in Mary's nostrils ceased and after eight hours 'of that deformed stiffenes,

and senselessness', she fell into an ordinary fit, 'to be tossed, plunged, and varied, with strange vicissitudes, lamentable Cryings, and most remarkable formes of motion' (ff. 38r-39v, 28-9).

If those previously convinced of the supernatural nature of Mary Glover's woes had won over the more powerful opinions in the court, a more contestable forum than the private one of the Glover's home and the more public, but weighted in their favour, one of William Glover's chambers, the battle was not over. The effort to bring the strength of institutional medical opinion to bear against the physicians judging Mary to be possessed has been noted. If, as is likely, this was at the behest of Bancroft, it was not the only avenue he explored. One Sunday in November, so between the conversion of Croke and the trial, Thomas Holland preached at St Paul's Cross, the most prominent beacon of official policy. Holland was a moderate evangelical, placed as rector of Exeter College, Oxford, by Queen Elizabeth to aid the attempt to turn the fellowship in a more conservative direction. As Regius Professor of Theology and a former chaplain to the Earl of Leicester, his was a voice likely to carry some authority with less combative puritans. His sermon was of broad appeal, condemning covetousness, bemoaning the dangers of avarice but also warning against the social consequences of the material redistribution favoured by Anabaptists. His moderate position was to praise the good use of wealth to assist the poor and fund the church and ministry.²¹ Apparently in the context of stressing the relationship between the covenant of law and the covenant of grace he noted that '[s]ome have gone about to shewe the truth of religion by casting out divels. David must come out with his two stones, the olde and the newe testament, before Goliah can be slayne'. As far as can be ascertained from Manningham's notes, this was a generic denunciation of sensationalist propaganda with no specific target identified. Such a target could be as easily seen as Roman Catholic as puritan and Manningham's position in Middle Temple

²¹ Robert Parker Sorlien (ed and intro.), The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple 1602-1603 (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1976), 196-201.

would have been a position from which he would have been likely to know of the forthcoming trial. It reads like a momentary digression from his main area of concern.²²

In addition, the advantage of the spectacle of Elizabeth in the pillory confessing her guilt was removed hence lessening the more physical reminders of the case. She was quickly released from prison and MacDonald's suggestion that she received royal pardon is certainly plausible.²³ Mary's troubles had not ended with the judgement against Elizabeth. She had no more of her extraordinary fits after the arraignment, as they were induced by contact with Elizabeth and there was 'no occasion after this day to bringe the parties together any more'. However, her ordinary fits continued and, in fact, grew worse, 'both in length and strength, above measure'. The fits would last up to twelve hours, each one including 'at the least, six great courses of panges', including the 'most strang, and irresistable beating, and rebounding of her right leg, and body'. Satan added 'a new and subtile stratageme', trying to take her life, 'although not with his owne hand, (for that, as well appeared, was beyond his comission)'. The means was to make her physical symptoms so violent that the efforts of those trying to help her by restraint risked strangling her (ff. 40r-40v, 30).

As far as 'the adverse parties to this cause' were concerned, finding Elizabeth guilty did not close the book of Mary's condition. The unnamed parties, having achieved the stay of sentence, pressured the magistrates 'to urge the Parents to deliver their daughter, to the hands of those Physicians, which held her case naturall, and had some hope to cure her'. This was seen as improper, partly because it was judged to be inappropriate, after the proper legal process and judgement, 'to call it into question againe, for three or fewer mens sake', and partly because the physicians wanting to take on the task refused to make those who disagreed with their assessment 'privie to their practises'. Bradwell suspected that their appetite for fame would take them beyond the bounds of proper

²² Ibid., 198. This rather lessens MacDonald's claim that this was a sermon 'denouncing exorcism': MacDonald, xxiii.

²³ Ibid., xxiii, xviii-xix.

physic. In addition, no temporal limit was put upon their delivery of the hoped for cure, threatening to take 'the poore miserable mayd' away for an unlimited period. These concerns were taken to the magistrates, along with a proposed alternative playing field. Mary's supporters felt that, 'tryall of law being made, we woulde also make tryall of arguments'. The hope was to have the case disputed candidly in print, on level ground. According to Bradwell, the idea 'was not misliked' by the magistrates. It seems reasonable to suspect that such a equal exchange did not appeal to Bancroft and events intervened to change the script again (ff. 41r-v, 30-1).

II

It may have been sensitivity to Bancroft's efforts to shorten Elizabeth's sentence, efforts that brought ecclesiastical influence over the boundary of secular jurisprudence, that encouraged John Croke to admonish Lewis Hughes, along with all the ministers of London, telling him that 'we might all of us be ashamed, to see a childe of God in the claws of Satan, without any hope of deliverance, but by such means as God had appointed, fasting and prayer'. Suitably abashed, Hughes drew together 'five Ministers and other good Christians, to set a day apart, and joyn with me in that holy exercise'.²⁴ The main account of the exercise names the ministers and good Christians. The detailed representation was written by John Swan, having gone through the notes of his colleagues, making him as much editor as author, not dissimilar to the collaborative work relating to Thomas Darling. Swan has proven difficult to identify with any certainty. He describes himself as a 'student in Divinitie' and the strongest candidate matriculated at

²⁴ Hughes, Certain Grievances, 19. Hughes states that this was after between three weeks and a month after the judgement. It appears, as will emerge, to have been 'merely' two more weeks of suffering.

Trinity College, Cambridge in 1595.²⁵ The other ministers, in addition to Lewis Hughes, are identified solely by surname, as masters Barber, Evans, Skelton and Bridger and it has proven impossible to enlarge on this. It is tempting to suggest the Master Evans might have been Barnaby Evans, the curate at St Mary's, Nottingham, who was central to the Sommers case but that would be based on no more than the interest of Evans in dispossession by fasting and prayer and a relatively common surname. It would be surprising that when Samuel Harsnet briefly turned his pen on the ministers around Mary Glover which will be mentioned below he did not draw attention to the connection if it was the same man. There may be the characteristic hyperbolic humility but also some truth in Swan's celebration that God chose 'such meane, base, despised, and contemptible men' to plea for Mary's dispossession in order to emphasise his own power, but there may also be some truth in that these were not ministers of especial renown (56).²⁶

²⁵ John Swan, A True and Breife Report, of Mary Glovers Vexation, and of her deliverance by the meanes of fasting and prayer. Performed by those whose names are set downe, in the next page (London, 1603), references hereafter in the text. MacDonald suggests a cleric of the same name, who matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1569 and received his B.D. in 1583 before moving to Oxford: MacDonald, xxv. While a certain humility would, of course, be expected, his role in the fasting process is relatively small and this would be surprising in a minister of such stature. MacDonald is correct to identify the latter as the translator of Lambert Danaeus, A Treatise Touching Antichrist (London, 1589), but the John Swan who saw Thomas Jackson, Dauids Pastorall Poeme: or Sheepeheards Song (London, 1603) through the press in the author's absence is more likely the former as his role was relatively junior as he explains in his letter 'To The Christian Reader' appended to the work, taking all responsibility for typographical errors and such like.

²⁶ Another tempting possibility is Henry Evans who had been tutor in the family of Henry Cromwell and curate of Ramsey, Huntingdonshire c. 1590-92 so offering potential connections to the Warboys case. However, between 1599 and 1603 he was vicar of Market Rasen, Lincolnshire which lessens the chances of his presence in London. The possibilities for Master Barber are obviously multiple. One serious possibility is that this was Thomas Barber, a fairly major figure in the conference movement of the 1570s and 80s, a supporter of Thomas Cartwright and John Field and one of the targets of John Whitgift's discipline. While he turned evidence against his colleagues in the Star Chamber trial of 1591 he remained part of the London godly community into the early seventeenth century. For our purposes, it is noteworthy that he had been lecturer at St Helen's, Bishopgate, the parish that was held by Lewis Hughes during Glover's troubles, and was resident in St Botolph without Bishopgate in his later years. Swan's account neither encourages nor discourages the likelihood. The best possibilities of Master Skelton are two Thomases, one matriculating at Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1578, the other at St John's, Cambridge in 1572. As he is referred to by Swan as an 'auncient humble harted preacher' this makes them more likely than John Skelton who matriculated at Broadgates Hall, soon to be Pembroke College, Oxford, aged 18 in 1591. The possibilities for Master Bridger are very open once the possibilities of 'Bridges', 'Bridge' and so forth are taken in. Limiting it to 'Bridger', a couple of noteworthy possibilities are Brian Bridger, matriculated at St John's, Cambridge in 1588 and Henry Bridger matriculating at Magdalen Hall, Oxford in 1582: John Venn and J.A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses (Cambridge, 1922); Joseph Foster, Alumni Oxonienses: the members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714 (Oxford, 1891-2); ODNB, 'Thomas Barber'. In the interests of veracity I will leave these as no more than possibilities and refer to the ministers, apart from Hughes, simply as 'Master'.

On Tuesday 14 December, the ministers gathered with the Glover family at their home in Thames Street for a preparatory prayer meeting. The prayer was led by Skelton who asked for divine guidance as he helped the group to prepare for their supplication. He called those present to repentance, 'and especially to an earnest humiliation of their soules and bodies before the Lorde'. The hope was that God 'in mercy and goodnes lift them up, by givinge deliverance and grantinge comfort in his good time, in what manner and measure it pleased him, and that not for any other, but for his owne truth and promise sake'. He expanded upon this call to fruitful humiliation and divine mercy, all thoroughly orthodox preparation, through an exegesis of James 4:10. The briefing was evenly balanced between humility and mercy, with a strong note of caution, warning everybody to refrain from even thinking about foretelling when God would deliver Mary or by what means, 'since his wisdom is unsearchable and knowes how to doe it, with meanes or without meanes, and even contrary to all meanes', thus making it clear that no human agency was the driving force, that the purpose was the mercy and capacity of God to deliver Mary when and by what means he judged fit. (4-7).

Two days later a company 'of such as feared god', numbering about twenty four and including the six ministers met at the home of Mistress Ratcliff at Shoreditch, perhaps notably just beyond the jurisdiction of the City of London. A few of the company were there at seven; before sunrise Mary's parents, having stayed with her overnight, brought her into the chamber. She took herself, 'with very sober countenance', across the room and sat on a low settle, at a bedside by the fire. She held a bible in her hand, 'wherof she made use of so long as she could', turning to the chapters being read, discussed or cited. When she struggled, 'either by greife of body, or infirmity of mynde, or meditation, or by fayling of sight', there was a woman sat with her to help her. This was necessary because the preachers would directly address her and expect her to have the text available for reference. The company waited until eight for the arrival of the 'auncient humble harted

preacher', Master Skelton, who was supposed to open the proceedings. As he had not as yet appeared, Lewis Hughes suggested that they should begin by reading selected parts of Scripture to aid individual meditation to put them in the right frame of mind. He opened with a prayer and then read James 4-5 and Psalm 51, drawing attention to verses appropriate to the occasion, and prayed again (8-11).

By now there were sufficient numbers to begin and Hughes kept the stage. He gave advice on the proper carriage of those present, pleading for humility and confession, fostering an awareness of unworthiness, 'begging pardon, craving gracious assistance, and an happy issue of our enterprise'. He took Psalm 50:15 for his opening text: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, so will I deliver thee, and thou shalt glorifie me'. He took this as a set of instructions, starting by making it clear that it was not a licence to call, but a command, and moving on to who was to be called, who had the power to offer aid, that the source of any assistance was God and God alone. He stressed the need for the Glovers to lay open to God all their sins, which brought silent tears from Mary, and made plain that the time was right to plead, this being 'the day of trouble', concluding with the promise of delivery and the purpose, the glorification of God. This sermon and prayer took ninety minutes (11-12).

After this action of preachinge and prayer ended, the poore creature, (being pale and wan coloured) was asked by her mother & others, how it fared with her? she acknowledged she felt payne in her body, & wept and prayed God to be mercifull unto her, and to help her, and saide withall, that shee could and would indure further proceedinge in the begone exercise, and so satt a while rubbing hard, or stroaking downe with her hand, her left syde and flancke (13).

By this point Master Evans had arrived and he took up the baton. He began with Matt. 11:28, a similar text: 'Come unto me all yee that are wearie and laden, and I will ease you'. He provided a similar exegesis, setting out the allurements, the addressed, the nature

of the addressed, and the promise of ease. He laid the emphasis on the third part, that those who come should be those, 'being pressed with afflictions (purposly sent) are ready to come to the hand that gave the wound' in order 'to gett occasion to make sheew of his skill and good will to heale', adding that they should not only laden with sin, but also 'wearied with the burden therof'. Upon his conclusion, Evans asked how Mary was, 'perceaving her to wax pale coloured, weepinge, and answeringe faintly' and announced that they would have a fifteen minute break, Most stretched their legs or took refreshment but Swan stayed to keep a complete record. He observed her, 'sittinge, weepinge bitterly, wringing her handes extreamly, complaining of unaccustomed payne, yea castinge out wordes of feare that God would not heare us in calling on him for her so wretched a creature'. In his account he took the opportunity to use this fear to argue contrary to such physicians who saw the cure from fasting as a panacea due to the patient's complete confidence in the means (13-5).

The company returned to their task. She had sat upon the settle by the bedside but she was now brought to the middle of the chamber and sat 'in a lowe wicker chaire', facing the fire with the preacher to her left. Master Skelton suggested Master Bridger should take on the duty and he did so. He opened with a prayer and then read Daniel 9:1-19, moving on to pertinent points for the occasion and closing with another prayer wherein he emphasised the power of David's sling 'in overthrowing Goliah, who defied the hoast of Israell'. This brought the day to noon but the company urged the preachers to keep the ball rolling, to keep Satan on his toes. One of the company drew Exodus 17:12 to their attention, 'that When Moses held up his handes Israell prevailed, but when he held them downe Amalek prevailed', as a means to press this advice. The ministers discussed who should be next and Master Barber led the prayer, wishing that 'amongst all the miseries that poore men are plunged into by meanes of sinne, they should be subiect to such a iudgement as this was', offered the comfort that they had the support of the Lion of Judah

and concluded with a complaint that human interests meant that it was difficult for them to 'meete together to performe such dueties, and such meanes as God hath saintified, and the Church heretofore practised in such cases, for releife and recovery, of pore creatures distressed in this kinde'. Lewis Hughes returned to the stage, perhaps wanting to keep the focus on the task at hand. He carried on with Psalm 50:15, stressing the plea for grace for himself, for the afflicted and for the company. This time the focus was upon the occasion for such a call, 'The needful time of trouble'. He held forth on the differences between the troubled saints and the troubled sinners, with the former pains coming from a father, being 'light and momentarie' with the purpose 'to correct, to purge, and refine'; the latter came from a Judge and were 'the begininges of greater woe' with the purpose being to 'make more obstinate and inexcusable' (17-20).

As Swan recalled, this last address took them past two in the afternoon and Mary had 'remained in reasonable good peace and ease'. He discussed it with a colleague who hoped it would remain so and 'that Satan would steale away like a micher', a truant or a thief. Swan chose not to voice his doubts, feeling that Satan would not be inclined to depart so quietly but also calling to mind 'that manner of his departing in those dayes, when the power of doinge miracles was given to the Sonnes of men, (which is now ceased) namely that he used to rent, and tear, and leave for dead'. Shortly after, his fears were met, for 'the poore soule began to be sencelesse of one side, to be blinded, dead coloured, and eye turned up, to be stiffe in the left legge and arm etc'. Master Evans immediately fell to prayer and after a good while her mother examined Mary's leg and another examined her hand, judging them to be regaining their normal limbreneess. Evans continued his prayer and soon 'the poore creature began to gaspe, and to strive to speake'. Eventually she spoke but so softly it could not be identified. Members of the company placed their ears close to her, straining to hear, with little success. Gradually her voice grew in strength until the onlookers could hear. 'The first word that she delivered

when she began to labour to utter any thing that was like unto speech, was almost, almost: the accent being uppon the sillable all'. While this was not, of course, the first time she emerged from a fit with an initially inaudible voice, but it should be noted that the earlier occasions focussed on punishment or revenge whereas on this day the focus was entirely on dispossession. Evans continued to pray and their voices were almost becoming competitive. Evans ceased and 'gave us leave to harken to her, which we were very willing and glad for to doe: he, (or another) saying further, let her alone, you shal see shee will doe it her selfe, she will procuer her owne deliverance'. All the company were excited and full of tears. One Master Oliver, a gentleman and a student of the Inns of Court, 'hasted from her with blubbering cheeks', almost lost for words. He noted the differences between this and her usual pattern, to which I'll return, pointing out that Mary never recovered free speech before the end of her last fit, taking this difference as a sign of hopeful delivery. Mary, still separate from the company in terms of awareness, began a prayer, with the company adding an Amen to many of the points she made. She remained in her chair, leaning forward with her face looking upward, having regained its colour, and her hands raised but not joined. She raised her hands with each petition and they fell at the end. She shed tears and was at great labour, with flecks of foam around her mouth (21-4).

Swan was very concerned to set out this prayer in as much detail as he could. Again, this was not her first prayer but it was either the first that could be categorised as a vision or, at the very least, the first such to be recorded. Stylistically and in terms of content, it shared much common ground with Thomas Darling. It combined pleading, confession, explanation and example. Her first plea was for God to 'looke uppon me thy poore handmaide, with the eyes of mercy'. She asked for her sins to be forgiven and for them not to stand as a wall to hinder any favours, for God to employ the sacrifice of Jesus as a means to wash them away. She declared her faith, hoping for comfort and aid in her struggle, asking for deliverance but only should God judge it to be appropriate.

O Lord in mercy behould me and graunt me deliverance, O Lord deliverance, and then even now o lord if it be thy blessed will. Neverthelesse not my will but thy will be done, give me patience O Lord, and strength to beare, and lay on no more then I shalbe able to beare, and confirme my hope to be delivered when thou shalt see it good

She asked for the utter submission to God's will shown by Job and by David, stating that if God chose to allow Satan to take her life he should protect her soul, hoping merely, if it was God's will, to be able one day to say with David, 'It is happie for me that I was in trouble'. Her next plea was for divine mercy to be shown to 'her by whose meanes this trouble was brought uppon me', declaring her own forgiveness and asking that Elizabeth be allowed to see her sin and to repent. Mary recognised that 'Satan was herein thy rodde (o Lord) uppon me, and shee but the instrument'. She made it plain that God knew that the pursuit of Elizabeth was not borne of malice or of an appetite for revenge, 'but that the truth might be knowne' for God's glory and, she admitted, 'that I might be delivered from the slaunder of men'. This served as a lengthy preface to the Lord's Prayer to which she added a few short petitions and fell into another fit (25-8).

With the new fit, the company called 'for a new man to the helme' and Swan was chosen which, he stressed, was more than his intention, expecting only to join with the others in communal prayer. He accepted the call, beginning his prayer with Jacob's speech from Gen. 28:16-7: 'Surely god is in this place, and I was not aware: how fearful is this place'. This, as intended, provoked fear from the awareness of sinful mortals and their continually unholy 'inclinations of our hartes', with Swan pleading for mercy. Having encouraged humility, 'he began a little to alter the tune of the former dolfull ditties', turning to thanksgiving. He expressed gratitude for the mercies credited undeservedly to all the preaching and prayers of the day and in particular 'uppon the poore maide, whose tongue being by his goodnes lett loose, had so spoken as before yow heard'. He grew bolder and

to 'incroatch uppon further favour', asking God 'to make perfect the good worke he had most graciously begun'. It seemed this was perhaps presumptuous, 'a triumph before victorie', for Mary entered another fit and Swan passed his post by Mary's side to another (28-9). Master Skelton was the other and he began his prayer by taking up the theme of humility, of the unworthiness of those present to appear before God asking for mercy, moving on to recognise the propriety and justice of the chastisements sent by God to sinners. This set the ground for a plea for mercy, not based on merit but on Christ's beneficence, for his glory, 'the profit & comfort of us all ther assembled, and the afflicted partie, and to the stopping of all mouthes opened agai[n]st the truth of God' He was succeeded by Master Evans, taking on a more militaristic stance in Swan's description. The preacher, after 'bucklinge on his harnesse', began to cry for help, not because danger was imminent but because it was present and pressing, 'and so proceeded with fervent vehemency as the heat of the battle increased'. His prayers struggled against the outcries of the company, moved by Mary, who was 'diversly distressed' through this time. He tried to continue but judged it to be more profitable to encourage the company in their own, private prayers. Mary stayed in her chair apparently deaf, dumb and blind but turned away from the preacher 'as if she could not abide him'. This intense period was not too lengthy, for God, in his good mercy, 'did not lett this heavines to lye longe uppon us' and the onlookers saw her 'again to gaspe and strive for recovery'. Once again, she gradually recovered her voice, slowly increasing in audibility until she could be heard to say, 'Once more, once more (making her accent uppon the word once)' and began her second prayer, still in the chair, 'with the same position of body, countenance of face, and gesture of handes' as during her first prayer (26-32).

Mary's second prayer was a little longer than the first, with much reiteration of themes from the earlier one. She opened with a plea for further recovery, but one phrased with the proper priorities. 'O Lord thou has begune to be gracious unto me, thou hast done

more for me then I looked for, I beseech the o lord perfect the worke which thou hast begun, that thou maist have the prayse, and these thy children may be comforted'. She quoted Psalm 50:15 as treated by Hughes earlier, on the time of trouble as the right time to call for aid, followed by the right expression of passivity, asking to be given 'an hart to submitte to thy will & to wayte uppon thee'. In her prayer for divine power to 'darken the power of Satan' she pleaded that her own sins along with those of her parents should not act as a restraint.²⁷ These were, she accepted, 'the cause of this heavie chastisement layd uppon us' but hoped for sufficient repentance to encourage the withdrawal of the trial. This was stated with the right intentions, in the hope that 'I being strengthened may strengthen others, and being delivered, I may comfort others, with that comforte wherwith thou hast comforted me, so that thou mayst have from many, glory, prayse, & thanksgivinge'. Once again the prayer ended as she entered a third fit, 'which also grew more greivous then the former' (32-3).

Swan returned to the driving seat with an unidentified text on the close but delayed arrival of deliverance. His account probably has as much honesty and the requisite humility when he describes his prayer, bemoaning their weakness and calling for strength, as 'stumbling and stuttering by meanes of the perplexitie that he and the company, and the poore creature were then in'. His prayer was reduced to short requests until, overcome by fear, he withdrew into the company, searching for better weapons. He was not alone in his anxiety, 'for (I am sure) I also saw feare, and trembling, yea teares, and sobbinge, in the more auncient, expert, and experienced souldiers & Captaines that were there'. Master Barber took up the challenge, grounding his prayer in a version of Isaiah 62:6-7, 'Those that are the lords remembrancers, should not give him rest untill he be mooved to remember his people'. Notwithstanding this statement of resolution, Barber 'bewrayed a

²⁷ Here, as in the first prayer, Swan felt the need to add a marginal note of clarification. On both occasions Mary asked for divine strength to be added to her own in the struggle against Satan. To avoid the risk of her seeming to claim any independent agency in this battle, he read both pleas as asking for divine power of enactment to be added to the proper wish to be relieved that God had formed in her, 32, 26.

feare and a doubt of his own', hoping that if their prayers were not heard at this time, God would respond for the sake of his own glory. He seems to have been swinging between despair and confidence, for Swan reports him crying out shortly afterwards 'the first victorious cry, He flies, he flies, but uppon what occasion he did so, I cannot now call to minde' (34-6). His successor, Master Evans, seemed similarly troubled in that he opened with a complaint about the beginning of dusk, which he felt 'did much abate the comforte and courage of our mindes'. More particularly, he explained the insufficient progress with Mary's condition, blaming 'the weaknes of our faith, & coaldnes of our prayers' or perhaps 'from sinnes not repented of'. He turned this to positive action, calling for due repentance and humility, increasing the likelihood of their prayers being heard. He also pleaded with God to hear their prayers, 'because we tooke no indirect course or unlawfull meanes for remedie, but went directlie to him who hath all power in his hand', yielding obedience and relying upon promises, 'according also to the practise of his Church and children from time to time in such cases' (36-7).

At this point Mary began to revive again. Through all the time of clamour and contributing to it, her physical symptoms had been disconcerting, with her arms turning inside out, 'or writhed the outside inward'. Her whole left side was benumbed and 'her fingers stretched a broade and standinge stiffe upright, inflexible as Iron', her mouth repeatedly opening and shutting without any sound, leading one minister to describe it as a dumb spirit. Her eyes were shut, 'her belly greatly swoalne, and after that, her breast bulking up, her throat swelling etc'. She moved into another spell of trying, with growing success, to speak. Once more she could be heard she repeatedly said, 'Once more, once more, not hastelie pronounced, but with good payse & deliberation, making (as I saide) her accent uppon the word once'. Then she delivered her third prayer, of equal length to the others. It partly consisted of repetitions from her earlier efforts, partly of new points, and Swan admitted that neither he nor others kept record of everything. What was preserved

was brief and the epitome of orthodoxy, mixing humility, patience, hope and the proper purpose and intentions.

O Lord thy mercyes have bin exceedinge comfortable unto me, thou hast begune to be gracious, O lorde be mercifull unto me still, and leave me not untill thou hast sett me free: lett thy glory appeare in my deliverance, and lett Satan be confounded: strengthen me (O Lord) against that Goliah, thy grace is sufficient for me, give me power, and patience to attend thy leasure, give me faith to beleieve thy promises, give me victory against this mine enemy, that I and others may rejoyce, and tell to others the great thinges that thou hast done for me: I beleieve, help my unbeleiefe. Thou hast taught me that if Satan be resisted he will flye, and I being delivered may prayse thee, and others that heare of it may also magnifie thee, and may alwayes say, the lord be blessed that hath done such thinges for the sonnes of men, and so learne to feare thee, and call uppon thee, and put their trust in thy mercie, &c (37-9).

By now it was six in the evening and, with her prayer finished, Mary fell into 'her sharpest conflict'. Her senses went again and her whole left side was benumbed. Her eyes were 'blacke and retorted inwards, her countenance owglie & distorted, her mouth excessivelie wyde, gaping sometime more in length upward and sometime againe more stretched out in bredth'. She wore a scornful expression which sometimes became threatening, nodding her head and 'gaping uppon the woemen that stood or kneled before her, as if she would devoure them'. At other times her head tossed from side to side rapidly or twisted over to one side or the other and stayed in this odd position. When Lewis Hughes asked God to rebuke 'this foule malicious Devill', despite being blind, deaf and dumb, Mary 'turned to him and did barke out froth at him' (40-1). While the agitated company cried 'with a confused noise, Jesu help, Jesu save', Mary threw herself forward, carrying Hughes with her, having sufficient strength to overcome the efforts of the minister

kneeling behind her and 'cast white froth out of her throat round about the chamber'.²⁸

Hughes was trying to restrain her, partly because her head was bouncing back onto a pillow on the top of the wicker chair and while he had his arms under hers supporting her body, her right leg was 'at libertie', and she 'stamped vehementlye' upon the floor. When others tried to keep this part of her under control, 'she raised her body a loft, and forced backwarde both the chaire and him that stood behind her'. All this physical struggle required 'certaine of the weomen' to be 'busilie employed in holding downe beneath to keepe Decorum least any unseelines should appear' (41-2). To such potentially immodest behaviour was added a collection of animalistic characteristics.

Her voyce at this time was lowd, fearfull and very strange, proceedinge from the throat (like an hoarce dogge that barks) castinge from thence with opened mouth aboundance of froath or foame, whereof some did light on the face of one that kneled by, as his wife was mooved to cast him her handkerchife to wipe if off[f]. The noyse and sound of her voyce one expresseth (in his noates of observation) by the word cheh, cheh, or keck keck: another, by twishe twishe, or the hissing of a violent Squibbe: another to a Henne that hath the squacke: an other compareth it to the loathsome noyse that a Catt maketh forcinge to cast her gorge: and indeed she did this very often, & vehemently straine to vomitt (42)

In the midst of this Master Bridger knelt to one side of the chair, beginning 'a sweete prayer' which, despite or perhaps because it was delivered 'with a milde spirit and low voyce', won a lot of attention. He returned to the Lion of Judah and added Gen. 3:15, drawing attention to Mary's capacity as a woman to bruise the heel of the serpent and reading Job 41:1 as an analogy for Jesus drawing out the devil, finishing with images from Revelation to complete the collection of Scriptural messages of godly power over Satan. While Bridger gave an encouraging reading of the power differentials, Mary's fit continued.

²⁸ Hughes, Certain Grievances, 19.

She twisted her body, tossing her head from side to side, her shoulders loose and, most remarkably, 'her hucklebone [i.e. her hipbone] standing up in her bellie at the place of her navell'. This was accompanied with 'the former disfigurings of eye, mouth, handes, armes, fingers, throat &c'. The surrounding company were making plaintive pleas, saying, 'Iesus help, Lord shew mercy, Lord strengthen, Lord confound Satan, Lord send deliverance'. With all this furore, the preachers were losing a sense of order. One of them was rebuking Satan and calling him a foul spirit in response to which, despite her eyes being shut, Mary turned to him 'and did belch out spittle at him disdainfully, as also at others that kneled [sic] on each side of her'. This was so unpleasant that one of those holding her arms and hence with no means to escape her bile told Swan later 'that he had much adoe to forbeare spitting againe in his foule face, I say his (quoth he) for that me thought, I saw his ougly countenance in her then deformed visage' (42-4).

Swan offered comfort to Mary's father who was understandably distressed, with an 'aboundance of teares'. Swan told him that in such depths of agony there was hope in that if Mary was 'not thus rent and torne, I should not looke for deliverance'. Hughes was of a like mind, thinking that 'the pride & rage of Satan was but a token of his ruine not farre of', grounding his optimism in Psalm 50:15. He raised his voice suddenly 'and prayde lowd and vehemently', calling upon God to show his power and abusing Satan, telling him to be gone and calling him 'a proud spirit and yet cowardly, loath to let lose his hold'. Hughes cried, 'he flies, he flies', which prompted Mary to turn to him with 'a direfull menacinge, (and sometime mocking) countenance' and, with an open mouth, 'she did cast out foame upward into his face, her breath enteringe into his throat'. The louder he prayed, 'the more she raged in his armes, forcinge to rise, and with her strength did lift him up with her, striving to turne her brest & face towards him, notwithstandinge her eyes were shut as a dead bodyes, onely she did lift up her eyebrowes, which did make her looke the more ghastly'. While Hughes struggled with her Master Skelton began to pray and Mary

suddenly fell into the chair where she remained without motion. Her head was 'hanging downward, somewhat inclined towards the shoulder, her face and colour deadly, her mouth and eyes shut, her body stiffe & senclesse, so that ther were that thought, and I thinke we all might have saide, behould shee is dead'. (Swan mentions the notes of another onlooker reporting 'a thing creeping under one of her eye liddes' the size of a pea, but as nobody backed this up, in the interests of objectivity he chose not to stress it) (44-7).

She lay in this catatonic state for a while and, although Swan gives no hints of the company's response the fact that he mentions no prayer or pleading may be taken to suggest they watched in awe and trepidation. Suddenly her body took on life, her eyes and mouth opened and she raised her hands, saying, 'he is come, he is come' and, looking at the preachers behind her and the others either side, 'the comforter is come, O Lord thou hast delivered me'. Her father was the first to respond, crying through his tears that 'this was the crye of her grandfather going to be burned'. As her grandfather was a Marian martyr, this was the greatest non-scriptural model she could follow.²⁹ This prompted a collective outcry, 'even like the victorious crye or shoute of a conquering armye', albeit a cry still full of tears. While she still cried, 'he is come', she struggled to break free of those around her and they stood back to see what she would do. She slid out of the chair and knelt. Her face was 'exceeding sober, and full of a kinde of majestie and reverence', holding her hands fairly high. She turned to various members of the company, looking them in the face and informing them of his arrival, this time with the emphasis on the last word, in contradistinction to her earlier phrases upon her release from her fits (47-8).

This took her into a lengthy prayer of thanksgiving until weariness overcame her. It was all proper and orthodox, opening with gratitude for God's mercy shown to such 'a vile creature' who was 'unworthy of the least of them all'. She gave thanks for her 'health,

²⁹ John Foxe, Acts and Monuments (London, 1877), Vol. 7, 385-402.

strength, and comfortable deliverance'. She voiced her resolve never to forget it and asked for aid in making sure that she and all present, as well as those who heard of it, to 'make true use of it'. She made clear what she meant by this: 'to prayse thee for thy mercies keep in store, and to trust to thy promises, and to depend on thy providence'. She voiced a hope that this experience would make her into 'a new creature', who would hate sin and 'detest Sathan and his workes' treading him under her feet as dirt and to embrace sanctification, 'to walke worthy so great a mercy'. As her weariness became evident while she expanded upon her thanksgiving one of the company encouraged her to pass the duty of thanksgiving on to another. While she was still at prayer, one of the preachers said, 'Oh what a sweet smelling evening sacrifice is this unto the Lord?' Once she was sat back in the wicker chair, the rest of the company kneeled and Master Skelton, kneeling behind her, led them into further thanksgiving (48-9). He added petitions for strength and for further grace for Mary. He in turn was followed by Hughes, reiterating thanksgiving but, ever with an eye for the politics of what had happened, he ended with a plea for God 'to graunt unto us wisdom and discretion in publishing this great work of mercy unto the world'. This aspect was stressed to such a degree that Swan noted that the primary conclusion in Rob Midnal's notes of the prayer was for God to 'make me unfainedlye thankfull, and bolde with wisdom to verifie the truth hereof in due time.' Being 'bolde with wisdom' was to prove a difficult demand for those involved, to which I will return. For the immediate purposes, Master Bridger expressed a desire to add his own thanksgiving prayer but the consensus was that the evening was passing too quickly to allow him time (48-51).

The attention turned back to Mary with a kinsman going to her and saying, 'welcome Mary, thou art now againe one of us'. He was followed by her father who took her hand being, as yet, incapable of any words. Similarly her mother went and took away the handkerchief which Mary had 'covering her blubbery face' and 'with like watery

cheekes kissed her'. Mary was encouraged to leave the centre stage, to sit near the fire and duly returned to the settle where she had begun the day. Swan went to sit with her and gave thanks, bidding her to grow in strength, comfort and courage, to be assured that 'if shee should againe be assaulted' the main battle had been won and any further trial would be 'but a light skirmish'. With that he left her to the women, presumably offering similar delight but also examining her physically, for Swan notes that he was later told that one observed that Mary's 'bellye was fallen and become as lanke as it was 12 monthes before'. Their concern went beyond inspection in that she was given posset followed by broth with bread, all of which she took with no difficulty, a clear contrast to previous efforts at taking sustenance (51-2).

As the conclusion to the thanksgiving of Hughes had shown, the clerics were well aware of the difficult negotiation between publicity, counter-publicity and potential punishment that lay ahead of them. While Mary was greeting well-wishers, they withdrew to a corner of the chamber 'to consult on divers poyntes meete to be considered of and agreed uppon'. The first conclusion was for them to meet in a week's time for a thanksgiving of four hours. The next was more practical, that the names of all present should be taken, presumably should witnesses need to be called. The third was to appoint one to prepare an account of the day, partly by collecting notes and consulting others present, particularly those who had made notes. They regretted the failure to have detailed notes from the beginning of Mary's travails but Swan took the job with the intention to do the best from the sources available. The fourth conclusion was that the company should be admonished 'not to publish that this was done, as yet, but staye to see some continuance of her estate, and if they reported it to any (concealing the place and the persons) to doe it with wisdom and with a religious heart, least by foolish and vaine glorious tatling, the cause might be hindred, & themselves receive hurte'. This note of caution extended to the fifth conclusion. This was a matter of protective priorities, in that

they resolved that if any of the company were to be examined they would 'be as careful as might be to keepe the poore ministers out of danger', to lessen the risk of losing any license to preach and hence 'loose all the meanes they had of their maintenance'. With the sixth conclusion all others were brought in as Master Evans was to lead 'a prayer generall for the whole' which he duly did, 'praying and praysinge God for her Maiestie, the Counsellours, Nobles, Magistrates, Ministers, People, those that were present, & lastly the poore delivered maide'. The last conclusion was a traditional adjunct to a godly fast in that the company were to show their thankfulness 'with an other sacrifice, namely, with contributinge somethinge that might be bestowed on some poore' (52-4).

With the prayer over the company chose to sing a Psalm. Psalm 34 was suggested, a psalm of praise for God's mercy and protection but Evans preferred Psalm 6 on deliverance from physical and spiritual ailments and that was sung 'with a lowe voyce, very decentlye and comfortablye'. By now it was 7 and the company started to talk of leaving but Mistress Radcliffe and the other women of the house had gathered some food and fed the company who, after a stressful and exhausting day, probably had a substantial appetite. For Swan this brought Acts 2:42 to mind, the evening after the successful missionary work of Pentecost when 'they continued in the Apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and breakinge of bread and prayer'. Master Bridger was allowed to give thanks before and after the meal, an opportunity he took to deliver much of what he had intended when he was denied the earlier chance. The meal and his lengthy prayer took the evening to 9 when they rose from the table and as they stood and talked about the day Swan recalled Luke 5:26, 'And they were all amased, and praysed God, and were filled with feare, saying, doubtles we have seen strange thinges this day'. It may be noteworthy that not only was this a reference to the end of a day when Jesus had healed a man with palsy but also to a day when the Pharisees and the scribes heard of such activities and started to raise their hackles against such activities beyond their control (54-7). Earlier in

his account, Swan had stressed the differences between the symptoms of this day and her ordinary fits, as if to mark this as a special occasion, the climax of her travails. They had started at about nine, about four hours before their usual beginning. In addition, 'the vehemency of the fitt' came earlier and stayed longer. It was normal for her to lose sight, for her to pale and for her eyes to roll up into her head, as it was expected for her to become mute. Usually, however, once they had arrived, 'shee never came to have freedome of speech till the whole fitt was ended' in the evening, 'but now, they gave place by turnes'. Furthermore, the movements took a different pattern. After losing her senses, 'succeeded an heaving or swellinge in the bellie, breast, and throate', followed by 'the wagging of her chappe, which stirred much up & downe, not with over hastie motions, but with some leasure'. The accustomed rigidity and senselessness of her left side came but did not come and go as normal, leading Rob Midnal to observe that 'ther was no coherence of this dayes affliction, with her former fittes or passions' (16-7).

With their labours seemingly having met with success, they were 'replenished with much joye' but the company were cautious in their departure. Rather than leave 'with banners displayed', they 'crept away by 2 and by 3 in a companye till we were all gone', with a concern to avoid raising suspicions of any special gathering. Swan lingered in order to ask a couple of questions. He asked Mary if 'she did see any thinge departe from her when shee first felt release'. She said she saw nothing 'but she did feelee somewhat depart, and withall, felt such a fredome of all the powers and faculties of soule and body as she never felt the like before, which caused her in that sorte to springe out for ioye' (56-6). To keep Mary under wraps, perhaps to prevent her suffering the fate of Thomas Darling and William Sommers, and to keep her close to the best assistance if her troubles should return, it was agreed that she should be taken into the house of Lewis Hughes as a

servant for a year and so, 'by common consent', she was joined by her mother and sister in his house at St Helen's, Bishopsgate.³⁰

III

The fast in Shoreditch was the most controlled forum in which Mary Glover was possessed once her condition became a bone of contention. However, as has been seen in the ministerial conference after her dispossession, those involved knew that this was not the end of the struggle over the meaning of the event, over her condition, its causation or its part in the promotion of the godly cause. For its contribution to the godly stock to be complete, for Mary's dispossession to act as a feather in the cap of puritan esteem, it was necessary for it to go public. In this sense, the success of the fasting and prayer and its achievement in a controlled, private and hidden forum was simply to lay the foundational level for a longer and necessarily less controlled hermeneutic battle. Ironically, it was the cleric that Swan recorded as most sensitive to controlling the emergence of Glover's dispossession who was the first to let the cat out the bag and to suffer the first post-dispossession effort of Richard Bancroft to gain control of the episode. The day after the fast Hughes went to see John Croke, presumably to tell him that they had followed his advice and to relate their success. Croke responded by advising him to go to Bancroft 'before he was misinformed' and to tell him of the whole day's actions. In addition, he suggested Hughes should inform the bishop that he did not go of his own accord but to tell him he went on Croke's recommendation. Croke's motives are unclear, for he cannot have been unaware the Bancroft would not welcome Hughes with open arms. As he had been convinced of the veracity of the possession and encouraged the fast, it may be that his sole concern was for the treatment of Mary and that much achieved, sending Hughes, and

³⁰ Hughes, Certain Grievances, 20.

getting the credit for sending the lamb to the slaughter may evince an unwillingness to see puritan ministers given a chance to make more of their success, to draw a line under the affair and, at the same time, to rebuild relations between the authorities of the City of London and the episcopacy.³¹ What is harder to explain is Hughes' willingness to fall for the advice. I can produce no better explanation than the triumph of the previous day had him flying high and it did not occur to him that anyone could fail to be convinced and delighted with such clear evidence of divine merciful intervention. If that was how he arrived at Fulham Palace he must have been sorely disappointed, for he was refused an audience and for his 'pains I was called Rascall and Varlot, and sent to the Gatehouse, where he kept me foure moneths'.³² This was, it seems the end of his career at Great St Helen's, for the parish records carry notes of payment for a replacement minister while he was imprisoned, another as he was suspended and his replacement as vicar, Richard Ball, appears in 1603.³³

In the short term, the efforts of those involved to keep their cards close to their collective chest were of limited success. A close eye was kept on Mary; on the day after the fast Swan asked her 'whether she did ever praye so before' or if she could do so again and she responded in a godly manner, saying that, 'I pray God enable me to pray as I shall have occasion'. He asked her '(merilie) whether she could nowe gape so wide as I might put in my fiste', to which '(with stayed countenance) she answered nothings'. The following day Master Bridger was preaching nearby and Mary was taken there accompanied by certain women, '(religious and matronelye Citizens)'. Bridger preached on 2 Thess. 12, on grace and peace as a gift from Jesus and God the father, seemingly with Mary as the implicit exemplum. Swan felt 'he rayseed and delivered such doctrine and use,

³¹ Cf. MacDonald, xlvi-xlvii.

³² Hughes, Certain Grievances, 20. There is no record of exactly what offence took him to prison and later produced the suspension of his ministry. The imprisonment must have been under the authority of the High Commission as such a penalty is not available to the ecclesiastical courts. His suspension could have been from within the ecclesiastical courts but we have no trace of the exact charge.

³³ George Watson Cole, Lewis Hughes: the Militant Minister of the Bermudas and his Printed Works (Worcester, Mass., 1928), 4-5.

as I thinke the poore partie made good use of'. That night the family were invited to 'supp with a religious Cittizen' who gave thanks before and after the meal (59-61).

Bancroft started to dampen the tinder to prevent any sense of confidence. Like Hughes, Bridger was arrested and was still in prison when Swan's account went to press. The host who delivered the thanksgiving was 'bitterly taken up' by Bancroft 'for performinge, privately in his family (as became a vertuous christian man) a religious duty of humiliation, by prayer and fastinge, uppon an occasion of a heavie crosse which at that time laye uppon one of his children'. The fear of conventicles that was to come to a climax in the 1604 canons seems to have been the main target of Bancroft's use of the pulpit; Swan reports that he heard 'iolly chaplaines in their lofttie vaine scornfully report the practize of prayer & singinge of psalmes in Londoners houses'. On the Saturday, as had been decided at the end of the fast, Mary was visited by a number of the preachers and laity in order to 'understand how thinges went with her', not least because 'a bruyte began to be rayseed abroade, that she was relapsed into her former estat'. Fortunately that was not the case and she seemed to have remained free from further diabolic visitations (60-2).³⁴

While the circulation of rumours was beyond the control of those concerned, so too, albeit to a lesser degree, was Mary's appearance as a public model of piety. On the following day she attended religious exercises before and after noon, 'behaving her selfe there, christianly'. One minister, who, during her travails had prayed for her deliverance with his congregation, and been willing to name her, gave thanks to God for her in public worship. This was despite the care that one of the ministers close to Mary had taken steps to make sure 'that advertisement might in time be given him to forbear, because he knew that it stood not with the Bishops likinge that it should be so'. One additional appearance was mentioned on the following Wednesday at the lecture at Blackfriars after which she

³⁴ As with Hughes, we have no trace of any charges raised against Bridger.

was returned home with her parents, presumably because she was now judged free from further danger (at least from the devil) (63-4, 65).

The combination of rumour, speculation and confidence seems to have encouraged Bancroft to make some efforts to discourage any certainty about claims to successful dispossession. The first medium was the sermon. The initial effort seems to have been almost an aside in a sermon by Henoeh Clapham on 6 February. He was preaching on Math. 24:15, taking a cautionary note on studies that he saw as being overconfident in their ability to predict that date of the millennium and the final judgement through the allegories of the Revelation. Towards the end of his sermon he told the congregation 'howe it had bin bruited abroad, as he thought by some Atheistes or papistes, whose profest enemy he is', that he had hanged himself. Some of his friends doubted the explanation of suicide, suggesting that someone else was responsible, while those less sympathetic 'said it was no marvaile yf he hanged himselfe, for he had bin possest of the Diuel a good while'. Clapham denounced such allegations, countering them with his conviction that 'they were possessed that said soe; and yet not soe possessed as some hold possession nowe adayes, that is essentially'. He went on to explain the distinction: there could 'be noe essentiall possession' because Satan 'can effect as much without entering into the person as yf he were essentially in him' and that therefore there was no need for actual entry into the body allegedly possessed. Secondly, there was no essential possession 'because there can not be assigned anie proper token or signe to knowe that anie is essentially possessed, and not in anie otheres'.³⁵ The logic is not entirely beyond question as an argument against possession per se (and this may be a reflection of the sermon notes, to be fair to Clapham) in that Satan's lack of need to enter the body and doubt expressed about accurate diagnosis does not necessarily prove that such possession is not possible. What is a less questionable conclusion is the inherently

³⁵ Sorlien, 184-5 (quoted 185).

dubious nature of the power of discernment. If Satan can produce the symptoms understood as symptoms of possession without actually possessing the individual and if there are no indubitable means by which to prove possession then any claim to have successfully driven Satan out is a castle built upon sand. While this is not a denial of the possibility of possession it is, if accepted, a serious limitation of the security with which claims for passively participating in the dispossession of a suffering individual could be made.³⁶

The second sermon noted as running contrary to the interests of those hoping to use Mary Glover's dispossession to further the cause of godliness has the subject closer to its centre although it cannot be accurately portrayed as a wholesale denunciation of possession or dispossession. The preacher was John King, a former client of Stephen Egerton with an appropriate reputation of evangelical orthodoxy. His intellectual renown and perhaps his strident anti-popery aided his place as a rising star and between 1597 and 1601 he had been given the rectory of St Andrew's, Holborn and the prebendary of Sneating in St Paul's, both by royal prerogative, and created DD at Oxford. A straightforward denunciation of demonic possession would have been inappropriate on this occasion as he was chosen by John Whitgift to preach at Whitehall upon on the first Sabbath sermon at court after Queen Elizabeth's death, 27 March 1603. The driving theme of the sermon was a celebration of her achievement as religious patron and the expression of gratitude for the quiet succession of James, with the former compared to Theodosius, the godly Roman Emperor, and the latter to Solomon. Within these

³⁶ Clapham would be a curious client of Bancroft's. He was recently converted from Separatism which had taken him into the schismatical and cantankerous exile of Amsterdam and he was in the process of regaining his place within the Church of England so he may have been willing to make some gesture in Bancroft's interest or he may have been asked to do so by a bishop aware of his vulnerability. However, his last but one publication, *Antidoton: or A Sovereigne Remedie Against Schisme and Heresie* (London, 1600), a set of sermons whose title is self-explanatory, was dedicated to Edmund Anderson, who admittedly shared Bancroft's hatred of puritans but, of course, differed sharply on the existence of demonic possession. It might be argued that this strain accounts for the ambivalence of his contribution but the main element of consistency in his publications through his career was its maverick nature. By the end of the year he had departed from the narrow common ground he shared with Bancroft, having denounced him as a favourer of papists, and was imprisoned as a result of his behaviour during the period of plague in the capital: *ODNB*, 'Henoeh Clapham'.

constraints, King skilfully worked an engagement with demonic possession that encouraged a set of emphases that discouraged what, from his perspective, were inappropriate readings of such events.

King was aided in moving to this subject by the text in the liturgy being Luke 11:14 on Jesus casting the devil out of a mute and the suspicions voiced against him. The first point at which he addressed this work was to place it within the larger intention of his incarnation. 'The ende of Christes comming was to dissolve the workes of the divel, whereof possession was not the meanest. Can there be a greater then to take the temple of the Holy Ghost, and make it the sell and shrine of the divels image?' From the example of Christ, his first lesson was that the scribes and pharisees could not deny that he could cast out the devil, only try to diminish the credit and glory that he might gain from the act. The first lesson was the merit of the majority of the witnesses, quoting Julian who described it as 'the rusticity of faythe, as though none but the simple rude multitude beleve'. Turning his attention to those who questioned the worthiness of the act, asking if he was himself possessed, 'nay more that he was belzebub'. This was to arrive at the central point, the means by which Jesus refuted them, which consisted of four reasons. The first was from 'aut[h]ority: a maxime and a rule in all policy that a kingdome divided against it selfe cannot stand'. The second was the means of the casting out judged by precedent. If 'his apostles and disciples' cast out devils 'by the finger of God, then must I'. The third was a matter of power; 'yf one kepe possession, he must be stronger that puts him out: soe he must be greater than the divel that can cast him out'. The fourth was a straightforward statement of 'the repugnancy betwixt Christ and the divel'. However, as Manningham stressed in his notes, King 'insisted most upon his first reason, of intestine discord' and enlarged upon the dangers of divisions among like-minded folk. 'Friendes at discord are most deadly enemyes, and those thinges which before were ligamenta amoris became then incitamenta furoris'. Even the devils earned their own credit, that 'it was

commendable that a legion of them could dwell together in one man, without discord amongst themselves'. This served as the opening to the praise of the late queen, the gratitude for the untroubled succession and the hope for the peaceful reign of the new king. As far as the scribes and pharisees were concerned, 'that being the worst part of this text, he would passe over it'. As he went into the lengthy panegyric regarding Elizabeth and James, the 'miracle of dispossession' became little more than a metaphor for the Reformation. 'Wee have seene the exile of the diuel out of our Country, his legendes, his false miracles, exorcismes, supersticions, &c., and lett him goe walking through dry places; wee are watered with heavenly deawe, and wee hope he shall never returne againe'.³⁷ While the specific instance of Mary Glover might have been heard to be implicit in his sermon, its veracity or otherwise was not raised and neither was the existence or otherwise of genuine contemporary possession or dispossession touched upon. The most that could be argued from his treatment is that such arguments were divisive and were best left to the appropriate authority to judge. If Whitgift and/or Bancroft had hoped for a more clear cut condemnation they would have been disappointed. The two sermons raise issues to which I will return, the issues of authority and discernment.

This was not, however, the only medium available to Bancroft. Having dismissed the possibility of an equal exchange in the press suggested by Mary's supporters between the trial and the fast, he proved more than willing to employ his control over the press of London to see references and assessments of the case on booksellers' stalls. He could call on his client Samuel Harsnet to make a late addition to his account of the Roman Catholic exorcisms of Denham to associate the clerics who took on Mary's travails with bad company. This he saw onto the Stationers' Register on 16 March 1603. It was

³⁷ Ibid., 211-5. These readings run counter to the briefer treatment in MacDonald, xxxiii where he states that both preachers 'doubted that possession occurred "nowe adayes"', a treatment that has become an orthodoxy in the historiography. This is not exactly what Clapham was arguing, as I hope to have shown, and although the translation of the literal casting out of the devil to a metaphor for the Reformation might be seen to lessen the likelihood of current demonic possession it is not an issue King actually addressed. MacDonald assigns the second sermon to Giles Thompson; as Manningham notes (211) it was indeed Thompson's place on the rota, 'but Dr. King was appointed and performed that duty'.

preceded on the register two days earlier by Edward Jorden, the physician last seen receiving the sharp end of Anderson's tongue during his efforts to argue for natural disease during the trial.³⁸ Harsnet's contribution can be dealt with briefly, partly because it was brief and partly because it trod a path that will become familiar from his critique of Darrell to be examined below. For now it is sufficient to say that Swan's description of 'his immodest stile, and lascivious penn' has as much accuracy as wounded sensitivity.³⁹ For any seeking devils to exorcise or guides to consult, he stated that such were available in London: 'wee have ready for them Darrells wife, Moores minion, Sharpe, Skelton, Swan & Lewis; the devil-finders, and devil-puffers, or devil-prayers: and they shal start them a devil in a lane, as soone as an Hare in Waltham forrest'. In addition, he promised to be able to easily find 'a route, rable, and swarme of giddy, adle, lunaticke, illuminate holy spectators, but especially a Sistrernity of mimpes, mops, and idle holy women' willing to 'be as ready to cry out, at the mowing of an apish wench, and the lowing, or bellowing of a brainlesse empty fellow'.⁴⁰

Slightly greater attention needs to be paid to the first relevant tract as it has been seen as a groundbreaking precursor to the scientific revolution and an important contribution to the rise of 'scepticism' regarding demonic possession.⁴¹ Jorden had

³⁸ The bibliographic history is given in detail in Henry N. Paul, The Royal Play of Macbeth (London, 1950), 108-10. He suggests that James probably received a copy of Jorden's work by the time he rested at Theobald's at the start of May on his journey to London and Harsnet's by the time he spent the day with Bancroft at Fulham Palace on 22 July: 107.

³⁹ Swan, A True and Breife Report, 68.

⁴⁰ Samuel Harsnet, A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures, to with-draw the harts of her Maiesties Subjects from their alleageance, and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England, under the pretence of casting out devils (London, 1603), 166. This plainly cut Lewis Hughes to the quick, for he reproduced it, word for word, as a cruel description of himself 'and the rest of the Ministers, that did joyn with me in that holy action' along with the 'men and women of good esteeme and credit': Hughes, Certain Grievances, 20; cf. Swan, A True and Breife Report, 1st pag. 2. The compilation and the timing of Harsnet's tract is given detailed and convincing treatment in Clive Holmes, 'Witchcraft and possession at the accession of James I: the publication of Samuel Harsnett's A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures', in John Newton and Jo Bath (eds), Witchcraft and the Act of 1604 (Leiden, 2008), 69-90. The identity of 'Sharpe', inserted between the wives of Darrell, George More and the ministers coming to the aid of Mary Glover is uncertain. The name does not appear in the material relating to her or in any other case of which I am aware.

⁴¹ James Sharpe has him as 'that paragon of the physician's virtues': The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: a horrible and true story of football, witchcraft, murder and the king of England (London, 1999), 196; Sands has him as one of those 'who were much more sceptical than' Darrell and describes his printed work as 'much more convincing' than his performance in court: Kathleen R. Sands, Demon Possession in Elizabethan England (London, 2004), 116, 193; D.P. Walker has his work as 'a learned, medically traditional

changed his assessment of Mary's condition since the trial, adopting an understanding of solely natural disease. Bradwell made much of this shifting opinion, asking, '[w]hat shall we thinke of his contrary protestation before the judge?' He concluded that 'he wrote this according as he was inspired by his taske master, and not out of his owne sense and judgment'.⁴² I will not deal with the medical arguments at great length for two reasons. The first is that a more temperate assessment has been provided by Michael MacDonald, drawing attention to the specific context as well as its limited long term impact; there was, after all, no second edition once the furore over Mary Glover had been settled. The second is that Jorden will re-emerge in the context of a broader analysis of the relations between natural and spiritual healing in the following chapter.⁴³ What is more pertinent to the immediate subject is Jorden's manner of argument and his efforts to set the parameters of debate, in particular the differentials of power, the surety of discernment and the treatment of precedents.

In his lengthy dedicatory epistle, addressed to the College of Physicians and dated 2 March 1603, Jorden works to establish his authoritative position and to nip potential criticisms in the bud. With a tone of humility, refusing to claim a breadth of expertise, he makes the case for his judgement to be accepted on this particular instance, pointing out that in cases outside their particular calling, people depend upon the assessment of those within whose field of expertise the query falls. 'Why should we not prefer the iudgements of Phisitions in a question concerning the actions and passions of mans bodie (the proper

treatise', concerned with 'enlightening laymen': Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the late Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries (London, 1981), 13, 14; Almond states that his work 'no doubt created a new group of readers more open to the possibility of naturalistic explanations of possession: Philip Almond, Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 2004), 38; Thomas has him as 'one of the most perceptive contemporary writers on witchcraft', and describes his work as 'a powerful exposé of the variety of possible natural causes underlying supposed cases of possession'; while expressing doubts about his diagnosis, Thomas still has him as a 'sceptic' and one of 'the rationalist physicians': Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (Harmondsworth, 1973), 249, 584, 692.

⁴² BL Sloane Ms 831 ff. 56v-57r (MacDonald, 45).

⁴³ MacDonald provides a helpful biography and places Jorden in the development of the diagnosis of hysteria or 'the suffocation of the mother': MacDonald, vii-ix, xxxiii-xxxiv, xlvii-lv. While arguing for the importance of Jorden's resurrection in the twentieth century and his influence on later Jacobean cases he also notes that analysis of his role in the Glover case was 'to reduce Jorden to insignificance' and that his tract 'had little lasting influence on the diagnosis of either witchcraft or hysteria': xlvii.

subject of that profession) before our owne conceites; as we do the opinions of divines,
Lawyers, Artificers, &c. in their proper Elements'. This plea makes two silent moves. The first is to move from the particular physician, that is, himself, to the broader remit of 'physicians', a move from the particular to the general and assuming that he is to be allowed to speak for an implied homogeneity, contrary, as we have seen, to the judgement of the physicians consulted in Glover's case.⁴⁴ Secondly, he silently assumes that this field is within his profession and not part of the proper element of 'Divines, Lawyers, Artificers, &c.' thereby granting himself an assumed authority in a field less clearly defined than this assumes. He goes on to express epistemological caution which serves his interest. Of course it is good to be zealous in pursuit of the truth and 'so to be wise in discerning truth from counterfaiting and naturall causes from supernaturall power'. While he would be the last to deny that God does 'worke extraordinarily' and that there may be 'both possessions by the Divell and obsessions and witchcraft &c', indeed that there may be 'dispossession also through the prayers and supplications of his servants, which is the onely meanes left unto us for our reliefe', that is not the end of the story. Because such instances are 'verie rare now adayes', he advises people to 'be very circumspect in pronouncing of a possession'; this is because 'the impostures be many' and because 'the effects of disease be strange to such as have not looked th[o]roughly into them'. Effectively, this is a lengthy way of saying, 'trust me, I'm a doctor.' His third ploy is to disarm hypothetical critics employing the success of fasting and prayer as an efficacious means to bring divine intervention to aid the possessed to prove the reality of possession. He does not deny that fasting and prayer may go along with the healing of such as are perceived to be possessed, merely that 'this may be a naturall remedie two maner of wayes': it can pull 'downe the pride of the bodie, and the height of the naturall humors thereof', a physical

⁴⁴ Bradwell draws attention to this assumption, stressing its reliance on ignorance, 'for when all men, that were acquainted with Marie Glovers case, doe likewise take knowledge, not only of the difference amongst the phisitions, but of the principall parties also in that difference': BL 831 Sloane Ms f. 52r (MacDonald, 41).

cure, or it can work 'by the confident perswasion of the patient to find release by that means', a psychological cure.⁴⁵

Jorden elaborates his call for trust in the main body of the tract. He claims that many more examples could be given both from 'authentically writers in our profession and out of our own experiences', examples which he would give 'were it not that late examples would be offensive to rehearse', effectively to rely on trust. Such examples would show 'how easily men unexperienced in those extraordinarie kindes of diseases, may mistake the causes of them'. Physicians, trained in philosophy and experienced in treatment of natural diseases, are best placed to distinguish between natural, preternatural and supernatural. Therefore it was their own fault in 'neglecting that light which we might yeeld them', that some less well prepared individuals 'doe runne headlong into many errors and absurdities'.⁴⁶ This encouragement to suspicion is taken further by the particular examples of deceit he employs. Having given a broad brush assumption of the reader's familiarity with counterfeit drunkenness, madness, epilepsy, he cites the authority of Hippocrates for those who 'can make noises & speake in their bellies and throates', naming the particular examples of 'the holy maid of Kent, and Mildred of westwall, &c.', the latter being Mildred Norrington, one of Reginald Scot's examples from 1574.⁴⁷ Shortly after he recites the established precedents of Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pindar, the two supposed possessed girls who consulted John Foxe the previous year, adding Martha Brossier, the French demoniac whose exposure had recently been translated into English at Bancroft's behest. Following this trinity there appeared two fraudulent demoniacs, one whose supposed devil could not distinguish between canonical Scripture and apocryphal texts and the other who lacked Latin. These examples were enough, he felt, to establish

⁴⁵ Edward Jorden, A Briefe Discourse of the Disease Called The Suffocation of the Mother (London, 1603), ep. ded.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

his grounds, although he reassured the reader that '[d]ivers such like examples might bee procured to shew how the animal functions may be abused by our owne will'.⁴⁸

Taken as a diagnosis of the causes of Mary Glover's condition, Jorden's Discourse was relatively easily dismissed. The condition of suffocation of the mother was, within early modern medical discourse, seen as a condition more likely to appear among post-menstrual women, or caused by either amenorrhea, the failure of menstruation to appear at puberty, or sexual abstinence creating an imbalance of humours. While this was not contrary to medical orthodoxy (albeit unusual in appearing among the natural disease explanations for the symptoms of demonic possession), given that Mary had not yet reached menarche when her condition began, Bradwell's critique of Jorden had good ground. He made a number of palpable hits despite his somewhat rambling style. Rather than work through his mixture of outrage, disgust and sarcasm in detail, I will focus more narrowly on his response to the tactics highlighted above. His general tone is captured fairly accurately in his response to Jorden's dismissal of the credibility of such as were guilty of 'neglecting the light which wee might yeeld them'.

Now we must desire to know of him, [']who neglecteth this light['] he speaketh of: if he be able, let him tell us. We looke for a pregnant instance: as eather the Justices of the bench, or Jurie, or els (at least) the generall number of ministers, lawiers, other schollers and professed christians, which before and after the sessions, came to see the maide in her afflictions. But all men know, that the Justices were not without the direction of Phisitions, in their proceeding. And the rest of the people, at other times, did often finde some of those phisitions, that were most observant of everie thinge, that hapned in her case, and clerely in judgment contrary to him; and to their judgments they clave. Therefore it is false that [']phisitions were not neglected['].⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13. Michel Marescot, A true discourse, upon the matter of Martha Brossier of Romorantin pretended to be possessed by a devill (London, 1599). On Brossier, see Sarah Ferber, Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France (London, 2004), 40-59.

⁴⁹ BL Sloane Ms 831 ff. 53r-54v (MacDonald, 42).

So far as Bradwell and, one may assume, his sympathetic readers were concerned, Jorden's inaccuracy, indeed, his duplicity had been laid bare. Moreover, his claim to be acting as the voice of the whole profession, along with his suggestion of a consensus on the issue, had been displayed as, respectively, presumptuous and wrong.

For Jorden's efforts to claim the project of diagnosis solely for the medical profession, Bradwell was quick to muddy the waters. Describing Satan as 'the Ocean sea of subtleties', he stressed his ability, if granted divine permission, to 'hide his owne ougly shape' under the appearance 'of ordinary symptomes'. By this means he could extend his pleasures, 'for exercising his mallice there the longer, and more securely'. Bradwell turned Jorden's epistemological caution against him. Witnesses should indeed not make a hasty diagnosis 'under pretence of doing good'; neither should physicians think that the condition of possession or its absence 'be discerned assoone as a tertian fever'. True discernment would emerge to those who had the aid which, it is implied, Jorden lacked: they 'whom God enlighteneth, shall (notwithstanding) fynd him out'.⁵⁰

Regarding Jorden's use of precedents and those which he selected Bradwell's (and, as will become clear, Swan's) approach was twofold. He had no interest in claiming those accepted as fraudulent as support for his diagnosis of Mary Glover's veracity. Jorden, 'amongst the rest of such good ware, maketh shew of this faire jewell:' some had counterfeited possession, either directly or with the aid of some natural disease. His response was curt and dismissive. 'And what then? Though Rachel Pinder and too manie such have done this; what is that to us?'⁵¹ To take the fact that some alleged possession were not real as proof that none were real was logically fallacious. He was more detailed in addressing Jorden's attempt to use the differing physical responses of Mary to the presence of Elizabeth Jackson as a means of questioning them as symptoms of

⁵⁰ BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 74v (MacDonald, 60).

⁵¹ BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 84v (MacDonald, 68). Cf. BL Sloane Ms 831 ff. 167v-168r (MacDonald, 137) where he compares Jorden to Scot, obviously with pejorative connotations, and feels justified in doing so, 'sith him selfe blusheth not to use his authoritie sometime'.

possession. He turned to an example which, despite the best efforts of Samuel Harsnet discussed above, maintained its stock in godly circles, the example of Alice Samuel. Mary's reaction changed from active fits to rigidity and insensibility; Bradwell drew the reader's attention to the precedent of Alice who, on his reading, as accusations against her mounted had 'desired her good servant (or Master rather) to use that trick no more'. Once the children had started to accuse her, when they were in their fits, they 'would not be well in any place, but in the presence and companie of mother Samuell'. After she had absented herself, allegedly to feed her spirits and make 'a new League and composition with them', the symptoms changed: with the new deal 'they shalbe no whit the better, but rather the worse for her being there, because she would not remaine any longer there'. Satan was willing to go along with this arrangement because it chimed with his interests which Bradwell saw as similar to his actions with Mary.

And surely, in this our case of M. Glover, Sathan purchased a large field of comodeties, by so doing. For hee seeing som present there, that were settled in incredulitie, and knowing, there were greater ones abroad, that laie in the winde for som slaunderous calumniations, to blemish this cause with, stood the handes of both, in this oportunitie. And by that means, satisfied his good dame, brought to passe, division among the behoulders and witnesses, slaunder to the innocent maid, scandale to the truth, securitie to his longer inhabitation, and prevention (as he hoped) to that casting out, which might much advauntage the cause of the Church, and give glory, unto the God of most unsearchable mercies, everlasting power, and infinite wisdome.⁵²

The equivalent approach in Swan's account was more concise, as much an argument from the absences from Jorden's sample. He felt he could not 'passe over in silence, the strange works of God in these our dayes', listing by geographical location the familiar

⁵² BL Sloane Ms 831 ff. 91r-92r (MacDonald, 73-4). Cf. BL Sloane Ms 831 f. 136r (MacDonald, 111).

cases of Thomas Harrison, the daughter of James Charles from Woolwich, William Sommers, Thomas Darling, Anne and Joan Nayler, the Lancashire Seven, Mildred Norrington and one unidentified case '(as I heere)' in Sussex. For Swan, the lesson was clear: those suffering in his name could confidently hold their peace for 'I will take the cause into myne owne handes, and be revenged on the violent and wilfull oppositions of men, against the manifest workes of myne owne power'.⁵³

The limited success in purely logical terms of Jorden's tract and the fact that it was not judged to be of sufficient value to merit a second edition is irrelevant. When the accounts of the symptoms, their appraisal and the development and eventual success of Mary's ailments are measured within the public sphere very different conclusions are reached. While Jorden's work was properly published and fronted with a dedicatory epistle to the College of Physicians, Swan's account was from a clandestine press without the approved seal of the Stationers' Register, thereby lessening its claim to respectability, raising the danger of its being inherently marginal and potentially categorised as seditious. In his opening plea to the new king he made great claims for the painstaking practice, the lengthy familiarity with the patient and the professional credit of the two physicians who had collaborated on an analysis to place Jorden's in serious question.

But the weaknes of this mans opinion is ready to be layd open, by the labours of two other learned and christian, professours likewise of phisicke, who also have taken twentie times more paynes, care, and diligence, about the afflicted party in time of her vexation to find out the truth, then this man hath done. Which booke of theirs, handlinge the means of her first being taken, the manner of her strange and fearfull fittes, by the space of almost 8. monthes: the proceeding in Iudgement against the Witch, the evidence brought in against her, the greivous affliction of the maide even in presence of Courte, the verdict of the Iurie, the speech of the Iudge, and sentence

⁵³ Swan, A True and Breife Report, 70-1; all the less famous examples were probably lifted from John Darrell, The Replie of Iohn Darrell, to the Answer of Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker, concerning the Doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniackes (n.p., 1602).

of the Recorder (not yet fullye executed, (I know not uppon what cause:) will I hope,
fullie give information and content, to any indifferent reader⁵⁴

A more accurate appreciation of the relative impact needs to take into account that Bradwell's clinical assessment was not even blessed with the publicity of a clandestine press. While we should not underestimate the importance of circulated manuscripts in early modern England, this was not a matter of choice for Bradwell. His text would be limited to a sympathetic audience, perhaps offering reassurance for some but more likely to be preaching to the converted. The press was even more restricted than it had been when John Darrell was the contested minister.

Furthermore, the limits of the public debate were being set more rigorously. Swan reports a scholar at Cambridge proposing to dispute the question, 'nulla hiis diebus possessio ac dispossessio Dæmoniorum', in these days there was no possession or dispossession of demons but the heads insisted that the proposition be changed to 'nulla est hiis diebus ordinaria possessio ac dispossessio Dæmoniorum', effectively shifting the ground to those of Henoah Clapham's sermon noted above.⁵⁵ Similar constraints may have been imposed in Oxford, for in February John Chamberlain reports a young scholar at Merton College, Thomas Darling, 'that pretended heretofore to be dispossessed of a devil by Darrel', who was censured to be whipped and lose his ears 'for libelling against the Vice-Chancellor and diverse of the Council'.⁵⁶ Slightly closer to the bone is a recent

⁵⁴ Swan, A True and Breife Report, 1st pag. 4-5. MacDonald has suggested that the second author was William Scott, a barrister of Inner Temple. Apart from him not being a physician, his only source is an amusing anecdote relating to the vexations of Mary recorded by John Manningham with 'W. Scott na[r]' after it. Given that the anecdote is of an onlooker having their pocket picked and a wry witticism produced by the theft, it is not entirely convincing that this is from a separate narrative of the troubles. MacDonald suggests that Bradwell 'quotes the lost narrative as an authoritative account': MacDonald, xxvi, citing Sorlien, 354. The three occasions when Bradwell quotes what he refers to as 'the narration' are citations (with blank spaces for the absent page numbers) referring to matters covered in the first 42 folios of the manuscript before the second part, the eight chapters explicitly authored by Bradwell which constitute a critique of Jorden's tract. It may be more convincing to see the second physician as a silent or at least anonymous assistant to Bradwell. There is also the possibility that the second physician wrote the first section separately but as it is not made plain it has been treated above as also the work of Bradwell: BL Sloane Ms 831 ff. 132v-133r (MacDonald, 108).

⁵⁵ Swan, 57-8.

⁵⁶ John Chamberlain, The Letters of John Chamberlain, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, (Philadelphia, 1939), 186-7.

sermon Swan mentions at St Paul's Cross where the preacher 'spake much to the taxing of the ludge, lurie, and witnesses, and clearinge or acquitting the Witch'.⁵⁷ Finally, the denial of the hope of Mary's supporters to have an open debate in person or in print was noted earlier. Swan goes on to note the dismissal of 'an offer which was tendred unto them' by John Ireton, described as 'a worthy preacher', to debate 'whether there may be any witches: or whether there may be any possessions & dispossessions in these dayes'. Swan judged it better 'and more like christian schollers' to have had such a question 'handled by a sett, and solemne conference or disputation in either of the universities' than to have employed 'an heavie hand, a partiall pen, and arguments of violence, to strive to over-beare, both the men and the cause'.⁵⁸ It takes little sophistication to see why such a conference held no appeal for the ecclesiastical authorities, and I suspect Swan was playing a pretence of naivety when he expressed his disappointment. What made the prospect of Bancroft agreeing to a debate with Ireton on equal terms is that he was the minister of Kegworth, Leicestershire, who John Darrell recommended as an aid to William Sommers, in his turn pleaded with Darrell to take on the task and went on to serve on the initial Commission which judged Sommers to be genuinely possessed and to be denied the opportunity to testify on Darrell's behalf at Lambeth!⁵⁹

There are two minor elements, one of which has already been noted and the other which seems at some distance from all the vitriolic hubbub covered so far. Together these elements mark a transition but not the transition that tends to be assumed. The first is the evening at the end of the fast which provided the ritual of humility through which to plead for divine intervention to ease Mary Glover's vexations. After the resolution to attempt to keep a lid on the publicity of her relief and to try to protect the most vulnerable of those present, the ministers, the participants in the exercise 'crept away by 2 and by 3 in a

⁵⁷ Swan, 1st pag., 5. Judging from the notes discussed above, MacDonald is inaccurate in his suggestion of the possibility that this is one of the sermons attended by Manningham: MacDonald, xxv.

⁵⁸ Swan, 1st pag., 3.

⁵⁹ See above, 142, 173, 175.

companye till we were all gone'.⁶⁰ They hoped to use the spiritual grace shown in Mary's delivery for the glory of God and for the assistance of the godly cause in England but they were hampered. The fast had, of necessity, taken place in private, removing the opportunity to attract the mixture of concerned, pious and curious, along with the occasional dubious, sceptical or downright ungodly spectators attending the exercises relating to Darling, Sommers et al. If they hoped the fruit was to be harvested through the pulpit, some thanksgivings were made but at some cost and contrary voices were encouraged. This left print, manuscript and word of mouth as available media but the first was of limited availability, the second less effective as a means of conversion and the third both less effective and to be used with caution. The second element emerged while Richard Bancroft was awaiting his appointment as successor to his patron, John Whitgift, who died in February, as archbishop of Canterbury. In his draft for the new canons of 1604, Bancroft sought to prohibit 'any privatt fastinge and prayer under pretence of Castinge out Devilles under payne of suspension and deprivation from the minstre'. In the minimally watered down version in Canon 72 no meeting was to be had 'either publikely or in any private houses' to attempt 'by fasting and prayer to cast out any devill or devills' without 'the Licence and direction of the Bishop of the Diocesse first obtained and had under his Hand and Seale'.⁶¹ The former could be read as denying the very possibility of demonic possession but the lesser version achieved Bancroft's purpose. It was now illegal for such events to happen under solely puritan control. Should such licence be granted, the fasting could be within the bishop's oversight and thereby control. If it should be a success then he would be able to take a share of the credit and the opportunity for it to operate as any power-play to promote the godly cause at least in a confrontational manner was impossible.

⁶⁰ Swan, 56.

⁶¹ Bancroft's draft is in S. B. Babbage, Puritanism and Richard Bancroft (London, 1962), Appendix I, 381; Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiasticall (London, 1604), M3. Clive Holmes has plausibly suggested the possibility that the modification may have been the work of James: 'Witchcraft and possession', 89.

The combination of a stronger disciplinary mechanism, requiring ecclesiastical approval before the opening of any proceedings to combat the devil with the chastening experience of seeing the media of propagation made less available or their claim to respectability damaged, in the case of the press, or a greater risk attached to even thanksgiving from the pulpit, as shown by Master Bridger's fortunes established a new power relationship in the response to demonic possession. What needs to be stressed here, and will be enlarged upon below, is that this was not a blossoming of scepticism regarding the existence of demonic possession or, for that matter, the proper means through which to address the misfortunes of the possessed. The opportunities of a godly cleric or clerics, supported and assisted by laity of a similar mindset, to take to battle with the devil, armed with nothing more than a Bible and prayer (and the hope of divine mercy) were seriously diminished. Even Mary's dispossession was limited to a collection of the trustworthy, removing the spectacle advantageous to the godly cause of the suffering residence of Satan and the dramatic thaumaturgist seeking divine assistance. The cost to the participants or the potential costs to those offered future demoniacs had risen and the chances of turning the good intentions of those involved to the promotion of piety had fallen. Having established these conditions, the authorities had achieved their goal. This was not, or at least not primarily, to 'abolish' demonic possession; it was to prevent, at least to restrain, the enactment of godly charismatic devotion to what were perceived as subversive ends. It was not to 'abolish' godly charisma, merely to limit its channels; the pulpit and the prayer were available but they were more controllable, more visible and less likely to escape discipline than the fasting and prayer in the holy household open to the curious. In such circumstances it is no surprise that this was the last dispossession drama on the Darrell model.

What needs to be emphasised and will also serve as a prologue to what follows is that the consequence of the struggle over the meanings attached to Mary Glover was not

a disavowal of the reality of demonic possession. At the ground level, it remained part of the orthodox religious and medical discourse of early modern England. Its treatment had come to be more closely monitored by the ecclesiastical authorities but this does not equate to wholesale scepticism about its possibility or its existence in the contemporary world. What was expressed in different ways, and to different purposes, by John King, by Edward Jorden, even by John Swan and Stephen Bradwell, was a heightened demand on its discernment. One of the lasting consequences of this conflict was a more exacting measurement of its appearance in specific cases but not a denial of its possibility. The means of Satan's intervention in human bodies had not changed but the confidence of mere mortals in diagnosing its presence had deliberately been given a serious blow. To gain a more complete understanding of the ways in which the attractiveness of a public engagement with demoniacs was lessened for godly ministers diminished sets three tasks. The first is a closer examination of debates which breached the boundaries of the privacy of the godly community. The second is a better understanding of the means by which the contributions of Samuel Harsnet contributed to this debate and that in itself requires a longer retrospective analysis of the categorisations employed to set the parameters of abuse and defence. The third is the relationship between the discourses of natural and spiritual medicine, a more complex and interactive relationship than we tend to assume. These tasks and the ways that they came to be reflected in the discourse and practice of possession and dispossession is the focus of the following chapters.

Fearful Precedents and the Manner of Argument

While the experience of, the representation of, and the contest over Mary Glover can be seen as a grand finale to the entrance to a dead-end road, the closure should not be misunderstood. While it did indeed represent the last effort at a dispossession involving godly ministers, albeit one strained by efforts to control both the experience and its representation and thereby the meaning attached to it, it did not represent the triumph of 'rationalism' or 'scepticism' so much as the last flowering, in the English context, of the association of godly ministers and laity with a possessed individual and an identified witch as the secondary cause of the possession. As will be shown, the discourse of 'real' possession was still very present, but it entered a new degree of suspicion and rising demands of the process of discernment. What is needed is an exploration of why it proved to be the last occasion on which the model inherited, as it were, from the Darrell cases, shaped the experience. This can be followed by addressing the second exploration, of the continued appearance of possession, its discernment and responses to it. Finally, this will provide the space for a more explicit discussion of questions of 'truth' and 'truths' within discussions of diabolic possession within early modern communities and how that might raise modifications in the ways in which they are answered by historians in the present day.

To understand the caution taken by the godly in dealing with Glover's travails and to understand why this proved to be the last full bloom of diabolic possession tackled with fasting and prayer, a starting point is to return to the contributions to the struggle over the judgement of Darrell, Sommers et al., the lengthy tracts by John Deacon and John Walker.¹ These two lengthy engagements have become something of a challenge to historians, particularly since the work of Gibson and Freeman made it clear that these

¹ John Deacon and John Walker, Dialogicall Discourses of Spirits and Divels (London, 1601); Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer To All[] The Material Points In Any Of Master Darel his bookes (London, 1601).

were not works emerging directly from the stable of Bancroft and Harsnet, that they were written by ministers who one might have expected to be counted among the defenders, or at least sympathisers, with Darrell's sufferings. Indeed, Gibson has shown that the more traceable of the two, John Deacon, had flirted with ecclesiastical discipline when he had been curate at Bawtry, Nottinghamshire in the 1590s. He received patronage from reliable godly gentry and the tracts can be seen as closer to a family feud than one between established antagonists.² The purpose of bringing these tomes centre stage is not primarily to assess the intellectual dimension of their argument. They raise some difficult questions with a selective reading of some of the pro-Darrell literature but also strain so hard to discredit Darrell (or, more accurately, their representation of him) that their readings of patristic sources and even Scripture go beyond the pale, imposing metaphorical, literal and allegorical readings, as they suit their purposes, that bring the reality of the possessions encountered by Jesus and the apostles into question.³ Some of their means of argumentation will be touched upon but primarily as a means of teasing out the driving force, the concerns, that brought them to produce these denunciations of their brethren, as far as it is possible to do so.

To deduce the breeding stock of these works is harder than usual. Any house-trained literary critic will explain about 'the death of the author' but, in addition, these are texts which have many voices, not all of which are consistent. I will move through them in

² Marion Gibson, Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy (London, 2006), 145-50; Thomas Freeman, 'Demons, Deviance and Defiance: John Darrell and the politics of exorcism in late Elizabethan England', in Peter Lake and Michael Questier (eds), Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660 (Woodbridge, 2000), 51-55.

³ Stuart Clark, 'Demons, natural magic, and the virtually real', in Gerhild Scholz and Charles D. Gunnoe (eds), Paracelsian Moments: science, medicine, & astrology in early modern Europe (Kirkville, MS, 2002), 223-45, esp. 239-40, places them among the natural philosophers giving Satan such powers of illusion that nothing is to be taken on trust, philosophers taken to the limits and rescued by Descartes. The section is from a speech by 'Physiologus' and as he is one of the characters they employ, not entirely to be taken as an expression of Deacon and Walker's opinion. As a whole, as will be seen, the emphasis is much more on the credulity of the witnesses than on the powers of Satan. A profitable comparison which can be seen as part of the explanation why Deacon and Walker's argument was not taken as a new orthodoxy among the godly is with Meric Casaubon. Casaubon expressed such 'natural' explanations for the perception of spirits that he was in danger of denying the existence of all spirits, not the intention of his denunciation of 'enthusiasts' and providing an epistemological trap that he had to free himself from: Adrian Johns, 'The physiology of reading and the anatomy of Enthusiasm', in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds), Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England (Aldershot, 1996), 136-70, esp. 162.

turn, identifying characterisations of the engagement and also hints of what can be suggested to be at the heart of the project. The demand to decipher appears in the mixed tones of the opening of the first tract. The Scriptures chosen on the frontispiece are Deut.13:1-3, on false prophets, 'a dreamer of dreams' and Matt. 24:23-4 on 'false Christes, and false Prophets'. The Dedicatory Epistle has an apologetical tone, explaining the supposed three years' delay in publication, stressing caution but claiming a forced hand by the publications of Darrell and his cohorts, that the tract was needed particularly now, 'when the fearefull infection of those their factious proceedings, so universally, and so dangerously overspreadeth itselfe: not unlike to the fretting Gangrena, or incurable Canker [I Tim 2:17]'. The epistle is addressed to the Judges of the Common Law, including, of course, Lord Anderson and Sir John Popham, the former a familiar acquaintance to us and the latter the addressee of The Triall. The choice of dedication was made, they hasten to add, not because of any distrust in the High Commission but because, having received the opprobrium of the pamphleteers, the Commissioners might 'haply be deemed by the adverse part but incompetent Iudges'.⁴ Similar caution was expressed in the letter prefacing A Summarie Answer, addressed to the 'Learned Preachers and Godlie Brethren', explaining that the persistent promotion of 'their newly broached opinions' had forced them to publish a rejoinder, moved by 'a compassion of some, by putting a difference, and some other again to save with feare, by pulling them violently forth of the fire'.⁵ The explicit fear that they express is to be given 'unchristian reproaches' which they anticipate from 'the cankred mouthes of some clamorous companions'. They fear that pamphlets and pulpits will proclaim that they 'are quite falne from the brethren and their cause, they know not well what: that they are become Apostates, revolvers, backsliders, formalistes, and such as fawn on the state'. Hence they stress that their work was the

⁴ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, Ep. Ded.

⁵ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer, 'To The Reverend Fathers, The Learned Preachers and Godlie Brethren'.

result of endless reading and conferences, after which 'the verie truth it selfe' eventually began 'to breake foorth like the sunne in his strength'.⁶

Operating within a stated space of moderation and humility, they set out the dramatis personæ of their dialogue, a total of six individuals who, as will emerge, are usually allegorical figures and sometimes more clearly 'real' individuals. Philologus is one with an appetite for news, sensation and talk; Pneumaticus holds against the existence of spirits, representing both the 'Swinish Saduces of old, and those godles Atheistes now in our daies'; Lycanthropus defends the transformative power of devils and Physiologus is a natural philosopher, capable of exposing absurdities by the light of reason. The two central characters are Orthodoxus, one of 'an approoved or upright iudgement', the authority of divines and Scripture and Exorcistes is 'a coniurour or caster foorth of spirits and divels'.⁷ The balances are clearly weighed in favour of Orthodoxus, particularly with Exorcistes portrayed as holding a sense of agency in expelling devils and being given a title that connotes exorcism rather than dispossession, a given power in the activist rather than a role of leading prayer and fasting as a plea to God to dispossess the individual should He so choose. This is not a title (or an agency) that would have been taken on by any godly minister and offers an easy target of pride in Exorcistes along with a papist association that, as will emerge, was a recurring trope in the tracts. Thus Lycanthropus refers to 'the Exorcist also who cast out the divel at Magnitton'; Katherine Wright is taken as an example of those who would not say they were possessed 'if they were not earnestly perswaded unto it, by some of the Exorcistes trade'; Exorcistes and his like are accused of leading 'ignorant people' astray by 'making them beleeve you can cast forth divels: whereas you have no such power at all'; such 'fained false miracles' are supposedly executed by 'some

⁶ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourse, Ep. Ded., 'To The Reader'. Darrell seriously denied alleged efforts to discuss the matters with him and his colleagues, saying that he was out of reach and that when George More agreed to meet them he was stood up: John Darrell, The Replie of Iohn Darrell, to the Answer of Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker, concerning the doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniackes (n.p., 1602), 'The Epistle to the Right Reverend Fathers and Brethren'.

⁷ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 'To The Reader'.

speciall persons'.⁸ This continues in the second tract, with frustration expressed resultant upon 'your Exorcists calling, their pretended power and proud vaunts' and 'Exorcistes our divel-driver' accused of having established 'a new found ordinance, for the orderly exorcizing of spirits and divels' with the corrective being, ironically, closer to Darrell's own line, that 'all divels whatsoever, were ever driven foorth by the onely immediate power of the Lord, apprehended wholely by a miraculous faith'.⁹

Their stated intention is the protection of the godly and the church. They fear that claims to work miracles will 'iniurously put upon faithfull professors, the lively cognizance, the liverie or badge of that Antichristian brood' who claim the 'accomplishment of such lying signes and wonders'. When Exorcistes accuses his brethren of devaluing the power of fasting and prayer, the response of Orthodoxus is that they actually hold the ordinance is higher esteem than him but fear guilt by association, that 'you your owne selfe (by these your disordered dealing) do rather bring that holy ordinance of God, into publique disgrace'. Similarly, when Exorcistes admits his acceptance of his companions' arguments, he explains his unwillingness to submit to authority by concern that he 'should scandalize the zealous professours' who 'rightly favouring the reformation' had offered their support; Orthodoxus reassures him that 'such sincere professours, as are zealously, and rightly religious' had supported him with the best of intentions and would welcome him back into the fold by their 'enlightened iudgements' when he explained his acceptance of the error of his ways.¹⁰ In addressing the Reverend Fathers, they explain their project as a need to expose 'what lurking poyson lieth shrowded under those glorious pretences', that 'their deceitful and coloured kind of proceeding' claimed 'an holie cause' and was varnished 'with holy pretences'. They ask the reader, '(howsoever they wholely pretend to uphold the kingdome of Christ) what do they else by those their iollie pretences, but cover

⁸ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 163, 178, 267, ('Magnitton' was the reversed spelling used to refer to Nottingham.)

⁹ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answere, 60, 109.

¹⁰ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 'To The Reader', 260, 348-9.

themselves (as we say) with a wet sack?’ This patronising tone comes to a head when they discuss the ministers putting aside their time to work with the possession of Thomas Harrison, asking ‘Might not those grave and godly Preachers have been better employed in some more profitable studie for the glorie of God, and the good of his Church: but that they must bee wholie taken up manie houres and dayes together about such trifling toyes, and become forsooth the publike notaries to a paltie boy’?¹¹ The model for the willingness of the godly to accept the errors of brethren is illustrated by a selective account of John Foxe and the diagnosis of possession. Ignoring the case of Robert Brigges, they draw attention to the fallibility of the best of ministers in discernment; a ‘pretended Demoniacke’ could mislead a minister, ‘as did the dissembling caitife, who cousoned that reverence father master Fox’, the ‘caitife’, of course, being Rachel Pindar. When Exorcistes expressed his fear of being taken for a counterfeiter, Orthodoxus offered comfort. ‘Think you it impossible for your selfe to be deluded by the divell: or to be deceived at all by a cogging companion? Was not the reverend father Master Foxe, and many others besides, as grossly beguiled by such counterfeited crankes as ever was you with this your falsely possessed patient? And therefor yeeld your submission for shame’.¹²

The availability of an escape route conditional upon serious humiliation should not give the impression of a willingness to compromise or a gentle approach. When Marion Gibson noted that D. P. Walker admitted that they were ‘very erudite’ and that Marchant praised Deacon as ‘staid and serious, not given to violent emotions’,¹³ it should be added that this was an impression that they worked hard to make, an impression that enabled them to place a mask of respectability upon some harsh, vituperative attacks, some ad hominem slurs and some arguments more rhetorical than logical, tactics which we will encounter below in a return to Harsnet’s means of engagement. The suggestion that Katherine Wright was encouraged to accept she was possessed has been mentioned and

¹¹ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer, ‘To The Reverend Fathers’, ‘To The Reader’, 77.

¹² Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer, 236; Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 353.

¹³ Gibson, Possession, 146.

similarly snide assessments appear when they ask about the hierarchies and categories of demons. Moving through examples for Wright, Sommers, Darling and the Lancashire seven, asking if Midlecub, Roofye and so forth were 'knavish', 'cruell or courteous' devils, there are intellectual points to be made, but their main intention is to expose such 'palpable, grosse, and ridiculous fooleries'.¹⁴ They make Exorcistes cite Ephesians 2:2 and I Tim. 2:26 as a warning that the devil works effectually in the disobedient and use that as proof that Darling was never possessed 'because everie man else, and even you your selves do generally repute him, a religious, a godly, and a gracious youth'.¹⁵

A recurring refrain in their argument, one which will appear with different emphases in Harsnet, is the question of 'simple folk'. Thus part of the danger of the 'holy pretences' mentioned above was 'to intangle (if possiblief they may) the very hearts of the simple'.¹⁶ This could be used as a means to authorise characters like Physiologus to dismiss reports of supernatural symptoms. 'I see not how they should possibly behold that with their eies, which you would have me beleeve with my hart: contrary to divinity, to philosophy, to physick, to nature, to law, and to conscience'. This would give the reader a choice: such supposed supernatural signs were so absurd and impossible 'as they are of all wise men derided, and deemed no better then juggling devises, to deceive the simpler sort'.¹⁷ To move to the particular, faced with Joan Pie's deposition regarding Sommers's attempt to hang himself, they pointed out that 'this supposed supernatural sight is only reported by a silly poore woman, perhaps in a maze when she saw the same: men may be too credulous concerning those her reports'. The circumstances, the excitement, combined with the witness's gender and simplicity so that 'the poore woman might undoubtedly imagine, that she beheld the young man from out of his ordinarie place, or stature'. In establishing the grounds for engagement, this could be taken further. Exorcistes asked how they could

¹⁴ Deacon and Walker, *A Summarie Answer*, 153.

¹⁵ Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, 224.

¹⁶ Deacon and Walker, *A Summarie Answer*, 'To The Reverend Fathers'.

¹⁷ Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, 211, 207.

possibly dismiss accounts of Sommers's physical symptoms that went beyond the capacities of human bodies. Physiologus responded scornfully. 'Howsoever the partie reporting had simply deposed this point, may not your selfe (having sense) be monstrously ashamed to penne downe such palpable, such impudent, and grosse impossibilities, as neyther man, nor divell are able to accomplish but by an utter destruction of nature'.¹⁸ Thus the criterion is set down: to depose anything supernatural is, by deposing an impossibility, to rule oneself an untrustworthy deponent and thereby to rule oneself out of court or unworthy of engagement.

By placing themselves on the epistemological high ground, an authority was established for a mixture of 'common sense' and medical explanations. Confronted with a list of supernatural symptoms by Exorcistes, drawn from the account of Sommers, Physiologus was unimpressed. All such symptoms could come from 'naturall diseases', namely from 'disordered melancholie, from Mania, from the Epilepsie, from Lunacie, from Lycanthropie, from Convulsions, from the mother, from the menstruall obstructions, and sundry other outrageous infirmities'. There were all manner of diseases which happen 'to maidens and widowes, of the passions of the wombe, or from the late fluxion of their naturall evacuations, or when they deferre their mariage to[o] longe, and then be sodenly bestowed in mariage: all these doe no lesse hurt and disquiet the poore patients minde, then if they were actually possessed of Satan'. An alternative approach appeared when Exorcistes mentioned foaming at the mouth like a horse or boar as a symptom of possession: 'if foaming at mouth doth undoubtedlie demonstrate a divell in the partie that foameth: then may we likewise conclude, that every such scould as foames at the mouth, yea everie Horse and Boare, which foames at the mouth, hath undoubtedlie some daungerous divell in their bellie'.¹⁹ When Exorcistes gave the signs of dispossession as 'crying aloud, rending sore, and leaving as dead' Orthodoxus replied with a related

¹⁸ Deacon and Walker, *A Summarie Answere*, 38, 37.

¹⁹ Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, 206-7; Deacon and Walker, *A Summarie Answere*, 36.

approach. These symptoms occurred in 'mania, in phrensies, in the mother, in convulsions, in Catalepsies, in Epilepsies, and Lunacies'; therefore Exorcistes must conclude that anyone with such diseases, having such symptoms, must be 'possessed of Satan, because in everie of them also, those your supposed infallible signes of dispossession are verie apparent'.²⁰

A trope which may have been taken from Harsnet or simply developed independently from the stock trade of abuses is popish associations. It appears early in the claim to be protecting the godly. Having raised the threat of 'lying signes and wonders', the appropriation of the powers of Antichrist is shown as one of two options: 'either the Protestant he plaies kindly the Papist, or the Papist he plaies correspondently the Protestant at least: for in this speciall point, the one is not apparently discerned from the other'. The allegation of establishing 'exorcizings by praier and fasting, as a perpetuall ordinance' is described as a 'lesuiticall iest'. In the process of denouncing feigned miracles the two parties interested in such delusions are named as the 'papists and your selves'.²¹ This trope becomes stronger in A Summarie Answer with the reader hearing that Darrell '(partly by the inherent pride of his insolent spirit, and partly by the prowde support of many his under-hand favorits) is very prowdlie enthronized into a new Popedome forsooth'. Apparently, he runs 'from countrie to countrie like a pettie new Pope among his owne Cardinals; yea and that also in his pontificalities, portrayed and contrived after the new-found popelike cut'. Drawing on the support of the earlier testimony of Sommers is to support your 'lesuiticall supposes' and to argue, as Exorcistes does, for the success of fasting and prayer 'ex opere operato' is 'to iumpe with trayterous Stapleton and with

²⁰ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 240. Darrell responded with understandable umbrage: John Darrell, A Survey of Certaine Dialogicall Discourses (1601), 50, 57; *idem*, The Replie of Iohn Darrell, to the Answer of Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker, concerning the doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniackes (n.p., 1602), 6-7 adding the phenomenon of speedy recovery from so many diseases to the logical problems of the argument.

²¹ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 'To The Reader', 267, 327.

Thyreus the lesuite'.²² The same suspects are given when Exorcistes argues for a particular type of devil who was only vulnerable to fasting and prayer: 'let Stapleton, Thyreus and Exorcistes affirme what they will, we hold no such lesuisticall fooleries'. For Darrell to claim, as is alleged, that his own words, 'the very frame of the Exorcists words' contained 'a magicall force or enchauntment' which drove the devils out, brings a clear parallel to the minds of Deacon and Walker. This is the same way that 'the grosse headed papists doe so grosslie imagine a magicall force, in hoc est corpus meum: for the present transubstantiating of bread and wine, into the very naturall Body and Blood of Christ'. At its heart is a practice of legerdemain, juggling and pretence supposedly to promote the glory but essentially to lead people astray, encouraging 'either an approbation of the real presence of Christ in their Masse, or a confirmation of publike fasts in those their solemne meetings: or a perpetuall establishment of the worship of Saints, of Purgatorie, of Masses, of Trentals, of Dirges, of praying for the dead, of plodding on Pilgrimage, with tenne thousand such other devices'.²³

One initial indication of the reasons behind such harsh, on occasion casuistical and frequently abusive, tactics for renunciation is gained by the portrayal of the nature of the trials and judgement at Lambeth and with the High Commission generally. Without exception, they receive a positive treatment.²⁴ Part of their stated reason for taking to the press was that Darrell and his cohorts stuck to their guns despite being 'verie iudicially convinced for grosse malfactors'. The possibility of the 'Ecclesiasticall governors' forgiving and reinstating Darrell should he prove willing to admit his guilt is raised and 'your authentically convention, and publike conviction' are mentioned.²⁵ The position is clearer in A Summarie Answere with the reader being told that they were encouraged to print by

²² Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answere, 'To The Reader', 9, 157. 'Stapleton' is Thomas Stapleton, who died in 1598, one of the great Roman Catholic exiles, theologians and polemicists.

²³ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answere, 109, 209-10, 224.

²⁴ This seems to run counter to the instance cited by Gibson, Possession, 149, where Dialogicall Discourses (347-9) suggests that Exorcistes is innocent of fraud, contrary to the judgement of the court. However, it is 'Exorcistes' who is said to be innocent and he is sometimes Darrell and more often just a like-minded friend, so it is not so clear cut as this suggests.

²⁵ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 'To The Reader', 340 (recte 350), 352.

them 'giving that Canuisado of late to her Maiesties high Commission'. The nature of their offence was 'not only to impugne her Maiesties high Commission concerning ecclesiasticall persons and causes' but also by choosing to behave as 'undutifull subiects, to resist her highnesse authoritie, and (which is worst of all) even then to accomplish everie of these, when they were by God forbidden, by her highnesse restrayned, by due order of lawe convented, convicted, apprehended, imprisoned, by the sentence of Iustice definitively condemned for grosse malefactors'.²⁶ The value of the testimonies given in the trials is accepted without reserve: 'they have voluntarily deposed before authoritie' statements contrary to their earlier depositions when they 'reported them rather according to the predeterminate purpose of your proper desires'. No credit should be given to any evidence regarding the possession of Thomas Darling because 'he plainly confesseth (as Master Darell doth graunt) that he also (for his part) did but counterfeite whatsoever he did'. Indeed, gratitude was expressed for the way in which 'this wild-fire' was 'so quietlie calmed by the cooling streames of iustice' and commendation is granted to 'our superiours, who so timely tooke notice of, so seriouslie enquired into, so iudiciallie proceeded against, and with such holie perseverance persisted constantlie in the necessarie restraint, and timelie stoppage of all those outrageous courses'.²⁷

This emergent sense of a publicly acknowledged authority comes across more clearly once attention is paid to sources taken as trustworthy. In Dialogicall Discourses, Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft is employed as a trustworthy source on the question of the earthly nature of the Devil and as an exegesis of Solomon's dealing with spirits. He is treated as a similar authority on the nature of the temptation in Eden, the Witch of Endor and the credibility of a hierarchy of demons as well as being cited as a

²⁶ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer, 'To The Reader'. A Canvasado is either a counter-check in fencing or a sudden attack more generally.

²⁷ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer, 87-8, 90, 229.

source for the counterfeiting of Mildred Norrington and Margaret Jessop.²⁸ Perhaps partly as a result of Darrell's almost delighted (and repetitive) denunciation of this use he is absent from the second work.²⁹ However, this can hardly be put down to a newly acquired timidity, for they accept an authority even less likely to be accepted uncritically by their fellow puritans. Dialogicall Discourses cites him once, suggesting that any holding doubts about the justice of Darrell's conviction would lose such doubts, 'if once they but reade Master Harsnets booke'.³⁰ In A Summary Answer he is much more centre stage. The 'venomous infection of their viperous pennes' is condemned for 'verie uncharitably endeavoured to wound S. H. unto death, for that (by meanes of the sayd S. H. his dutifull discoverie of those their undutifull dealings)' they were prevented from granting themselves Apostolic authority. The manner of Harsnet, 'a verie orderlie, direct, and materiall proceeding', is contrasted to Darrell's silence on serious points and cavilling objections to 'some odd quippes or termes of disgrace', which 'you doe hotelie and fiercely pursue'. Darrell's style is 'not unlike to the daintie-fed *Dog*, who having eftsoones the proffer of a good morsell of meate, lets fall the same: and very eagerly skippeth at, and followeth a flie'. The effort is to make 'your sillie poore Readers beleieve' that 'you have directlie Detected Master Harsnets Discoverie: whereas (in the opinion of all the learned) you have rather indirectlie Discovered a very dangerous Detection of some supposed fraudulent dealing'.³¹

Having presented Harsnet as the rational, well-tempered, orderly voice in the exchange over Darrell's activities, the means of assessment had been set down. Thus the preface to disowning Darrell's 'Iesuiticall supposes' is an account of his 'Legeredemaine' in responding, when 'any materiall poynt, is (by M. Harsnet) propounded from Sommers his mouth, that may any way portend your teaching to counterfeit', with allegations of his

²⁸ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 83, 104, 115, 125, 129, 327-7. For Norrington, see above, 57-9.

²⁹ Darrell, Survey, 28, 30, 32-3, 34, 35.

³⁰ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 352.

³¹ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer, 'To The Reader', 8.

treachery but when his testimony provides anything in support of Darrell, he is trustworthy. Thus everything Darrell argues is taken to be inherently suspicious; Harsnet is the voice of reason. Any testimony from Katherine Wright, Thomas Darling or Mary Cooper is to be dismissed as they are merely 'your sillie Proctors'. No attention need be paid to shifts in their testimony, to the pressures imposed upon them or the nature of Harsnet's representation of their testimony. One consequence is that it is reasonable to cite Harsnet as a counter to any claims that symptoms were supernatural. A second is to authorise later depositions over earlier ones. On the first occasion, taken in by Darrell's guidance they may have reported wondrous sights. Now, 'the Deponents themselves (deposing with some better deliberation, their supposed straungnes afresh) they have since then more advisedlie reformed their oathes, and deposed the contrarie'.³² A third is to be willing to pass Darrell's disputes over to the higher wisdom of Harsnet, as in the question about miracles and wonders, when they state simply that this is beyond 'the compasse of our Commission' and can be left 'to M. Harsnet, and Thyreus the lesuit, with whom you are hotely disputing these points'.³³

To see two godly writers adopting such tactics, employing such approaches, making such associations and stating such trust in the High Commission and in Harsnet requires explanation. This is particularly so, given that they must have been aware of the troubled relationship, to say the least, between godly ministers and the High Commission and, judging by their citations, their familiarity with all the literature, both pro- and con-Darrell, emerging from the dispossessions. There are some clues which prove worth pursuing. Near the end of Dialogicall Discourses, Exorcistes states as one of his reservations about submitting to his opponents that there are precedents for the establishment using fallen brethren as ammunition for abusing the godly cause. His submission would 'give our adversaries great occasion, to insult over the brethren afresh

³² Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answere, 40, 41 (quoted), 82, 103.

³³ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answere, 47. Thyraeus as a figure of dispute, a guide and a source of ridicule will become a familiar trope below.

in farre better causes than this: as we found by experience, how highly they triumphed over the intended discipline of late, by reason of Hackets, Arthingtons, and Copingers seductions'. Orthodoxus offers small comfort, merely pointing out that the 'preposterous courses' of Exorcistes have discredited 'the holie ordinance of praier and fasting' as 'Hackets seductions disgraced (in the eyes of some) the intended church discipline'. Therefore he has no cause to complain about the insulters as he has nobody to blame but himself.³⁴ This taken up again in the reasons behind their decision to print their opposition in A Summarie Answer. They felt the need to express their concern to prevent any actions or associations which might hinder the advancement of God's truth, 'as heretofore the Brownists and Hackets have too inconsideratlie effected, by their unruly and headie conceits'. The most explicit list of guilty associates appears later on and is worth quoting in full.

A most lamentable experience concerning the infallible truth of that which we teach we may have from the Anabaptists in Europe: from the Donatists in Affricke: from the Iesuites in Germanie, in Fraunce, and elsewhere: from the Familists and Barrowists in England: from the fearefull seduction of Hacket, of Coppinger, of Arthington; yea, and even now (at this present) from the seducing Exorcists of every condition. Every of these (howsoever they otherwaies pretend the good of the Church, and the credit of christian Religion) have bred a more dangerous scandal, and given a more deadlie wound to the happie proceeding of our holie Religion in deede, then if they had bin the professed and open adversaries to the holie profession thereof.³⁵

Darrell, in his presumably deliberately parallel letter to the Reverend Fathers with which he opened his Replie, expressed his understanding that the allegation that there was no difference between his actions and those of the Antichrist or 'that the dealers, in these actions, are to be matched with Brownists & Hackets', were it to be true, would 'enrage

³⁴ Deacon and Walker, Dialogicall Discourses, 348.

³⁵ Deacon and Walker, A Summarie Answer, 'To The Reverend Fathers', 208-9.

your meek & patient spirits with indignation'.³⁶ Certainly Darrell's (less than meek or patient) spirit was enraged with indignation.

Turning to the place of William Hacket and his colleagues Edmund Coppinger and Henry Arthington and their representations within the history of efforts to reform the Church of England is worthwhile in three ways. The first is that it is an aid in tracing the genealogy of the manner of Harsnet's contribution to this exchange. The second is that it makes more comprehensible the depth of Deacon and Walker's fears and hence the lengths they were willing to go to to distance themselves and, they hoped, the godly cause from Darrell's misfortunes. The third is that some tropes can be identified, some means of abuse and spiritual contests that will become more familiar in later cases and debates.

In brief, Hacket was a marginal figure among the godly in Northamptonshire who had shifted from being a hedonistic, vituperative and provocative ungodly yeoman in the 1570s to being an equally vituperative and provocative fomenter of the godly cause in the following decade. With his close friend, Giles Wiggington, he followed a semi-separatist vocation in the midlands and beyond, earning a reputation as a suspicious, perhaps eccentric charismatic, possibly ethically dubious figure. He came to the attention of the central authorities early in 1591 both as a threat and a useful propaganda tool after the imprisonment of the central promoters of presbyterianism.³⁷ Dissatisfied with the more temperate means of promoting godliness, he joined Coppinger, a lesser godly gentleman from Suffolk, and Arthington, a similar figure from Yorkshire, in London. Moving in godly circles and corresponding with some of the prisoners, Hacket became increasingly convinced by revelations and ecstatic experiences that he had a central role to play in the promotion of reform. Convinced that he was chosen to be king of Europe and then that he

³⁶ Darrell, Replie, 'The Epistle'.

³⁷ His career is treated in Alexandra Walsham, "'Frantick Hacket': prophecy, sorcery, insanity and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement', *Historical Journal* 41 (1998), 27-66 with different emphases and some common ground, and the same author's contributions on Hacket and Coppinger to *ODNB* are helpful. The appraisal of Hacket's earlier career is made difficult by one of the primary sources being Richard Cosin's account that will be turned to below. While this is an account to particular purposes, Hacket certainly provided plenty of material to those purposes. His geographical origins may have played a part in Deacon's sensitivity to the precedent.

was the embodiment of Jesus Christ and that Coppinger and Arthington were his prophets of judgment and mercy respectively, he and they produced literature declaring the imminent second coming along with a plot to depose Elizabeth and to cast out members of the privy council out of sympathy with the godly cause.

The first climax of the affair came on the morning of 19 July 1591 when Coppinger and Arthington went abroad spreading warnings of vengeance and urging repentance. They stood on a cart in Cheapside, telling of Hacket as the messiah and all three were duly arrested. During his trial, Hacket was unrepentant, indeed, he was blasphemous and given to treasonous speeches against the queen, maintaining this behaviour right through to his execution on 28 July. Coppinger was said to have denounced Hacket during his imprisonment but fell victim to his own hunger strike in prison, dying the day after Hacket. Arthington proved more tractable, willing, in retrospect, to provide an account of his part which, overseen by the ecclesiastical authorities, touched puritan nerves. On an individual level, he was successful in escaping serious punishment and returning to respectable godly obscurity, producing three short pieces of orthodox calls to spiritual and social propriety.³⁸

Henry Arthington provided the first of three publications under the eye of Richard Bancroft, each with different emphases but each serving to further the cause of the ecclesiastical authorities against puritan critics and allying that cause with secular authorities. In his letter to the reader Arthington set out his stall, describing himself as 'Prisoner' and making it plain that the dedicatory epistle to the Privy Council and the text that follows 'were both perused and allowed by authoritie: and after sent mee agayne to examine, that I might see and testifie what upright dealing I found therein', although he stressed that nothing of substance was changed, just a few words and sentences 'for the

³⁸ H.A., The exhortation of Salomon (London, 1594); H. A., Provision for the poore, now in penurie Out of the store-house of Gods plentie (London 1597); H.A., Principall points of holy profession touching these three estates of mankind (London, 1607).

better'.³⁹ His contribution is, of course, focussed on apologetically distancing himself from Hacket's intentions. Throughout, he recognises his culpability but with the mitigating circumstances of his possession by diabolic spirits upon Hacket's own collusion with Satan. In his condemnation of Hacket's sin against the holy ghost by 'compelling us poore soules' to proclaim him 'Christ Iesus, the Iudge of the world', the means are central, 'for so wee were inforced by a Devilish spirit within us' (4). While trying to convince Arthington of Hacket's nature, Coppinger told stories of Hacket's remarkable sufferings and the Yorkshireman felt that it was impossible that 'such great torments bee indured, either of soule or bodie as was mentioned, without special assistance from God or Satan, (little suspecting that he was a Satanist)'. By establishing such trust he 'gave the villaine interest to infuse his cursed filthie spirit into me' (14). When they returned to Hacket's chamber after pastoral work to which I will return, Coppinger and Hacket prayed for the queen's preservation, 'after all doone, he imbraced me in his armes'. At 'the which verie instant I thinke I was filled with Satans spirit, for before we departed, I felt my selfe verie hot within, which I verelie then thought had been an extraordinarie motion of the holie ghost', similar to that of the disciples on their way to Emmaus (15). As a result, the following night he wrote a 'curssed Prophesie' against the City of London, cursed, 'both in respect of the autor (the spirit of Satan in mee:) and in regard of the matter, for the most part false and wicked' (15-16). The final delusion was effected on the morning before they went out to declare their mission. The two men visited Hacket and Coppinger told of his 'vision from Heaven', explaining that he was the prophet of mercy 'and that I was the laste and greatest Prophet of Iudgmentes, that ever was or should be: both of us indued not onely with Propheticall but also with Angelicall spirites, and shoulde separate betweene the sheep and the Goates before the Lord Iesus at the last day'. When they joined in prayer, Coppinger expressed his unworthiness for the office. Hacket leapt out of bed and told

³⁹ [Henry Arthington,] The Seduction of Arthington by Hacket especiallie, with some tokens of his unfained repentance and Submission (London, 1592), 'To the well disposed Reader'. Hereafter references will be in the text.

them that 'the honor of Christ Iesus might bee advanced, meaning himselfe, (but we the Lord in Heaven). Coppinger continued and Hacket interrupted a second time, praying that 'wee might have regard to honor Christ Iesus: meaning still himselfe, (but we the Lord in Heaven)'. Arthington was so moved by this plea that 'I was inforced through the spirit of Satan within me, to bid my new fellow Prophet arise, and annoint the King with the Holy ghost' (18-19).

The presence and power of the spirit was not diminished by the failure of the coup and the subsequent arrests. When the three were re-united in front of the Privy Council, Arthington knelt and prayed for the protection of Hacket as the king of Europe. Looking back, he concluded that 'neither could I bee discharged either of his wicked spirite, or to take him for the special adopted sonne of GOD, Christ Iesus in earth, to represent the personne of Christ Iesus in heaven, so longe as the breath was in the villaines breast' (20). On the night of 27 July, the night before Hacket's execution, 'hee sette his wicked Spirite so on to worke within me'. Arthington prayed vociferously for vengeance to descend upon London, waking many of his fellow prisoners. He compares himself to Balaam, praying for God's people when he was supposed to be cursing them, although he did not share Balaam's direct divine instructions. Henry simply prayed, 'O Lorde, when thou wilt, save thine elect, confound thine enimies', which, unbeknownst to him, meant that he was praying against Hacket (22-23).

When Arthington was told of Hacket's execution, the shells fell from his eyes. He suddenly knew that 'he was no man sure, but a Divell incarnate, appearing to me as an angel of light'. With that realisation he felt himself 'quite dispossessed of that hot spirit' and newly appreciative of the depth of his sin. He humbled himself in prayer, asking if he was a reprobate. He was reassured by the Holy Spirit that he was not, comparing him to Saul before the Damascene conversion: 'both wishing to doo God good service, yet when wee thought our selves best occupied, then did we most dishonor his nam[e]' (23-24). The

account leaves the narrative, turning to a series of comparisons with comparable sinners, measuring God's mercy, but with an underlying theme of Hacket's Satanic collusion. Arthington judges his sin to be less than that of Judas, as Judas had been forewarned, whereas Henry had no idea until 'I had no power nor grace to resist, being sore bewitched and possest with his divelish spirit, to be led like a drunkard which way he would' (27). However, his sin was greater than Peter's denial in that Peter's contrition was immediate but Arthington had no idea he had sinned 'so long as Hacket lived after our arising: Till by his death I was discharged of his divelish spirit' (29). The other side of this was an appreciation of God's mercy. He compared his treatment with what 'favours heretofore the Lord hath extended unto greivous sinners', judging that he had better treatment than the bedridden man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:5-9) and than Mary Magdalen with seven devils cast out (Luke 8:2). Part of this was based on his immediate rescue, 'in dispossessing me of his hote divelish spirite, and of those hellishe opinions before touched, even the verie same houre that he [Hacket] was executed' (33, 36). Finally, he judged his treatment to have been better than the possessed man whose devils were cast into the Gadarene swine. His physical miseries were incomparable, not having been made to dwell 'amongest the mountaines and graves, naked and bare', nor had he been 'once tempted of Satan, to hurt my selfe anie waie' and this was the case despite the sins of the possessed of Mark 5:2-28 being far from 'so great as mine' (45). The lessening of God's judgment was explained in a manner which, not coincidently, deepened Hacket's guilt. After all, it was not Arthington that declared Hacket to be Christ, 'but the spirit of Satan, (which that wicked wretch had infused into me...)' for Henry had 'no minde to dishonour Christ Iesus, or to hurt anie creature' until he was suffering from demonic possession (49).

Reading Arthington's Seduction with Deacon and Walker's fears in mind enhances an appreciation of a potential association of demonic possession, treason and godly activism. This can be taken further than the 'mere' suggestion that Hacket had been

Satan's agent in the possession of his aides. Upon Arthington's return to London one of the duties he agreed to was to visit 'Mistress Honiwood in the meane space, who had beene longe and greeuouslie afflicted' (10). This was Mary Honiwood, a former supporter of the Marian martyrs and correspondent of John Bradford. She was an important figure in godly circles in London and the recipient of spiritual guidance from the patriarchs of practical divinity such as Bradford and Edward Dering. Most famously she was reported to have benefited from an act of providence when she dismissed the comfort offered by John Foxe regarding her chances of salvation, stating that she was as certain to be damned as the glass she held was to break against the wall, throwing the glass and it remaining undamaged when it hit the wall and fell to the ground. This might have provided her with temporary comfort, but she continued to be aggrieved with doubts, fears and uncertainties for many years.⁴⁰ Her lengthy spiritual travails were familiar to godly readers, with some of the correspondence with Bradford and Dering having been published in 1564 and 1590 respectively. For our current purposes the nature of their comfort should be stressed. Bradford was concerned with her difficulties in finding assurance and her difficulties in bearing children. Where Satan appeared it was in the comparatively everyday work of undermining her confidence in her election, drawing on her humble awareness of her human frailties, 'as Sathan laboureth to losen our fayth, so muste we labour to fasten it by thynkyng on the promises and covenant of God in Christes blood'.⁴¹ Similarly, Dering's comforts were to help her bear admittedly lengthy periods of doubt, to accept the labours of Satan's temptations with a willingness to accept the formative influence of such trials in the humility consequent upon obedience to an unkind spiritual husband and father.⁴² It is only in the context of Hacket that her troubles take on the tincture of possession. The

⁴⁰ For the Providential lesson, see Thomas Freeman, 'Through a Venice glass darkly: John Foxe's most famous miracle', in *Signs, Wonders, Miracles*, SCH 41 (2005); for her Marian background, *idem*, "'The Good Ministrye of Godly and Vertuose Women": the Elizabethan martyrologists and the female supporters of the Marian martyrs', *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000), 22-3.

⁴¹ *Certain most godly fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true Saintes and holy Martyrs of God* (London, 1564), 298-305, 426-7, quoted 300.

⁴² Edward Dering, *Certaine Godly and Verie comfortable Letters, full of christian consolation* (Middelburg, 1590), A7-B5, C3-C5.

Sunday before the start of the prophets' tour, the three men fasted and left Hacket at Honywood's. Hacket told her that 'the wicked spirit Satan, was fled into hir only for a refuge, but she shoulde be dispossessed of him shortly'. Indeed, he prayed that the 'same wicked spirit might be given unto him', thereby claiming an ability 'to cast him out at his pleasure' and confident in his capacity to deal with such possession, given his triumph over former troubles (14-15). Of course in retrospect a confidence in dealing with diabolical spirits is less surprising once Hacket is known to be a servant of Satan himself. Reading this from the perspective of Deacon and Walker, this raises the stakes of Darrell and dispossession substantially. If, as was alleged, Darrell claimed the ability to cast out devils then the connotation that he was able to do so because he was also a servant of Satan becomes a serious risk.

Crucial to these concerns was a third strand of Arthington's account. His argument for the threat posed by Hacket was not limited to the rhetoric of a godly son gone bad. He encourages guilt by association with godly circles and practices. When he tells of his return to London with the intention to gain the Royal Seal for a Free School in Wakefield, Coppinger came to see him, telling him how he had become 'well acquainted with the holiest man that ever was borne (Christ Iesus excepted)'. While Arthington was not immediately convinced, he agreed to return to 'our old exercise' of keeping 'a private fast upon every Lords day, for some speciall causes best known to our selves', fasts made more effectual by attending godly lectures, in particular those of Richard Gardiner, a close associate of Thomas Cartwright and the other imprisoned ministers (9-10). This links what followed with private fasting, with godly preachers and Presbyterianism. Similarly, the moment that Arthington is possessed is alongside earnest and hypocritical expressions of concern for the preservation of the queen, rendering such avowals from puritan preachers protestations of loyalty that are inherently untrustworthy.

He takes a different tack in the lengthy expressions of gratitude to the 'Christian Magistrates' and their treatment of him. He now recognises that they were kind to keep him imprisoned for so long, that it was a good decision to prevent 'the godly and wise to have conference with mee, whilst I was possest' for he would have done them harm and they given him little help 'untill I was parted as it were with my familier, which was the same houre that Hacket suffered' (40-41). He even expressed gratitude for them refusing his pleas for the Bible during his confinement, because 'surely I should have wrested the Scripture the stronger maintenance of my errors', hence delivering a warning about the dangers of uncontrolled Scriptural exegesis for even well-intentioned laity. Finally, he thanks them for restricting comfort and counsel from the godly even at the time of and after Hacket's execution as that would have risked such counsellors claiming credit for themselves at the expense of due recognition being given to God alone (41). His plea to Elizabeth to spare his life brings this to a climactic set of associations. If he lives, 'I will become an enimie to Satan and his kingdome, and oppose my selfe against all Heretikes, Scismatikes, Sectaries and Enimies to God and her Maiestie, even to the uttermost of my power, so long as I live' (52).

The second text is Richard Cosin's broader account, building upon, and developing, Arthingtons' account. He shared specific targets but his emphasis was on the broader aim of using Hacket, Coppinger and Arthington to discredit the wider schemes of the godly. Thus the preface sets out forms of conspiracy, with the last sort '(being suggested by Sathan, under the visard of vertue, godlines, and religion) are the most pernicious and divelish'. The 'untrue pretence and colour of pietie and religion (thinges of themselves of chieftest price and excellencie) the most dangerous snare and deadly dart that Sathan can shoot forth'. By transforming himself into an angel of light, Satan had found 'the readiest and surest way, to blinde and seduce a multitude'. The unholy trinity is, of course, the focus, but lest the reader think this was a unique event, he notes that this has been seen

'at sundry other times also, by other his like factours', for instance 'in Germany, in our fathers daies'.⁴³ He enlarged on the precedents later, drawing attention to Martin Luther's warning against 'like fanaticall persons, the Anabaptists in Germanie: who pretended like puritie' (81) and recounting the history of Thomas Müntzer. He felt there was no need to make explicit the parallels, choosing simply to add the vulgar tongue of Martin Marprelate to the mix and encouraging the reader to share his conclusion.

For the sharpe and angrie zeale of some unadvised Preachers, which pretend neither to like of the Pope, nor of the present state of the Church, for want of some puritie, as they fansie, hath it not incensed, and made to boyle over, not onely the foule mouthes of Martinists, but also the traiterous actions of these Conspirators?
(85)

To complete the lesson of precedents, he recounted the history of Münster and compared these events 'with the actions and opinions of these late conspirators, & of their Disciplinary schoolmasters, from whom they have sucked like poyson' (96). I will return to the Disciplinary schoolmasters but for now this can be left with the threat that 'If their purposes had succeeded, and their prophecies of killing and massacring men (like swine) in London streetes, had come to passe; would the outrages, in haynousnesse, have come any whit behind those of Munster?' (96).⁴⁴

Cosin dedicated space to emphasising the role of Hacket in leading Coppinger and Arthington astray. He gave an extract from one of Coppinger's letters telling of how Hacket was 'the instrument to make me bolde and couragious. where I was feareful and faint'. Since Hacket's departure the 'workings of his holy spirite in me' had been 'mightie and great: my zeale of spirit burneth like fire' (23). In his version of Arthington's account of

⁴³ [Richard Cosin,] Conspiracie, for Pretended Reformation: viz. Presbyteriall Discipline (London, 1592), Preface. Hereafter references will appear in the text.

⁴⁴ Thomas Egerton, the Solicitor General, had held forth during the arraignment, making the same comparisons and adding the rebellions of 'Cade, Taylor, and them of Norfolk': HMC, Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part IV, The Manuscripts of Lord Kenyon (London, 1894), 608. Cosin refers to how Egerton 'excellently also discoursed' on treason 'shadowed under the cloke of religion & zeale... exemplified by the Anabaptists at Munster in Westphalia, and some others': Cosin, Conspiracie, 69-70.

Hacket's prayers, the emphasis is on Hacket's wish 'that the spirit might direct them'; Coppinger tried to continue his prayer 'but the Devilish spirite mooved Arthington to interrupt him', leading him to 'annoynt the king' (55). Having been 'thus seduced and bemoped by Hacket', it came as no surprise that they moved into such 'lewde, dangerous, and traiterous attempts' (28). Having been told by Coppinger that they were possessed by Angelical spirits and convinced 'by a great burning that he felt in himselfe', Arthington joined his colleague in the conviction that 'no power in earth nor hell' could hurt them, 'that they were subject to no power, but to God alone' (47). Where else could this lead but to misguided treasonous actions? Cosin missed few opportunities to make the connections. When Coppinger seemed to be 'distracted of his wits' during the examinations, he was brought into court when Hacket was present and 'at his sight he presently roared out, in a very strange and horrible kine of voyce'. Hacket apparently remarked that he was not surprised, 'for that he had given him over already unto Sathan' (60-61). Finally, he records Arthington's observation that formerly his habit had been to 'abstayne from bitter speeches and raylings, as a thing which hee naturally abhorred'. However, having been convinced of an extraordinary calling he had, of late, 'altered his opinion, and was mooved in spirite, to flowe another sharpe and biting course of writing, as beeing more convenient in his iudgement' (63). This served as a prelude, as I will shortly show, to a broadening of his target.

Before turning to this guilt by association, it is worth touching upon the use of relations with Mary Honnywood as a pattern relevant to Deacon and Walker's fears of a resuscitation of similar portrayals. She first appears in a section devoted to Hacket's intemperate declarations of his abilities. She is described as 'a gentlewoman of London, who pretendeth or feareth to bee possessed with a diuel now foureteene yeeres together', presumably on no evidence beyond Arthington's account. He is reported to have said that Hacket 'prayed so confidently for maistresse H. that he charged God to have given her

unto him, to restore her to her former health and libertie everie way, saying, Lorde,
according to thy promise thou hast power, and I have fayth, therefore it shall come to
passe' (5). She returns as a proof of their extraordinary gifts in that, '(for a sure signe of their vocation) the said devill should be throwen out of her, by all, or some of their three meanes, very shortly' (63). Cosin employs her as an instance of puritan practices encouraging people to get above themselves: 'Did not Hacket in praying for the pretended possessed Gentlewoman, sawcily expostulate with God, & charge him with his promise, as if he dealth not well with him?' (86). Finally he turns this claimed power as part of the way into greater claims to authority, as the route to treasonous actions. 'Did these not pretend and feigne, to bee in high favour with God, and that they could tell secretes, and things to come, meerely contingent, and to bee able to cast out Devils, and to obtaine rayne at pleasure?' (98) The potential connection to the accusations against Darrell become clearest in an account of an earlier argument with Roman Catholics when Hacket told that he was willing to ask God to sink him into hell if his was not the true faith and challenging his opponents to do the same. When they refused to make such blasphemous claims, Hacket suggested that they plotted with other papists and 'procured Devils to be raysted, Sorcerers, witches, and Enchaunters... to worke upon my body' to make him retract his claims. Hacket stated that as far as the agents were concerned, 'I knowe and can name, and minde one day, to helpe to burne them', this leading to a mass conversion and his crowning as Emperor of Europe (23-24).

A recurrent strain in Cosin's efforts to widen the target was 'the simpler sort'. Hacket's 'counterfeit holinesse' was helpful among 'the simpler sort as had zeale without knowledge'; some gave him 'peculiar giftes and qualities, to bee able even to tell secrets and worke myracles' and some attributed this to 'sorcerie and enchauntments' but the 'simpler sort' credited his 'rare spirite and holinesse' (7). In an earlier episode, he was kept in Northampton gaol by Sir Walter Mildmay. He asked his wife to let him lie alone that night

as he had to discuss serious issues with a visitor that would come to him in the night, 'insinuating into her, as if he were to have at that time, some speciall conferences with God, or some Angell',

Whereupon it was straightway blowen abroad thereabouts, amongst the credulous multitude of those, that either favoured him for supposed zeale, or feared him for sorceries, that (albeit there were no candles used) yet there was a great light (that night) seene shining in his chamber: so that by this tale, the erroneous opinions afore conceived of him, were greatly encreased (9).

Similarly, far from lessening his sense of being chosen, godly company increased his self-esteem. By 'use and imitation of such as he most followed & conversed with (though otherwise he were wholly unlettred) he had growen to such a dexteritie in conceiving of extemporall prayers, with bumbasted and thundring wordes, as that he was thereby mervailed at, and greatly magnified by some brethren and sisters' (7-8). In itself this was to raise a question mark against the moral attractions of ex tempore prayer. The same suggestion of presumption starts with Hacket and takes in the godly in general. 'For did not Hacket (the most ignorant of all the three, being but an unlettered Maltster) in like sort take upon him to rule the other, and to mannage the whole action? and are not the most ignorant of such as be of this humor, most presumptuous to direct all others, and to discusse deepest doubts?' (96). Cosin kindly warned of the dangers to 'the children of disobedience, such as be wise in their owne conceites, and not wise with sobrietie', in over-demanding prayer: 'they might aske and not obtaine, because they aske not as they ought' (46).

In addition, Hacket's acquaintances among the godly were judged to be inadequate in cautioning him. Cosin, of course, encourages the worst reading, aware of the ultimate intentions of Hacket and choosing to ignore pastoral delicacy in the treatment ministers gave him. In a letter from January, Hacket reported that he had consulted an unnamed

ministers regarding his gifts and extraordinary calling. The minister told him to 'be careful and circumspect over himself: to take heede lest he were deceived by the subtiltie of Satan'. He was concerned that Hacket risked his own social credit 'and also be a hindrance to the great cause', but he was unwilling to 'quench the spirite of God in him, or to hinder his zeale' (16). In an equally loaded reading of a pastoral epistle, in response to one expressing a general desire to play a role in advancing reformation, Cosin reproduced a section reporting a warning that 'Satan by his angelicall wisdom... doth many times prevaile with the holiest to make them feare good successe in the best causes', intimidating them with the scale of the challenge. The interpretation encouraged is that the minister failed to question Hacket's ambition (and thereby assuming Hacket had laid his cards on the table), choosing solely to question his fitness for the task (21). A similar appraisal of 'too little, too late' was granted to Hacket's old friend Giles Wiggington relating to his engagement with the statements of Arthington and Coppinger. After noting that part of his testimony is 'not worth the inserting here', Cosin concentrates on the absence of condemnation.

Thirdly it appeareth also therein, that he did not contradict any of their sayings, nor rebuke them them, nor founde fault with the absurditie and blasphemie of their opinions, and unduetifulnesse of their speeches, or danger of their purposes, but onely warned them to bee wary &c. least they might be illuded of the Devill: so leaving it at that time doubtfull whether hee allowed them to bee such extraordinarie men or no (53).

The under-appreciation of the danger posed by Hacket et al. was not the end of Cosin's tactic of guilt by association. Among the comparisons to the Anabaptists in Germany, it was suggested that voluntary conferences, activities and the pursuit of devotion beyond the parish church encouraged such outbreaks. 'Had not they their Cabinet Preachers, their table-end teachers, their guides of Fasts, &c. that teach, pray for,

and attend extraordinaire callings by visions, dreames, revelations, & enlightenings?' Such claims to fame were the crop of such practices: 'Had not hee and they likewise learned of the same Devil (in the prayers at fasts) to aske signes and seales of God, for their extraordinary callings?' (86). The rhetorical questions posed regarding comparisons to Münster have implicit answers. 'Have not their mutuall cohortations, and seditious instructions, with their conceived prayres, and hypocriticall Fasts, (that they practised in privie conventicles, and assemblies) given greatest strength to his faction, to the seduction of numbers?' Such meeting encourage 'sundrie Malaperts' to disregard the clearest refutations of their claims by 'all the stayed and sound Preachers'. Once the 'weakenesse, and meagernesse of their childish collections, have beene fully displayed', they turn to alternative means: 'have not these Conspirators, and such as have animated them, betaken themselves unto pretended extraordinaire callings, ravishings in spirite, caryings into heaven, reveleations, dreams and visions?' (96-97). Arthington and Coppinger employed an argument that will return within the arguments between puritans and Quakers with the boot on the other foot. They said they would prove their claims 'by Gods Spirit (which was above his word) and by his word also' (53). Cosin's prayer which served as the conclusion to his account was not limited to the individuals around Hacket, his plea was for such potential foes as much as actual ones. 'God of his infinite mercie forgive, and turne the hearts of all that trouble his Church, from running wel, or that impugne his ordinance, and such as are set over them: and restraine, or roote put all fantastickall errorrs, & fanaticall spirites, which the envious man (from time to time) doeth sowe amongst the good wheate' (102).

Cosin's combination of comparison, insinuation, hyperbole and fact provided the soil for Richard Bancroft's wide-ranging assault of the following year, his Dangerous Positions. Having laid out the organised plans for reform that he was concerned to expose and discredit, he made it clear that prayer alone was not sufficient as a means of

prevention, that 'there must be other meanes diligently looked into'. It was high time discipline was imposed. 'Every one is acquainted with the execution of Hack. but few do understand, the secretes of those attempts. They stretch much further then they are supposed'.⁴⁵ He stated that his purpose was not to set down 'the full hystorie of those desperate reformers' and he had no need to do so, for, as he wrote, that had been 'most effectually performed already by another'. They were relevant insofar as they had connections with Cartwright and his fellows, 'and especially those, not of the meanest of our Disciplinarian Ministers'. This made them 'verie pertinent' to his purpose, which was to prove 'the brethrens imitation of the Scottish ministers reformation'. Surely, given familiarity with Hacket's activities and his connections with the Disciplinarian ministers, 'it wil not now be denied but that great & many threatning speaches are published'.⁴⁶

This attempted coup makes the threat from the reformers unquestionably clear. When those are unsure hear of 'any extraordinary callings, in private men' they should know that, 'through the assistance of giddy & seduced malecontentes', such people will be willing 'to correct and amend, to set up and throw downe, to deliver and restraine, to punish and execute... according to their own pleasures'. All this seditious, treasonous and violent action will be done 'under pretence of such directions, as they shall affirme that the holy Ghost doth minister unto them'.⁴⁷ To close the case, to eliminate the get-out-clause available to opponents wanting to dissociate themselves from Hacket's efforts, Bancroft concluded with an assumed distrust. He was not unaware that if 'any of the saide ministers or their favorers' were asked for their position on such efforts, 'no men will more eagerlie exclaime against them'. Knowing their efforts to have failed, then such writers would agree that 'their extraordinary purposes, pretended before with teares, with fasting, (with grones and imprecations, to have proceeded from the spirit of God,)' to be nothing other than

⁴⁵ [Richard Bancroft,] Dangerous Positions and Proceedings, published and practised within this Iland of Brytaine, under pretence of Reformation, and for the Presbiteriall Discipline (London, 1593), 141.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 168.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 142.

'illusions of Sathan, cruel, bloody, & trayterous designements'. (In itself, this set the scales in that such behaviours drew on a stock of anti-puritan stereotypes). This was to be expected as an effort 'to save their lives'. 'But if they had prevailed, what would have been said of them then? Surely it is no hard matter to gesse?'⁴⁸

The carefully extracted confession with the carefully built representations and insinuations performed a very effective job. The opportunity was taken to associate reformers and their practices with populism, hypocrisy, uncontrolled speculation, sensational spirituality, treachery, violence and a mask of piety for ambitions to power. For present purposes, this was built upon, and associated with real and feigned diabolic possession, claims to the ability to cast out demons, and Satanism. Given this set of tools and their use within all too recent memory, the fears of Deacon and Walker become much more comprehensible, as does their willingness to cast Darrell and his tactics, however well intentioned and distant from their representation they may have been, to the crows.

II

The lengths to which Deacon and Walker were willing to go to avoid the cause being besmirched by being associated with Darrell are particularly comprehensible when we note that they were well aware that they were dealing with a rhetorician, albeit a new one, from the stable of Richard Bancroft. This is one reason to return to Harsnet's A Discovery, to bring a reading which pays more attention to the stock from which it emerged. It was a task to unpick exactly what happened in the trials and this is a task that has been performed admirably by Marion Gibson. The same is true of exactly what preceded the trials and previous accounts have, I hope, been bolstered by what has gone before. In this particular section of the study the truth is almost irrelevant, although truths

⁴⁸ Ibid., 176.

will be turned to in a later section. It is a separate albeit related task to assess the operation of Harsnet's tract, to bring a reading which pays more attention to his means of argument, with consequences for our assessment of it. A close examination of A Discovery is intended to serve two purposes. It will help us to understand how and why he 'won' the contretemps. It will also adjust his position in the way he is used as a 'witness' by current historians and critics. Beyond this, it is intended to change our understanding of the consequences of its success, both within godly circles and within the discourse, experience and response to claims or accusations of demonic possession in the following decades.

We can start with a brief overview of Harsnet's characterisation by modern historians. Clive Holmes has him, along with Reginald Scot, as one of 'the leading sixteenth-century intellectuals upon the agnostic side'.⁴⁹ James Sharpe has him as 'a sceptic' and cites him as the sole witness when he observes how easy it was to feign possession.⁵⁰ For Stephen Greenblatt he is the 'voice of scepticism'⁵¹ and when Darren Oldenridge needs support for his thesis that it was easy for sufferers of epilepsy to feign possession Harsnet provides the evidence.⁵² Whether it is implicit or explicit, Harsnet can be seen to be almost a proto-Enlightenment rationalist, keeping his head when all around are deluded by the way 'Puritan exorcists throw themselves into paroxysms of prayer'.⁵³ The adequacy or inadequacy of this as a model for the Harsnet as represented in A Discovery is an important part of what follows. I will begin by surveying the structure of the work, going on to examine the way it functions in greater detail. This leads into first a study of the presentation of the text overall, showing how it employs a manner and style of 'respectability', of business-like order and authority, and, second, this sets the preface for

⁴⁹ Clive Holmes, 'Popular culture? Witches, magistrates and divines in early modern England', in Steven Kaplan (ed), Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1984), 88-90.

⁵⁰ James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (Harmondsworth, 1997), 203.

⁵¹ Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations (Oxford, 1990), 121.

⁵² Darren Oldenridge, The devil in early modern England (Stroud, 2000), 13-14.

⁵³ Greenblatt, 100.

an exegesis of the manner of his argument tracing five dominant themes. Harsnet sets out his rules of engagement, the particular context in which Darrell is to be read, a context where exorcism has a history of being employed for the advancement of false religion or self-promotion. Then he establishes that Darrell is only accepted by women, the poor and by fools. The actual manner of argument employs three tactics. The first is irony and sarcasm, using hyperbole or straightforward abuse. The second is guilt by association: other possessions have proven to be fraudulent; Darrell is working with possession; therefore he is fraudulent. There are two other ways in which this tactic is employed. The first works to discredit Darrell through established sets of anti-popery rhetoric. The second uses Darrell to add to the arsenal of anti-Presbyterianism and anti-puritanism as well as vice versa. Finally, and pertinent to this particular context, is the way Harsnet uses the precedents of diabolic possession within England, a way which was to have consequences for the later history of the treatment of such cases.

The presentation of Harsnet's work exudes respectability. The title is followed by one quote from Scripture and one from Augustine's Contra mendacium ad Consentium and the page is dominated by the large printer's mark. Each section of the text is preceded and followed by a decoration of complex patterning and the first letter is always enlarged and set in ornate floral decoration. The main text consists of five books with the longest running to seventy seven pages, the shortest to forty. Each book opens with a paragraph detailing the contents in a business-like, matter of fact manner. The expectation is built for a thorough, authorised, controlled account, clearly demonstrating the fraudulent practices of John Darrell. The purpose of this presentation is to make the reader inclined to assume Harsnet has the voice of reason and offers the credible trustworthiness of authority. In a sense, Harsnet delivers, in that the contents are a selectively accurate portrayal of the issues with which he deals; what is deceptive is the style of his argumentation, the means by which he 'proves' his case and the manner in which he establishes Darrell's guilt.

The first book, the longest, explicitly states its intentions to draw the context within which the trials emerged, along with the endeavours of his supporters before, during and after the enquiry. With this goes the epistemological framework of judging possession and dispossession as well as efforts to maintain 'their credites, when their iugling is called into any question'.⁵⁴ The second book, of seventy-four pages, concentrates on demonstrating Darrell's time spent preparing Sommers for his performance and the means used to offer tips during the first period in Nottingham through to the end of February. This is dominated by the narrative, with occasional mentions of Darrell's denial of particular charges, denials followed by depositions to the contrary from Lambeth. The reader is assumed to accept the weight of evidence, sometimes with the straightforward statement: 'M. Darrell denieth it: but it is deposed' (151). The third book, of forty-one pages, continues the narrative through the initial confession, the Commission from York and on to the assizes and is similarly dominated by the obviously weighted chronicle with occasional allegations and counter-allegations. The fourth book, of forty-three pages, was devoted to demonstrating that none of Sommers's supposed symptoms were beyond ordinary human capacity and that he was never lacking in sentience during his fits. Related to this was the effort to show how Darrell made Sommers's acts seem strange and that people were suspicious of his acts before Darrell arrived. The final book mops up the remaining instances, with accounts of his work with Thomas Darling, Katherine Wright and Mary Cooper, with many of the allegations repeated with an additional section discrediting the published account of Darling's case.⁵⁵ Partly because the tactics adopted regarding the value given to different witnesses and depositions has been discussed at length above and partly because different purposes are being served in this section, the earlier book will be central here, although this certainly will not mean the later books will be neglected.

⁵⁴ Samuel Harsnet, A Discovery of the Fraudulent practises of John Darrell (London, 1599), 1. Hereafter references will be given in the text.

⁵⁵ The Second Book ends on p. 152 and the Third Book starts on p. 177 with no intervening pages.

The work begins with the requisite epistle to the reader and Harsnet immediately sets out his stall. The very first sentence opens as follows: 'The feate of iugling and deluding the people by counterfeyt miracles, hath been as auncient, as it hath beene too currant in all nations of the world' (Epistle to the Reader). He runs through the Egyptians, Simon Magus, classical Greece, Islam and Roman Catholicism generally, coming to a climax with the recent exorcists at Denham in Buckinghamshire,⁵⁶ where 'that which passeth all, the least bone of a canonized Saint (traitor Sainct Campion forsooth), hath more force in it sometimes to cast out a Legion of Devilles, then the name of Iesus, then prayer, fasting, invocation of the Trinitie, Exorcising, coniuring, and Maries reliques, Crosse, holy water, and all' (A2). Such frauds are easily explained, and he promises that he will show that all 'miracle-mongers' will have one of two ends: 'eyther gracing of false religion by this graceles feate, or the raising of their own greatnes in the opinion of the people' (A2). This list and explanation provides the right place for the brief introduction of Darrell hedged around with jovial asides. 'And one especially above the rest, hath placed his publike prize in this iugling science, casting out more devils by prayer and fasting after a good dinner, perhappes at after noone, then wee reade that ever any of the Apostles at so full a season did' (A2v-A3). Having noted that such things may have 'procured reverence and feare in the simpler and looser sort' (A3), he moves on to dismiss the Scriptural evidence of Mark 16:17-18. Rather than engaging with verse 17, where Christ passes on his ability to 'cast out devils', he focuses on verse 18, 'if they shall drinke any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them', giving the example of 'a giddie brother of theirs' who tried to demonstrate his immunity by drinking ratsbane and died shortly afterward (A4). Finally, he rules the distinction between mira and miracula out of court by showing that the two terms are used indiscriminately in Scripture and therefore effectively refer to the same

⁵⁶ The last group were later denounced at greater length by Harsnet in his A declaration of egregious popish impostures (London, 1603).

thing. He closes by taking the reader into the main body of the text. 'Thus much for a taste of Devill-drivers legerdemaine: open the curtaine, and see their Puppettes play' (A4v).

These six pages are notable in five ways. The first is Darrell's virtual absence. Harsnet gestures towards him in one sentence without naming him. Harsnet is solely interested in setting down the ground rules, his ground rules for this work, building one particular context in which Darrell will be read. The second point is that he will set the parameters of the argument of this tract, parameters which will, naturally, effectively force the reader to share Harsnet's conclusions before he has even begun to lay down the specifics of his thesis. It is 'the simpler and looser sort' who accept Darrell's work; therefore if one accepts his work as genuine one is among such people. This can also be seen in three tactics which, as will be seen, are recurrent throughout the tract. The first tactic is the use of irony and/or satire, for instance in the portrayal of Darrell's fasting 'after a good dinner' or the story of the 'giddie brother'. The second is guilt by association, working by fallacious syllogism. The long list of those who delude people 'by counterfeyt miracles' is there as a preface to the only appearance of Darrell, thus implying an argument that all the above claimed to cast out devils and were dissemblers; Darrell claimed to cast out devils; therefore he is a dissembler. The third, and related tactic is Harsnet's manner of 'proof.' The manner of disarming the appeal to Scripture has been noted but the removal of the distinction between mira and miracula is more subtle. He parades his learning in displaying the various Greek terms employed in the New Testament without making it clear what he must have known, that this is missing the point. The point is that the debate over the end of the age of miracles was an extra-Scriptural debate. He plays the 'educated and reasonable' card, aware that he is deliberately employing these talents in the wrong area.

. Before turning to the ways in which Harsnet puts his case in the main text, it is necessary to see how he presents the character of 'John Darrell'. Once again, it is worth

making it clear that at this point the veracity of his representation is not important; it is a matter of character rather than truth and how this serves as an element of explanation. His first explicit appearance is between the dispossession of Katherine Wright and Thomas Darling.

From the time above mentioned vz. 1586. till the 28. of March in the yeare 1596. M. Darrell for ought that is generally knowne, was out of worke. Notwithstanding (besides the publishing of the said historie) he omitted fewe occasions to intimate, what he had done touching Katherine Wright. Insomuch as growing thereby into some smal credit with the simpler sort: he became very peart and proud in that respect (1-2).

The accusation of self-advancement runs hand in hand with the advancement of false religion. It is common for those who 'for matters of crime are called into question' to slander witnesses, plaintiffs and judges. Darrell and his friends fit into this model once he had been 'charged with diverse notable cosenages, in pretending by hypocriticall sleights to cast out Devils'. The particulars of such slanders are not the main issue (making an assumption that they can be dismissed as nonsensical) so much as their indication of evidence of a 'great combination or association to have wrought some great worke, if they had not by fortune stumbled in their way' (4-5).⁵⁷ A similarly broad model is used to place Darrell in established patterns of skullduggery: 'How such impostors have from time to time inveigled the people by such false sleights, it were not much to fill a whole volume' (127). This appears in his careful treatment of the earlier Commissioners. They were in danger of falling to 'the hypocriticall sleights of false seducers, in matters that concern religion'. Without such sleights, how else would popery have 'so farre prevayled: the chiefe pointes thereof having beene uphelde by lyes, and fayned miracles' (208). Such works

⁵⁷ This assumption of inherent untrustworthiness is employed as a pre-emptive strike against Darrell's defenders regarding the changed depositions: 'But it is an easie matter to speake evil, for such as are of the divising and slaundering humor: who care not what they either say or write, so they thinke it may serve their turne' (14).

were on a par with 'many lewde practises of late yeares in England' which had been 'thrust forward by sondry trayterous Exorcistes, under the pretence of casting out Devilles' (210-11). Darrell allegedly 'bragged of his dealings' with Katherine Wright, 'both at Burton & in Lancashire, & at Nottingham, & in every place in effect where hee hath come' (312), which sat easily alongside a fear which Harsnet did not need to name. 'It may hereby evidently appeare, what a garboyle this lewde Impostor would have made in Nottingham, if he had not been prevented' (318).

Part of the explanation and part of the discrediting of Darrell was achieved through the identification of his 'market'. Through Sommers, he 'wonne his spurs in the opinion of many, especially women' (3), and when Sommers's actions began to 'grow very stale' Darrell turned to Mary Cooper to revive interest, interest which 'was very zealously followed by certaine wives in that towne' (4). In fact, the gendered reading of those susceptible to his seductions preceded his arrival in Nottingham. When his fits started, his sister-in-law, 'Mistresse Wallys, shee was not tongue-tyed, what a man her Brother was' and, 'being urged by certaine women', wrote to him asking for his assistance stating the support of 'Mrs. Gray... Lady Zouch... and divers other Gentlewomen' (23, cf. 97). When he turned to Mary Cooper, 'divers of his adherents, specially women, they bestirred themselves in this matter' (318). The other dimension to the denigration of his market has appeared above, the references to 'the simpler and looser sort' (A4) and 'the simpler sort' (2) encouraging distrust of them as witnesses and suspicion of Darrell's credibility. This could, of course, serve, if not to negate, at least to weaken his case. This is plain in the discussion of the earlier Commission. One would have presumed that Darrell 'would have produced his chief witnesses first, but peradventure it was thoght good policy to lay the burthen upon the simpler sort'; 'most of those that were examined, were but simple persons' (211). The impression of his vanity is worsened by its dependence upon such people. His self-esteem is increased by the 'admiration had of him, especially by his

followers, and some other credulous persons' (141). Similarly, his initial diagnosis of Sommers's condition is presented as being grounded on the letter of his sister-in-law and 'upon the rude report of a simple man, one Hugh Wilson' (107). The success with which Darrell convinced some of Sommers's repossession showed 'how easie a matter it is, with faire pretence to seduce the simpler sort' (151). The combined impressions of gullibility and self-aggrandisement encouraged the reader to accept Harsnet's statement when he told of the numbers joining to watch the dispossession of Katherine Wright. 'Hereuppon wee may not doubt, but that M. Darrell laboured to shew his skil: and besides, that which before is expressed, did play indeed sundry prety tricks to move the greater admiration' (307).

The consequence of this tactic for the reader is made plain. Having remarked upon the easy task of seducing the simple with the notion of Sommers's repossession, Harsnet gave credit to those not so foolish. 'Howbeit manie of the wiser sort, that were not possessed with the giddie humor of novelties, (covered forsooth with zeale and sighinges), did laugh this to scorne, as they did the rest' (151). The collective responses to Sommers's confession to fraudulence before the Commission from York were divided in a way that encouraged readers to identify with one side. 'The wiser sort believed Somers, such as had some good experience of the course held betwixt him and Darrell: others (not to be impeached, so much for their want of wisdom, as for their blinding the eye thereof, by their preposterous affections, they helde with M. Darrell' (207-8). The reader is implicitly given the choice between being judged to be among the credulous, the simple, and the women or among the wiser sort. This choice is made more explicit when Harsnet has demonstrated that none of Sommers's symptoms were beyond human capacities. Harsnet seems almost to wring his hands in despair. 'Whether these depositions will satisfie M. Darrell & his friendes, it may be doubted, they are so strongly possessed with their owne conceites: but to anie reasonable men they will be sufficient, to shew the vanitie of the

forsaide pretended impossibilities' (257). One may say that Darrell is innocent and thus show oneself to be 'possessed' with such 'conceites' or one may be a 'reasonable' reader and find him guilty.

This is part of Harsnet's efforts to represent himself as the voice of authority, to define himself as one who should not be mistaken for such a positioned analyst. He is in a difficult relationship when he touches upon the earlier commissioners in that they had a similar claim to authority but they acquitted Darrell of any accusations of wrongdoing. He copes by listing the commissioners and praising the respectability of the laymen, all members of the gentry and 'verie fitte Governors' who were more than reliable in 'normal' circumstances but unable to cope with 'the hypocriticall sleights of false seducers, in matters that concern religion' (208). The four clergymen were more difficult still and, after making it clear that they were inadequately informed about the whole situation, he focuses on the fact that they were inclined to trust a cleric and that Darrell had 'many abettors' (209). Having worked through the treatise to place himself and the judicial proceedings he is portraying as moderate, reasonable and trustworthy, the brief engagement with the Lancashire seven is employed to add a sense of transparency and openness, making an offer he could be reasonably sure was to operate by trust rather than be taken up. More evidence of dubious practices could have been added from George More's 'examination & confession touching that matter'.

His said examination is in the Registers office to her Maiesties Commissioners, for causes ecclesiasticall: where all the rest of the aforesaid examinations do remaine. And if any will take the paines to peruse it, he shal find, that M. Darrel and M. Mores course held with those in Lancashire, was as vaine and ridiculous, as with any of the other. The authour of the Briefe Narration, after hee hath taken his pleasure against the proceedinges of her Maiesties Commissioners, and such as they deputed for the better examination of these causes, as disdainig and scorning them, he writeth

(iudgeing other men of likelihood by his owne corrupt conscience) in this sorte: What goodly stuffe they have returned, time and malice will make knowne unto us. The stuffe such as it is (vile in deed) his Maistershippe may bee pleased now to peruse: and thereby reape some profit, if he reade it with no greater malice then it was written (323).

Moving on to the tactics of argumentation I will start with the means of irony and sarcasm. There is an early appearance in recounting the great claims made for the significance of Sommers's dispossession. 'These fellowes (we see) are marvellously ravished with this superexcellent wonder. But marke how truely one of them speaketh: peradventure against his will. It will prove (forsooth) to be a matter of as great consequence, and as profitable, as ever such worke, since the restitution of the Gospell amongst us. Any such worke: you may believe him' (16). This opens a list of preceding possessions in England. The main point is not the validity or invalidity of these cases so much as to suggest a lack of respect, of humility in the pro-Darrell accounts. There is a similar tone on Darrell's means of discernment, suggesting that John Foxe was, by Darrell's standards, likely to have been deceived by Satan 'as not having read (as hee supposeth,) Bodinus, Wierus, Mingus, and Thyræus, that write of devils, as hee himselfe. M. Darrell, and the rest of that Crue have done' (28). When Harsnet turned to George More's explanation of his warning the vexed in Lancashire about the likelihood of Satan's attempts to repossess them, his approach is not rational engagement.

If these childish answeres remayned not in record under his own hand, would any man believe them? doth it not give us iust occasion to thinke, that he tolde them such tales of a lewde purpose, thereby to draw them to pretend the like? Otherwise would a man fearing God being in such a conflict with Sathan, (as hee pretendeth) for their dispossession, have tolde them any such matters upon heare-say? Or doth it carry with it any such consequence, as to tell them that Sathan would allure them by

promises, and threatnings, because mens natures are subject to be seduced by such meanes? (57)

This tone of derision enabled Harsnet to dismiss the readings of symptoms by straightforward statements rather than arguments. Following his account of Sommers's exposition of the creed as portrayed in the Briefe Narration and the Apologie again his concern is not critical engagement.

Who woulde not thinke by these generall tearmes, that the boye had beene a kinde of Prophete? But they are (bee you sure) a couple of false seducers, and counterfeyte companions: it being impossible, (if they were not madde) but that they should write these thinges, against their owne consciences, and of purpose for their owne reputations, to abuse their Readers (248).

Having pointed out that Darrell was not present at this exposition, accepting its commendation by 'the simple people' he turns Darrell's description of the reading as 'divine-like' and 'a very glorious interpretation' to his own purposes. That Darrell ascribed such powers to 'an evill spirit', may 'touch himself as nearely as Somers'. For if the occasional errors in Sommers exposition are an argument for it being 'the Devill that preached in him, the most of his sermons at Nottingham, touching the possession, dispossession, and repossession of Somers, will haply bee censured in Nottingham, to have proceeded from the Devill' (223-24).

A related theme is surely intended to lower Darrell's credibility by lowering his social status as well as categorising him with inherently untrustworthy trades. In a chapter explaining how Roman Catholic priests trick their followers into accepting fraudulent exorcisms, he warns that 'these Exorcists of both kinds [Roman Catholic and Protestant], for want of worke are driven to their shifts: and like Tinkers walke up and downe from place to place, seeking to be employed'. It is difficult to set down all their 'sleights' and 'shifts' because they have so many and he ends with a warning for the present and future,

that many of them 'are here sette downe, and the rest may bee supplied peradventure by some hereafter' (61). He opens the chapter on the ways in which Darrell convinced his audience that Sommers' actions were extraordinary with an account of popish merchandise and relics and how, with feigned devotion, they are said to be genuine, 'whereby many credulous and superstitious people are drawne to admire them'.

It is the manner of the Mountebankes in Italie, resembled by some of our Pedlers, when they open their packes, to set out their ware with many great wordes. Unto which kinde of people, and seducing Mirabilistes, Maister Darrell in his practises with Somers may well bee resembled (220).

So when he describes Sommers's actions along with Darrell's explanation of them, these are 'his chiefe Wares' and one 'may well remember the saide Romish Priestes in extolling their feyned Reliques, and the saide Mountebankes, and Pedlers, in lying and cogging, to make the best of their packes' (221). This comparison is brought to a climax a few pages later when Darrell is said to have taken on Satan in the later stages of Sommers's struggles, an act which made 'the simpler sorte of people' grant him virtue and holiness. Harsnet's reading is contrary to this. 'If the resemblances before made of M. Darrels practises in this point, to Pedlers, Mountebanks, and the Reliquemongers of Rome be not so fitte', then readers should compare Darrell and Sommers to 'the pretie feates, betwixt Bankes and his horse' (225). This is to compare the two with a Scottish showman and his performing horse, trained to dance and perform tricks. It had been much admired in London and in 1596 was taken to Scotland where it was said to be animated by a spirit.⁵⁸

Another frequently employed tactic is guilt by association. The first part of this can be seen in the manner in which Harsnet manages to adopt anti-popery as a means to discredit Darrell. This is achieved by two strands, one narrow and one broad which are interwoven, the narrow one establishing the grounds and allowing the broad strand to

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Maroccus extaticus. Or, Bankes bay horse in a trance A Discourse set downe in a merry dialogue, betweene Bankes and his beast: anatomizing some abuses and bad trickes of this age (London, 1595).

become dominant later on. The first is the gradual identification of Darrell with the Jesuit, Petrus Thyraeus. He first appears in a chapter engaging with Darrell's supposed claim to be a fitter instrument to cast out devils than others. In a list of Roman Catholic exorcists, Harsnet points out that among the explanations, 'Thyraeus the Iesuite (an especiall Author of M. Darrels, and his favourers) hath no scripture for his warrant, neyther do he pretend any' (20). Shortly after, remarking upon the numbers willing to attest to Darrell's godly life and manner, the commendations are turned against him by observing that a 'man would think that Thyraeus had bin perused, he is made so sutable to his Exorcistes' (23). To take the suspicion of Darrell's unsuitability further, Harsnet momentarily takes Thyraeus' model seriously, despite having dismissed its lack of Scriptural founding. Darrell's supposed virtues 'doe make him answerable to the popish Exorcists' but this is insufficient and 'Thyraeus the Iesuite, must in effect tell us so'. He uses the model in Thyraeus' recently published Demoniaci, Hoc Est (Cologne, 1598) to draw attention to the requisite that a decent exorcist must not 'bee burdened with anie mortall sinne', with the dual implication that Darrell employed this model and failed to match its standards (25).

Having placed Thyraeus on Darrell's reading list (28), Harsnet falls on the sole citation of him, in Briefe Narration, with delight. When the process of explaining that God has created more symptoms of possession because people have 'growne more incredulous then heretofore', Harsnet suggests that the author has learned 'these new demonstrative signes of possession' from 'Thyraeus the Iesuite, and quoteth for it his booke De Dæmoniacis' but takes the opportunity to explain the consequences for the author 'and Mayster Darrell concerning their olde and newe devised signes of possession'. He goes on to give a list of symptoms taken from Thyraeus which might not be symptoms of possession, coming to conclusive advice that if 'M. Darrell will be a right Exorcist, after the current fashion amongst the Iesuits', then he must broaden his evidential palate 'and Thyraeus (a man so oft alleadged by his friends) will not be dainty to teach him' (31-32).

The same mechanism is used when he moves to the next stage of diagnosis. Asking for the basis upon which Darrell came to identify the witches responsible for sending the devils into Sommers and his sister, he suggests that the 'lesuiticall and popish Exorcistes' allow testimony to be taken either from the devil as it is cast out or from the witch herself. However, Darrell relied upon the reports of Sommers and Cooper and these, as 'his M. Thyræus sayeth, are not sufficient' (37-38).

Now Thyræus has been promoted as 'his', as Darrell's prime source, he can be employed as Darrell's measure and as his assumed confederate. Thus using Thyræus as the inspiration for the explanation of mortal or venial sins as the means to attract the possessing spirit Harsnet can remark that 'both hee and M. Darrell (together with his friendes) doe tel us verie pretie tales' (40). On judging Darrell's means for casting out devils, Harsnet points out that 'his maisters the popish Exorcistes, will condemne as an error in him. For one of them sayeth...' and the 'one of them' is, of course, Thyræus (43). Turning to Darrell's interrogation about the working of fasting and prayer, he notes that Darrell had said that he thought the possessed should, if capable, fast; if not, the will was likely to be accepted as sufficient by God. Harsnet judges this to be an error because 'the popish sort do generally require the said prayer and fasting, as a preparation, in the Exorcistes, and not as a meanes: although Thyræus confesseth, that prayer is something' (46), thus judging Darrell to be straying because he does not match the criteria imposed upon him. The same tactic appears in the judgement of the signs he employed to appraise the dispossession of Sommers which do not sufficiently rehearse those identified by Thyræus (52). The climax comes at the end of this chapter, where Harsnet ridiculed Darrell's explanation of the devil's departure, coming to a rhetorical question: 'why should knowledge bee mentioned in the practises of these iuglers?' After all, he trusts Darrell would not claim greater skill than 'all the great lesuiticall & popish Rabbins, who have written much, and have used great traffique in the trade of casting forth Devilles' (54). This

serves as a preface to an account of the proper signs taken from Thyraeus and the following conclusion:

When therefore these cosening merchantes, doe tell men now a dayes, that they have cast devils out of any their children, servantes or friends: it is hereby manifest, what credite their words do deserve (55).

The broader application of papist associations has been encountered above where it appears, having become a sufficiently well established part of the rhetoric to become an aside, for instance in the comparisons with pedlars and mountebanks mentioned earlier (221, 225). The first instance is prefaced by an account of relics. 'If a man go to Rome, and be desirous of novelties, hee shall find sundry Priests that will feed his humor. They will show him Christes napkin, S. lukes head, S. Andrewes arme, S. Blases wezand, a peece of S. Christophers arme', going on to provide a long list including Moses' rod and Aaron's rod. Such priests will declare with great devotion that 'these are no fictions, nor feigned reliques' and hence 'many credulous and superstitious people are drawne to admire them' (219-20), this creating the space for the comparison with Darrell. The blanket affiliation was present within the letter to the reader and made more secure through the application of Thyraeus through the first book. Once the pattern is set, it becomes an easy means of encouraging ill-repute. More's praise of godly means are said to suggest that such prayer could 'have had the vertue of popish relique, as well to cast out a Devill, as to disclose him' and the very presence of Darrell and More had 'as great force therein, as the popish priests, thrusting their fingers into the parties mouthes' (50). Harsnet employs a 'where will it end?' device, asking 'if these absurde mates had gone on, they would have proved as grosse deluders, as any of the popish or lesuiticall Exorcistes, if not more grosse' (58). After a section deriding the Roman Catholic use of exorcism within baptism, suggesting that the inhabiting spirits must be baby devils as they are so easily cast out, he stresses that this cunning is not 'appropriated onely to the Papistes, but extendeth itsel

further, there being men also amongst ourselves, who want not their Reliques and devises, which these elder devils must feare, and tremble at' (60). This appears within a chapter devoted entirely to the ways in which Roman Catholics get tricked into fraudulent possession stories, serving the interests of priests and false religion to which I will return. As with previous approaches, Harsnet sets up the comparison and the implied collusion and suggests that Darrell has taken it further. The comparisons with 'Romish Priestes in extolling their feyned Reliques' (221) is not enough. The conclusion to the chapter showing Darrell's coaching of Sommers up to his dispossession is an expression almost of ironic admiration.

The popish crew of Monkes, Iesuites & Friers could never have gotten so much wealth & reputation, nor have possessed the peoples minds with so great an opinion of them, nor have beene able to have drawne them to so great superstition and palpable errours, but by these and such counterfeit miracles & knaveries (127).

The second set of associations is with Presbyterianism and nonconformity, a ploy familiar from Cosin. Harsnet leaps with delight upon two passages in the literature defending Darrell.

The author of the briefe Narration, to draw us peradventure from further dealing with M. Darrell, or at the least to shew his humor, propoundeth in his margent this question, vz. Whether a Bishop and Elder be all one in scriptures. And M. More, (as cunning as M. Darrell in dealing with Sathan) saith: that the faith of the Church established under the Pastors and Teachers &c. shall bring forth this fruit, namely to cast out devils: &c. Hereunto it may be added, that many, who have taken M. Darrels cause most to hart, have been noted heretofore as favorers of the overworne Consistorian faction (14-15).

His conclusion is that, having failed to win the argument by learning or persuasion, 'for the setting up of their Presbyteriall conceits, they thought to supply their wantes therein, by

this devise of casting out Devilles' (15), another echo of Cosin. He takes this further in berating the ministers for praising preaching and extempore prayer: 'And who knoweth whether in time, the naming of the Presbyterie would not have had the vertue of popish relique'? (50). Similarly sarcastic speculations are added to More's observation that the prayer book was less efficacious than extempore prayer.

Assuredly it may well be supposed, that if this their course had not beene met with in time, we should have had many other pretended signes of possession: one Devill would have beene mad at the name of the Presbyter: an other at the sight of a minister that will not subscribe: an other to have seene men sit or stand at the Communion (35).

The confidence of 'it may well be supposed' makes the suggestion seem perfectly reasonable and allows Harsnet to complete his set of anti-puritan slurs. Not only does Presbyterianism acquire the ability to combat devils but refusal to subscribe to Whitgift's three articles accepting the Book of Common Prayer and nonconformist Eucharistic practice gain diabolical cachet. The last instance of associating ex tempore prayer and ecclesiological reform turns the abuse into an accusation of cowardice. In a comparison of Darrell et al. with Roman Catholic exorcists the latter are seen as the braver. Those 'that take upon them to cast out Devils amongst our selves' are agreed that 'stinted prayers are very offensive to them, & that they are not resolved of the difference betwixt a priest & a Bishop', but they are unwilling to say that their opponents are possessed, 'albeit men of that humor both have, and still do deprive them, maligne them, and slander them upon any occasion at their pleasures' (61). Finally, a cunning sleight is managed relating to Robert Aldridge, an assistant to Darrell who was willing to provide depositions against him at Lambeth. In the narrative before the first confession of Sommers, Harsnet describes Aldridge as 'a great companion of M. Darrels, but not of his cosenage', and asks how shocked he would be to read the account in the Briefe Narration of the offer of the

preaching post to Darrell. Nottingham is characterised as lacking a 'settled preacher' through Elizabeth's reign. Harsnet kindly clears away any danger of the reader being confused: as far as he is concerned 'it may be thus holpen': 'this fellow peradventure accounteth neither Parsons, nor Vickars, nor any that beare such popish names, for preachers: the Doctor to be chosen by the parish, as M. Darrell was, is the preacher (forsooth) that must beare the bell' (147). The possibility, fair or unfair, that the description in the Briefe Narration refers to inadequate or infrequent preaching on Aldridge's part is one that Harsnet chose not to bring to the table.

The third form of guilt by association is more strained and that, perhaps, explains why it is only used once. Mr Starkey, the head of the household that suffered seven possessed members in Lancashire, hired a cunning man, Edward Hartley, to assuage the symptoms. He met with some success but eventually was accused of actually being the means by which the family was possessed. Having taken the advice of John Dee, Starkey wrote to Darrell, asking him to come and offer assistance. At this time, 'Edward Hartley the witch' told Starkey 'that no one man could do his children and the rest there any good, it was too greate a work: but there must be two or three at the least'.

And here you may observe a little kinde of Wonder. For M. Darrell not knowing (for ought that appeareth) what the saide Witch had affirmed, did of his owne accorde... acquaint one M. Moore with the matter, and obtayning him to be his companion in that action, fulfilled the devils wordes, that two at the least must undertake that worke (22-3).

The passage stops short of suggesting that Darrell was actually in league with Hartley and through him with the devil but the reader is invited to come to that conclusion, particularly by the phrase in parentheses. By appearing cautious enough to say 'for ought that appeareth', Harsnet makes the implication in the manner of 'this may seem crazy but...' or 'call me paranoid if you will but...'.

To return to the willingness of Deacon and Walker to disown Darrell and his activities to such an extent that they were willing to employ dangerous, certainly borderline, readings of Scripture has become clearer through this analysis. Through a mixture of authority, bravura, crushing satire and guilt by association Harsnet had created a straw figure to knock down and dutifully knocked it down. Part of the reason their texts showed willing to accept his parameters of argument, to accept his straw figure as an accurate representation (indeed, to create their own straw figure) may well have been down to the differences between A Discovery and the texts defending Darrell. Harsnet was in a position to declare his authority, from the first page through to the last word. Darrell's supporters and Darrell himself were publishing unauthorised texts from unspecified places and often in a gothic typeface more frequently encountered in the world of broadsheets and sensational literature, thus encouraging an association with populism, never a compliment in this context. In addition, memories of the efficacy of Bancroft's earlier work along with Cosin and the disempowering connections drawn between Hacket and more 'respectable' reformers with allusions to treason joining populism probably produced greater fears than we immediately appreciate. Harsnet, in the new context, could employ the rhetoric of Jesuitical loyalties which was inherently an accusation of treason very effectively. The material nature of the pro-Darrell tracts as well as their illegality meant that they stood less chance of survival and much less chance of a wide readership, particularly among the 'unconverted.' This put Harsnet in a position where he could quote from them freely and selectively in ways that served his purposes and were unlikely to be contested or checked by his readership. Perhaps because historiographical attention has tended to focus on Darrell, insufficient attention has been paid to the threat Harsnet was happy to make to the broader godly community. Bringing down and discrediting Darrell could contribute to bringing down or at least forcing caution upon the work of that community, a consequence Harsnet and his patrons would applaud. Quite early on in A Discovery, he

draws attention to the frenetic activity by which many of his friends were 'kindled, and what choler they shewde' in trying to discredit the proceedings. 'Diverse of them came up to London, & in secret corners exclaimed bitterly against his committing to prison, iustifying by many devises his former actions'. Those who examined him and those on the Commission were threatened in a letter to Bancroft 'with the authority of great persons, who were said (but falsly) to have taken upon them the defence of M. Darrell', apparently likening them to the judges who condemned 'guiltlesse Susanna, and to the Scribes and Pharisees that tooke councill together to put Christ to death' (9-10). The numbers, the anonymity, and the 'secret corners' along with the lies and the unflattering comparisons applied to the epitome of respectability, not least because it was described as 'her Maiesties said Commission' encouraged an association of the wider puritan community with plotting, treachery, subversion and underhand tactics. For Deacon and Walker the success of such implications led them to the press; it is not unreasonable to suggest that it also encouraged other moderates among the godly to keep their heads down, to proceed with caution or to abandon the opportunities offered by diabolically possessed individuals in the future.

III

As a transition into the changed circumstances of engagement with and responses to the claims of those alleged to be possessed as well as the changing discourse of possession, it is salutary to examine the ways in which Harsnet represented the selective precedents to Wright, Darling, Sommers and Cooper. The snide remarks about John Foxe and others who might 'easily be deceyved by Sathan' due to their inadequate reading (28) have been mentioned above. There was an ambivalent reference to Agnes Briggs in Sommers's testimony. Some who were convinced of him being a dissembler mentioned a

book 'of a certaine maide in London, that had deceived many by avoyding at her mouth pinnes and needles'. Darrell apparently addressed this case in a sermon and, according to Sommers, 'did greatly blame those, that because some had dissembled, did therefore affirme, that I was but a dissembler' (146). Harsnet was more willing to be dismissive of the Throckmorton case, one which had been accepted as real, however much modern readings may raise eyebrows about the dubious social and legal treatment of the suspects. The case first appears in the account of Darrell's training of Sommers. According to Sommers, Darrell told him of bringing witchcraft accusations into his work with Katherine Wright but that, since then, 'hee had heard and read some part of a very ridiculous booke, concerning one M. Throgmortons children, (supposed to have beene bewitched by a woman of Warbois)', by which he had picked up some tips 'and was not ignorant, as fit occasion served, to ascribe what he list to witches' (93). In the same context, Sommers told of Barnaby Evans bringing John Sherratt to see him to see if he shared his suspicions of possession. Sherratt told Sommers of 'M. Throckmortons children in Huntingdonshire how they were possessed'. Moreover, Sherratt had a copy of the book and told Evans, within Sommers's hearing, 'the manner of the fits' they had and hence 'I learned something more then I knew before, and did still proceed further and further in my dissimulation' (97). Finally, part of Robert Cooper's deposition told how he told Darrell of Sommers's naming of witches and the minister said that he had thought it would come to this, that there were precedents. 'So (saith he) it hath commonly hapned in Scotland. And that one M. Throckmortons children, did the like not long since' (138).⁵⁹ The case has lost respectability by association with Darrell's template of fraudulence and the relatively weighty tome has become 'a very ridiculous booke'.

⁵⁹ Cooper is probably referring to the case of John Fian who caused the possession of a gentleman as part of an effort to win his wife. He was successful in the possession but caught out by the object of his desires and she managed to make him cast his amorousness on a heifer instead of her with embarrassing consequences. His discovery, torture, confession and execution were part of the North Berwick witch hunt of 1591: Newes from Scotland (London, 1592), C1-D3. The match is far from perfect (although it remains unclear exactly what Cooper meant) but demonic possession was both a late arrival and rare in Scotland: Brian P. Levack, Witch-hunting in Scotland: law, politics and religion (London, 2008), 115-30, esp. 117.

A longer list of precedents appears near the beginning of A Discovery which was mentioned earlier as it was used for the purpose of suggesting Darrell's supporters were making unjustifiably extravagant claims for his feats. Harsnet's judgement of the precedents is fairly clear, and certainly weighted. He starts with the maid of Chester, Anne Mylner, referred to as a 'pretended dispossessing', follows it with Mildred Norrington, exposed as 'a meere cosenage', despite the efforts of Roger Newman and John Brainford '(equally to M. Darrell and M. More)'. The Dutch possessions in Maidstone and Margaret Cooper are dismissed along with an unidentified 'very strange vexation of the maid of Bury'. The last to be mentioned are Agnes Brigges and Rachel Pindar completing a list of 'counterfeite and lewde practises, resembling or imitating the wicked devises of the holy Maid of Kent'. The identification with Elizabeth Barton is thought provoking. The Henrician marvel was not supposed to be possessed but she fit well with Harsnet's intentions: as he pointed out she was led astray by 'two false Priestes' and had 'marvellous trances, to the great admiration of the whole countrey' (16-17). In addition, as the religious context changed in the 1530s, her prophecies were no longer a fascinating curiosity but became subversive and the eventual investigation revealed links with dissenters and her eventual execution was for treason.

From the engagement with the text and the style of Harsnet's Discovery I would suggest an adjustment in the way he is characterised by historians. I would certainly not suggest we should lessen any appraisal of his success. As the treatment of Thomas Harrison in Chester and, at greater length, that of Mary Glover has shown, he instilled a greater caution in the godly in their aid offered to the diabolically possessed. This can be seen in attaining, where possible, episcopal approval, even assistance, for their pastoral intervention. Where that was not available the dispossession was less public, more controlled and recorded with greater attention to detail by figures less open to charges of populism. This element of control, even secrecy, compromised the opportunity for

immediate proselytisation, a necessary cost. Post-Glover, there seems to have been a lessening of appetite for such means of publicity, although such an argument from silence compounds the speculative degree of judgement. This is an issue to which I will return and it should be made clear that it did not mean that the chance of dispossession of those invaded by demonic spirits was ruled to be impossible, merely impolitic as a means of advancing the godly cause.

In this imposition of caution and its consequences, Harsnet's work can be described as triumphantly successful. What is at issue as far as historians are concerned is the means of his triumph. He won the argument through authority, through the superbly casuistical representation of the symptoms, their treatment and the conflicting testimonies, both in court and print, of them. He marked the tactic of using dispossession as a means to spread the Word as one associated with uncomfortable memories of the behaviour of Hacket, with the populism of Martin Marprelate and the questionable loyalty of Presbyterians, a particularly sensitive area in the aftermath of the attempts of Essex's self-aggrandisement. The manner in which this association was achieved was not that of the calm rationality associated with the term 'sceptic'. It was achieved through value-laden (mis)representations, insinuations, satire and calls for his voice, the respectable voice of establishment judiciary, the official voice of masculine authority to be valued more than the judgement of women and the poorer sort led astray by the guiles of zealously feigned pity put on by self-interested representatives advancing false and subversive fanatics. In sum, this reading encourages a characterisation of Harsnet's triumph as a more naked, explicit embodiment of the relation between power and knowledge than the relative subtlety of the familiar Foucauldian understanding. What has tended to be unnoticed or unreported regarding A Discovery is that Harsnet gives little space to discrediting the possibility of possession per se. That was not his goal; he reaches his goal by discrediting these possessions, Darrell's possessions and those that he employs as instances of the

association between exorcism and treachery, primarily Roman Catholic ones. The wider engagement with precedents in post-Reformation England is brief and selective, concerned to discredit merely by statement and far from the centre of his attention, only once earning a concentrated list amounting to two pages.

That this reading does not declare an end to possession discourse per se so much as a changed power relation in its functioning will be considered through three means. The first is a re-reading of medical understandings of possession, that Jorden is not the whole story and certainly not the uncontested orthodoxy. The second is the impact of this shift in juridical discourse, less a dismissal of allegations of possession in witchcraft accusations so much as a parallel caution in their treatment, a making explicit some of the caution, along with different demands of diagnosis, that was suggested in the difficulties Darrell had with gaining a conviction during Katherine Wright's experience discussed above. The third and more lengthy means will be returning to 'actual' cases of possession, partly in medical circles and partly in judicial circles. The latter will show the existence of a Harsnetian orthodoxy in some circles, particularly around the king and the centres of power, but also that such doubt was not evidence of a homogenous shift or one that can be detached from the process of judgement, with different contexts producing different truths. Indeed, this will also show an instance where the right context could produce a more successful acceptance of the continued reality of diabolic possession through the secondary causation of witchcraft, coming to an end only through the intervention of power plays of social status.

Negotiating the boundaries: shifts within possession and discernment among physicians and magistrates

The intention of this chapter is to complicate the appraisal of orthodoxies within the historiography regarding the relationship between spiritual and medical responses to experiences potentially identified as demonic possession and the related nature of changed judicial reactions to cases with their evidential roots in possessed individuals. The first point regarding medicine and religion that cannot be stressed too much is to dispel any assumptions that these were two separate, alternative and inherently conflicting discourses and vocations. This was not the case for the sixteenth and much of the seventeenth centuries. Alongside this goes the need to warn against the assumed authority granted to and trust placed in physicians in the west today (albeit an increasingly challenged authority). Fortunately, historians of medicine and the treatment and perception of affliction have been exploring this vein already; unfortunately historians of witchcraft and religion have not always engaged with this historiography. While I will voice some reservations about specific points in this work relating to demonic possession later on, this work serves as a salutary corrective for the residual whiggish assumptions that appear as an undertone in much of the historiography of possession. As Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham noted the two fields had an 'intimate relationship' at all levels in the seventeenth century, indeed, that a comprehensive account would 'almost be equivalent to a complete history of medicine in the period'.¹ Andrew Wear took the occasional efforts of clerics to warn medics off deathbeds (and similar efforts in the other direction) as evidence of the porosity of the boundary, that the barriers between the disciplines were

¹ Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham, 'Introduction: medicine and society on seventeenth-century England', in *idem*, (eds), Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England (Aldershot, 1996), 1, 3-4.

lower than now, the two being 'intimately linked'.² In terms of the ill person of the suffering community, naturalistic explanations were as available and as popular as religious ones and the two systems existed side by side, not merely because of their respective places in the institutions and value-systems available, but also because their respective efficacies were equally uncertain. 'Religion was a matter of faith, but so, in a sense, was belief in the effects of medicine'.³ For the 'learned physician', that is, the university educated one, claims to greater authority could be laid by explanations of the symptoms, of the 'signs', by explanations relating to the unseen, to the internal workings of the body. This can be seen as parallel to the claims to authority from clerics or godly laity, drawing upon explanations depending on similarly unseen external factors or different internal ones. Each diagnosis depended upon a degree of faith, of trust, as well as providing the opportunity for warning the patient of potential failure and removing any culpability from the person making the diagnosis.⁴ David Harley has explored the relationship in a different way, looking at the place of medical metaphors (and their stated limitations) within moral theology, obviously drawing on Christ as the physician and the minister as the soul's physician, but showing the professions existing in a creative tension, far from mutually exclusive and much of the practical divinity drawing on medical metaphors, as well as practical knowledge of the field, to employ the metaphors as self-affirmation.⁵

In Wear's appraisal religious (more accurately clerical) and medical discourses were parallel systems working together, but not always amicably. After a succession of instances of clergymen such as Richard Baxter acting as physicians, clerical writers such as William Perkins quoting them, and ministers like Henry Newcome with a wife providing medical expertise, particularly midwifery, he notes tensions over efforts to monopolise the

² Andrew Wear, 'Interfaces: perceptions of health and illness in early modern England', in Roy Porter and Andrew Wear (eds), Problems and Methods in the History of Medicine (London, 1987), 238.

³ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴ *Idem*, Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680 (Cambridge, 2000), 129.

⁵ David Harley, 'Medical metaphors in English moral theology, 1560-1660', Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences 48 (1993), 398, 403-4, 432.

sickbed. The main critic of medical advice lacking in university training he mentions is John Cotta and he will be encountered below. Elsewhere Wear mentions conflicts in differentiating between 'physical madness and spiritual possession' and his reference is to Edward Jorden and Mary Glover.⁶ The most immediate response is to draw attention to the fact that practising physicians stood on both sides, as did practising clergymen, so that instance works poorly as a conflict between medicine and religion. What is more important for the particular purposes of this section is that he concludes with the emphasis on a good working relationship, although 'in hindsight it might be said that the seeds of secularism were present'.⁷ (By 'secularism' he intends a stricter division between duties to the body and soul.) I would note the chosen term of 'seeds' and perhaps question the chosen figure of speech as it intimates a determinism, perhaps not intended by Wear. In his later work he made the division more explicit and placed the drawing the lines of demarcation after the Restoration. As will be seen in the final sections of the successor to this work a substantial causal part of this division can be placed on the disputes of the 1650s; earlier in the century, without the benefit of hindsight, this development is not so plain.

Flesh needs to be put upon the bones of the religious and medical relationship. The first point is that all 'afflictions', whether they be of the mind, the body or material well-being, were sent by God. Such afflictions were unlikely to be lifted until their purpose had been met.⁸ The purpose of similar afflictions could be diametrically opposite for different people: for the wicked they might be signs of God's hatred and for the godly tokens of God's paternal love; equally for the wicked they might be calls to redemption and for the

⁶ Andrew Wear, 'Puritan perceptions of illness in seventeenth-century England', in Roy Porter (ed), Patients and Practitioners: lay perceptions of medicine in pre-industrial society (Cambridge, 1985), 69-70; *idem*, 'Religious beliefs and medicine in early modern England', in Hilary Marland and Margaret Pelling (eds), The Task of Healing: medicine, religion and gender in England and the Netherlands 1450-1800 (Rotterdam, 1996), 154. It should be noted that 'physical madness' was not one of the diagnoses of Glover, unless suffocation of the mother is included under that very broad banner.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁸ David Harley, 'The theology of affliction and the experiences of sickness in the godly family, 1650-1714: the Henrys and the Newcomes', in Grell and Cunningham (ed), Religio Medici, 277.

saintly judgments upon vanity.⁹ One of the consequences of this outlook, with consequences for the medico-religious relationship, was a distinction between primary and secondary causes. According to spiritual physicians such as Richard Sibbes, Thomas Taylor and their colleagues, one should address the primary cause, should turn to the minister not the physician first. This was not in conflict with causation or treatment by natural agents, merely a recognition that these were secondary causes.¹⁰ The 'proper' response was not to welcome the illness, as a token, a trial, a sign of divine pastoral testing or to ignore it or to display stoical indifference. The former was to risk self-congratulation, the latter to display deafness to divine intervention. Similarly, to despise the affliction simply as a physical blemish was to fail to address the primary causal factor. One should examine one's life, accept just punishment for whatever aspect of worldliness earned it, and seek forgiveness. The sufferer should not welcome or reject the affliction but seek to understand it.¹¹

Identifying the ultimate, primary cause was not seen as an alternative to seeking medical assistance. Indeed, to refuse medicine was in itself disrespectful to God as it was not to trust God to work through His means.¹² In fact it could be worse. To neglect natural means was to be condemned as it was to demand, to expect, a direct divine remedy, a 'sin of superstitious presumption'.¹³ One should not merely trust medicine without looking for the ultimate cause. Physicians' means should be respected but not solely relied on. To do so was to commit the sin of Asa who placed too much faith in physicians, neglecting the ultimate cause, as opposed to Hezekiah, who turned to God, and then to the natural means. 'Let us not do like Asa, to trust in the Physitian, or in subordinate meanes, but

⁹ *Idem*, 'Spiritual physic, Providence and English medicine, 1560-1640', in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London, 1993), 102.

¹⁰ *Idem*, 'Medical metaphors', 402.

¹¹ *Idem*, 'Theology of affliction', 277-8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 279-80.

¹³ *Idem*, 'Medical metaphors', 403-4.

know, that all Physicke is but dead meanes without him'.¹⁴ On the higher plane, it was worse to be physically cured with the natural means without considering the primary reason for the affliction than it was to continue to suffer but benefiting spiritually from self-examination and repentance. Medicines were the means not the cause of recovery and for God to allow the means to work without the sufferer taking the proper intended lesson was a note of failure and disinheritance.¹⁵ For physicians and clerics alike, although with different emphases, bodily affliction and bodily healing were ultimately due to God and the success of natural means had a similar primary cause. The efficacy of any natural remedy depended on God and to expect such success without prayer was dangerously to ignore the need for such means to receive God's blessing.¹⁶

I will return to the cultural specificity of the phenomenon of the discernment and experience of demonic possession below but more immediate attention will be paid to specific relations. The concerns of John Cotta were noted above and he recurs in the literature relating to medicine, witchcraft and possession with sufficient frequency to be engaged with at greater length. Wear cites him on another occasion as a voice showing that learned physicians did not always reciprocate the expected combination of prayer and natural means demanded by clerics and again as disapproving of minster physicians.¹⁷ Michael MacDonald cites him as one blurring the boundaries between natural and supernatural causes, suggesting that 'dual causation was becoming less attractive to the medical profession' in the early seventeenth century.¹⁸ James Sharpe cites him on several occasions, not denying his belief in witchcraft but noting that 'he was sceptical about most popular beliefs surrounding it'.¹⁹ This is taken further in MacDonald's generally insightful

¹⁴ *Idem*, 'Spiritual physic', 105-6; Richard Sibbes, 'The Life of Faith,' in The Saints Cordials (London, 1629), 426.

¹⁵ Harley, 'Spiritual physic', 106; Grell and Cunningham, 'Introduction', 9.

¹⁶ Harley, 'Spiritual physic', 101; Wear, 'Puritan perceptions', 79-80.

¹⁷ Wear, Knowledge and Practice, 32-3; *idem*, 'Religious beliefs', 161.

¹⁸ Michael MacDonald (intro. and ed.), Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover case (London, 1991), xxxii.

¹⁹ James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (Harmondsworth, 1997), 83, 85, 99, quoted 82.

study of Richard Napier. One of Cotta's works is described as a lamentation of popular superstitions enhancing the rivals of professional physicians, these rivals being 'astrologers, clerical doctors, and cunning people'. He is put alongside Jorden and presented as a physician willing to diagnose many of the supposed symptoms of possession as the effects of epilepsy. He is not said to deny the existence of witchcraft and possession but to stress the rarity of such sufferings. He attacked 'technicians of the sacred' and is presented as representative of those bringing 'sceptical approaches to the powers of the unseen world'. He is later assumed to be among those doubting possession cases and presumed to be of accord with Napier when the latter dismissed one old woman claiming to be possessed as having epilepsy.²⁰

When Cotta is placed as an example of a 'sceptic', as an advocate of stricter division between medical and religious physic or as a representative of physicians in the camp of Jorden, the categories risk being given too hard and fast boundaries; at worst the discourse is in danger of being simplified to the point of misrepresentation. The purposes and operations of Cotta's two central works are worth exploring, partly to clarify what his concerns are and hence re-drawing the boundaries and partly to see how he argues, both in the grounds he employs and in the authorities he sees as serving his purposes most effectively. In this particular context the focus will be on the understanding of possession, although pertinent related issues will be touched upon. As a practising physician in the midlands, mostly in Northampton and later in Coventry, and a learned and pious man with patrons among the higher strata of society as well as familial connections through his mother to the Winthrops, Cotta would have been well aware of the controversies relating to Darrell and almost as certainly that around Glover. From 1604 he was resident in the parish of All Saints, Northampton, known for its puritan activism and Cotta was among those named in Star Chamber in 1607 as rumoured to have been spreading malicious

²⁰ Michael MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: madness, anxiety, and healing in seventeenth-century England (Cambridge, 1981), 198-9, 208, 211.

libels against ecclesiastical authorities.²¹ Taking this environment and such connections into account, the silences, the omissions in his citations will be seen to be as significant as the presences.

His most famous work, and most cited among modern historians, is The Triall of Witch-Craft and this deals at length with the presence of spirits, both good and bad spirits. His broad grounds showing the presence of spirits is when an individual has 'knowledge exceeding the knowledge of man' or performs 'works exceeding and transcendent, above the power and nature of corporall substances', these must issue from the knowledge or force of spirits. The question is not whether such spirits exist but how one can distinguish between good and bad spirits. For this his primary test is Scripture. He identifies the offices of 'either Angells or Messengers of God' as bringers of good news, tutelage to the saints, guidance, protection or defence to the elect, acting as 'ministring Spirits'. If a spirit does not fit into these offices, if these are not their works, they are not good spirits: 'all other are necessarily evill, and therefore divells'. Such spirits are permitted by God to descend upon humans, 'partly to deceive those wicked, which God in iudgement hath given over to be deceived of divells; partly, to quicken and stirre up the holy man, and to trie and proove him thereby, as hee did his faithful servant Iob'.²²

As far as Cotta is concerned, it is 'not destitute of easie prooffe, that there are many supernatural workes of the divell manifest to sense'. Satan's physical power is seen in driving herds of swine towards the sea and in rending and tearing the bodies of those possessed by him. He cast the possessed in the middle of a crowd and his voice was heard 'in so fearefull and marveilous manner cryed out in the possessed' and similarly upon departure from the same. All are taken from the Gospels, with the late addition of the conference of a young man with the devil as related in John Foxe's life of Martin Luther (27, 29). The second set of signs of the devil's presence is when the individual utters

²¹ ODNB, 'John Cotta'.

²² John Cotta, The Triall of Witch-Craft (London, 1616), 24-6. All references hereafter will be in parentheses in the text.

‘words of knowledge then hidden from men’, with the main example being the ability of the possessed to recognise the nature of Jesus before even the disciples knew. Similar evidence can be found in those suffering from those ‘beseiged, captivated and enchanted’ by ‘the Divels illusions’, although, following William Perkins, Cotta prefers to describe such as ‘obsessed’, as externally assailed by Satan as they lack physical symptoms of his ‘corporall presence’ (52-47, recte 53). However, to concentrate on trustworthy symptoms and the means by which they are vouched for is to stray from Cotta’s immediate purpose. For him, the main conclusion is that with all these proofs of Satanic power there was ‘no mention, no suspicion, no reason of mention, or suspicion of a Witch or Sorcerer’; the point is that ‘the divel alone was sole Agent’ (27).

He turns to the subject of imposture in a following chapter but not, it should be stressed, to suggest that counterfeiting should be the default assumption for those approaching those claiming or claimed to be possessed by the devil, merely that careful steps of caution should replace automatic credence. The first instance he cites is the French peasant girl, Marthe Brossier, who was taken by the Roman Catholic authorities in France and toured as a demonstration of the true church credentials evinced in successful exorcisms until her fraudulence was exposed (63).²³ The second is closer to home in a gentlewoman around 1608, ‘cured of divers kinds of convulsions, and other apoplecktike, epileptike, cataleptike, and paralytike fits, and other kinds of accidents of affinitie therewith’. She had almost been cured ‘by a reputed Wisard’ whose diagnosis of bewitchment was accepted and, as a consequence, ‘supposed Witches were accused, and after executed’ (66-67). She was not a knowing counterfeit, but wrongly diagnosed. She reappears when he addresses the question of ‘true iudgement’ needed ‘to distinguish first the wonders of nature unknowne to every mediocrity of knowing’, referring to ‘a formall

²³ Cotta cites ‘John de Serres’. probably referring to Jean de Serres, A general inventorie of the history of France from the beginning of that monarchie, unto the treatie of Veruins, in the year 1598 (London, 1607). On Brossier, see Sarah Ferber, Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France (London, 2004), 40-59.

Manuall' that he had written earlier, and I will return to this case at greater length below, because it constitutes part of the case for Cotta as being 'sceptical' about possession (74).

Having established the grounds for caution, Cotta goes on to give guidance to those wanting to enquire 'at Witches & Sorcerers, & Imposters', employing 'the light of Reason, which God hath given unto them'. There are two ways to detect the sick to 'be afflicted by the immediate supernaturall power of the Divell'. The first is by such things as are 'subject and manifest unto the learned Physician onely'. The means under this heading are dual. The first is 'when in the likenesse and similitude of a disease, the secret working of a supernaturall power doth hide itselfe', that is, when the symptoms displayed by the possessed take the forms of natural disease making the task one of identifying the ultimate source of the symptoms, natural symptoms caused by natural disease or natural symptoms caused by supernatural agency. The second aids this distinction in that such symptoms do not respond properly to 'naturall remedies or meanes according unto Art and due discretion applyed'. Such remedies either have no effect or prove completely counterproductive either 'against or above their nature'. 'The impossibilitie of either of these in usuall or ordinarie case of nature, doth certainly prove an infallibilitie of a superior nature, which assuredly therefore must needs be either Divine or Diabolicall' (69-70).

Cotta provides examples of such cases both taken from the work of the reformed Galenic physician, Jean François Fernel's De abditis rerum causis (1548). A young nobleman was 'by a wicked convulsion in an extraordinary [sic] maner long time tormented'. Physicians were unsure about the cause until they took into account the 'incredible velocitie of motion in the disease, impossible unto the force of man' and that he remained in full consciousness through his convulsions, which similarly 'according unto naturall causes was never seene, and is impossible'. The second instance was a man in an appearance of 'madnesse or phrensie, wherein he uttered and revealed things hidden,

and of profound science and revelation'. In both cases the diagnosis of diabolical empowerment was shown to be accurate as 'the Divell himselfe did shortly after justifie, declaring and professing himselfe the Author thereof in plainely expressed wordes' (71-72). The second way of detection, 'subiect unto the Physicion alone', is also illustrated by one of Fernel's patients, a man who was 'vehemently burning and thirsting' and hoped to find succour in an apple but was made hotter and drier by the supposed medication. Any remaining doubts that this was caused by 'the habitation of the Divel' were overcome by 'the sodaine and swift obsession of his minde, with frightful visions' which could not have been caused by the apple and therefore must have been caused by the Devil (72-73). This necessity of caution opens the space for Cotta to return to the gentlewoman mentioned earlier in order to warn of 'the multiplicity of consideration and circumspection' which should be brought to 'diligently attend the intricate maze and labyrinth of error, and illusion in their deceivable likenesses' which the Devil, for his own purposes, 'doth sometimes cunningly hide his owne workes'. Satan's gifts of deception were such that only a learned physician could be trustworthy in diagnosis through these means. 'How unfit it is here to admit every idiot for a Physician or Counsellor (as is too common both in these and other affaires of health) let wise men iudge' (74-75). Accepting the high claims for an educated monopoly of medical discernment, this is neither a claim that discredits the existence of diabolic possession (the very opposite, in fact) nor one that eliminates others from the field.

The second way to detect the authentically possessed is 'by such things as are subiect and manifest unto a vulgar view' (70). There are three particular symptoms which he allows to be sufficiently trustworthy to lay diagnosis. The first is regurgitation, attractive in the challenge it would make to fraudulent demoniacs.

In the time of their paroxismes or fits, some diseased persons have been seene to vomit crooked iron, coales, brimstone, nailes, needles, pinnes, lumpes of leade,

waxe, hayre, strawe, and the like, in such quantity, figure, fashion and proportion, as could never possibly passe downe, or arise up thorow the naturall narrownesse of the throat, or be contained in the unproportionable small capacity, naturall susceptibility and position of the stomake. These things at any time happening, are palpable and not obscure to any eye without difficulty, offering themselves to plaine and open viewe.

The explicitly cited sources are Antonio Benivieni, the groundbreaking Florentine pathologist of the late fifteenth century, Johann Weyer and Giovanni Battista Codronchi, an Italian specialist in forensic medicine, alongside 'others also, even in our time and countrey, have published to have seen by themselves' (76). The second symptom available to lay diagnosis is linguistic. Some 'sick persons have, in time of the exacerbations of their fits, spoken languages knowingly and understandingly', languages which would have been beyond them formerly and latterly. The 'safe' source for instances of such phenomena is, once again, Fernel. Finally, some have revealed knowledge of 'words, gestures, actions done in farre distant places', at the very moment they have been occurring. Cotta has known such cases himself and they have been 'seene by divers witnesses worthy credit in our countrey, in divers Sick people', citing the account of the possessed of Warboys as his only explicit example (76-77).

Before returning to the main concerns of Cotta, a few observations should be made about the absences from his citations and the trustworthy signifiers he identifies for diabolic possession. Given that he was a practicing physician it may seem unremarkable that most of the authors he cites are physicians, although he is not unfamiliar with the literature relating to demonology as shown by the appearance of Weyer and the witches of Warboys. The absence of Darrell et al. and Harsnet, as well as the earlier English precedents and, in particular, the more recent controversy over Mary Glover need considering, particularly the latter as any physician worth his salt would have been aware

of it. I would suggest, and it can be no stronger than that, that their complete absence and the predominant use of Scripture as a means to list credible symptoms was an active choice as a way to set out an acceptable set of measurements which would be as apolitical as possible. This seems a fair conclusion when there were available recent English cases with vomiting and claims to surprising linguistic abilities but to cite them would have been to have opened a tin of worms that it was in his interest to leave alone. Secondly, it should be made clear that the symptoms he marks as acceptable and particularly those judged to be sufficiently clearly supernatural to qualify as symptoms fit to be judged by the vulgar, are not said to be the only symptoms. His concern is with credible evidence so the emphasis lays on those more clearly definable as supernatural. This need for definable symptoms for judicial purposes is something that will recur in the course of actual cases after the coronation of James as king of England and his succession by Charles I. Finally, the shift in the assessment of who should be given credence in the discernment of spirits is slightly broader than the impression given so far. While he does stress that some fields are exclusive to learned physicians, that is not his final conclusion. While stressing the cunning and subtlety of Satan, his ability to hide, disguise and delude onlookers, it is not only learned physicians who are granted the means to discern. He is willing to admit that 'wise and understanding hearts doe oft discerne and discover them', that 'holy and godly men' can be trusted. Indeed he returns to his primary source, stating that Scripture requires 'Gods chosen children, to sift and trie the Spirits', to judge whether they are holy or diabolical (98-99).

Cotta maintains the distinction between godly and learned, and the vulgar and superstitious when he ends with tips for acceptable evidence in courts where witches accused of participating in possession are brought to trial. He broadens the register of means of revelation to associate Roman Catholic means of measurement and rescue with the vulgar and the superstitious. It is unacceptable to give any credit to bewitchment

revealed 'by beholding the face of a Priest, by being touched by hallowed oyntments, or liniments, by the vertue of exorcisation, of incense, of odours, of certaine mumbled sacred or mysticall words'; such means have been 'found worthlesse' and should not be included among those 'as doe in our time and countrey most prevaile in esteeme' (104). He is willing to give some credit to the ability of the possessed to identify a witch during a trance or fit and perhaps to reveal secret marks upon the witch's body or predict the witch's actions while they are far away. He is also willing to consider evidence taken from the unknown presence or touch of the accused. At the same time, his explanation stresses the merely secondary nature of the witch's agency. The possessed individual may have such abilities because they are drawn from the power of Satan's inhabitation, rather than from any innate or inherent power and that the witch has the powers only 'according unto contract or Covenant [with Satan] which those men do practise and produce' (114-16). Ultimately, his treatment of such spectral evidence is to give with one hand and take away with the other. It can be accepted as part of the investigation 'but whether these miraculous Revelations, with their answerable events, ought to be esteemed iust convictions of the persons thus by a supernaturall finger' is considered questionable. What should be stressed, according to Cotta, is that the agency of such 'holy and blessed power of working myracles (among which, the healing the Sicke or the possessed was not the least) was never of God dispensed' to the touch of 'wicked men, or Sorcerers or Witches'. All attention should be turned solely 'unto the immediate speciall glory, or extraordinary glorification of God' (117, 121).

It is worthwhile turning to Cotta's earlier work, A Short Discoverie of the Severall sorts of ignorant and unconsiderate Practisers of Physicke in England. This is partly to chase the earlier references to the Warwickshire gentlewoman mentioned earlier but also to add a little fine-tuning to the identification of those appropriate to discern spirits or their absence. In a chapter devoted to the discovery of witchcraft, the unnamed gentlewoman

appears after a fairly lengthy list of symptoms which can tempt onlookers to an inaccurate diagnosis of possession. He starts with the immediate physical impacts of 'falling sicknesses' but the particularity of the illnesses is left open with a warning that diseases may assail a body in combination. The physical symptoms are familiar from the shriekings, tossing about of bodies, 'their mouths distorted into divers formes, grinning, mowing, laughing, sometimes gaping wide open, sometimes close shutting', along with flailing and leaping about.²⁴ This is taken further to occupy more common ground with diabolic possession as we know it when he notes that in some diseases 'the mind is as strangely transported into admirable visions and miraculous apparitions'. The imagination suffers as much as, alongside, and consequent upon the body. Some will see things that are not there, or hunt for 'puppets and toyes'; they will fear and fly from water and fire when there is none close by; all this is 'working in the consistory of their owne braines'. 'Sometimes they complaine of divels or witches, lively describing their seeming shapes and gestures towards them'. The extraordinary mixture of diseases and symptoms, sometimes different combinations leaving different traces, naturally encourages speculation. Such mysterious behaviours 'not onely affright a common beholder, but sometimes also exercise the better iudgements' (61).

Here Cotta turns to the specific example from his own experience. He was called in by a gentleman whose daughter, under the age of thirteen, was 'afflicted in an unknowne and strange sodaine manner', unidentified by parents, friends and neighbours as well as physicians they had consulted. (Cotta notes in the margin that they were 'beneficed Physitions', that is, clerics practising medical as well as spiritual physic.) He reported a 'vehement shaking and violent casting forward of her head' every day from three or four in the afternoon until midnight, each shaking ending with a 'shrill inarticulate sound of these two sillables, ipha, ipha'. He concluded that these were no more than a particularly violent

²⁴ John Cotta, A Short Discoverie of the unobserved dangers of severall sorts of ignorant and unconsiderate Practisers of Physicke in England (London, 1612), 60. Hereafter references will be in the text.

set of 'sneezing and sternutations' possibly combined with epilepsy or some other 'species of convulsion'. The violence was causing a 'great oppression of the braine' with likely consequences for her imagination. He was so confident of his diagnosis and prognosis, and perhaps as a means of winning the ground of authoritative understanding, that he set down a prediction of her progress in writing. As predicted, her sufferings lessened over the next few weeks until he was suddenly called for again. After 'divers tortures of her mouth and face, with staring and rolling of her eyes, scrawling and tumbling upon the ground, grating and gnashing her teeth', the patient had now fallen into 'a deadly trance' with few signs of life, lessened breathing and a low pulse. When she emerged from such 'astonished sleepe', she was disconcerted, looking around herself 'as if she had fearefully or frightfully espied somewhat haggling about her', with her eyes staring, her mouth gaping and her arms rigidly stuck above her head. Cotta read the first symptoms as a cataleptic form of epilepsy and the second as a consequence of the oppression of her brain. As the trances continued intermittently with the fits, she remained insentient but 'her imagination still led her hands unto many and divers continuall actions', such as 'dressing and attiring the heads of such women as came neare unto her'. All this 'manifested the businesse and depraved motion of her oppressed imagination' as was evinced by her complete lack of senses beyond feeling and, as Cotta put it, the imagination 'is mistresse and great commander of all the senses' (61-63).

Cotta gave her 'some quicke medicines' and she, at least temporarily, regained her speech and understanding, giving voice to 'divers short, but devout invocations of God'. Her speech disappeared again, but her understanding remained and she communicated by pen, 'and therewithall an holy mind and thoughts rare in such an impe..., oft blessing God, and therein honouring her vertuous and carefull education'. Over the next few weeks her condition gradually improved, with her fits lessening in their frequency. Now there were none in the daytime although the level of improvement should not be overstated as Cotta

still recorded 'onely foure or five short fits every night', the 'onely' either an optimistic reading or a measure of a remarkable frequency before this. The fits were less vehement and she suffered '(as was before feared)' a palsy removing the feeling from her legs and one side of her body, 'being the ordinary terminations of an Apoplexie, and therefore foredoubted'. She was sent to Bath and Cotta gave instructions to her physician there and she gradually recovered over the following months (63-5).

This particular instance is taken as a case-study for the discernment of spirits, malevolent or otherwise. Even after her recovery there was still great doubt, 'not onely among the common and vulgar sort, but divers also learned', whether she should be ranked among those whom '(by the permission of God) divels and witches have had a power, or whom nature and the course of naturall diseases have thus in maner aforesaid afflicted'. Cotta 'must needs incline unto the latter' as she showed nothing that he not seen or read about beyond natural illnesses (65). It further confirmed his conviction that the parents could find none upon whom 'to cast the suspition of bewitching'. He goes on to set out the three 'most certaine and chiefe proofes of witchcraft & divellish practises upon the sick', familiar from above. The first is the manifestation of 'some reall power, act or deed, in, above, and beyond reason and naturall cause'. The second is counter-productive medicine. The third is anything in the knowledge or speech of the diseased 'discovering a ravishment, possession or obsession of their minds or spirits by any infernall inspiration'. All three were absent and he particularly noted the absence of any linguistic skills or prophesies that might show diabolical agency (66-67). The last possibility of proof considered is that 'certaine witches lately dying for sorcerie, have confessed themselves to have bewitched this gentlewoman'. He is willing to accept this as evidence of the self-condemnation of the accused but not as 'sufficient eviction of the witchcraft it selfe'. The confession depends upon the word of Satan and learned men know 'that the subtil serpent and deceiver the divell doth usually beguile, delude and deceive those that trust in

him by his iugling collusions, perswading oft times those actions and events to be his gratification of their malicious affections, which are indeed the very workes of nature'. A confession depending on one 'whose nature, custome and propertie is and ever hath bene to lie and deceive, is a meane, poore and uncertaine prooffe of witchcraft'. The confession proved the witch to be in collusion with Satan but not guilty of the witchcraft specifically. 'Her death therefore doth satisfie the law for her offence, but is no sound information of the iudgement of the witchcraft' (69).

Cotta's conclusion is that this patient was not possessed or suffering from any kind of bewitchment. This was not because such possessions do not happen, not because that idea was beyond his mindset of possibilities but because she failed to fulfil the criteria he had selected as indubitable evidence of infernal interference. He demanded a rigorous application of the template he laid out, not in order to eliminate diagnoses of demonic possession, but to make them more certain. As he stated plainly, he desired 'onely to moderate the generall madnesse of this age, which ascribeth unto witchcraft whatsoever falleth out unknowne or strange unto a vulgar eye' (59). His target was not the discourse of possession or the perception of possession per se, so much as the cunning folk, the mountebanks and quacks who used witchcraft as an easy explanation for things beyond their ken. Where he included clerics acting as medics under the same umbrella it was not because medicine and religion should not meet - his own works show that to have espoused such a view would have been hypocritical - but because those who met his abjuration practiced without sufficient education in medicine. In a sense, this could be seen to be the silent triumph of part of Samuel Harsnet's efforts in that Cotta was insistent that a profitable sense of suspicion should be brought to each potential possessed, not a scepticism about the possibility of possession but a sense of suspicion.

A further advantage of a more critical reading of Cotta is the influence of his works as well as the texts in themselves. He was, as will become clear, a central influence in the

primary authority in the judicial literature relating to witchcraft and possession for the reign of Charles I, that of Richard Bernard. Bernard's A Guide to Grand-lury Men deservedly gets attention in the historiography of witchcraft and demonic possession but I will address his advice in a slightly more detailed manner than the norm in order to test his often implicit positioning among the sceptics. James Sharpe notes his approval of James VI & I's record of discovering counterfeits and his disdain for ascribing to witchcraft 'whatever falleth out unknowne, or strange to vulgar sence'.²⁵ Michael MacDonald presents him as negotiating a difficult path between James and Reginald Scot which would place him very much on the sceptical side.²⁶ This taken furthest by Philip C. Almond when he places him following Harsnet who 'drove an Anglican wedge of secularism between papists and Puritans' as one encouraging medical explanations for the symptoms of possession, adding Cotta as one of a like mind in the footnote.²⁷ The encouragement to re-read Bernard's Guide in this context receives a two-fold fillip in that he was, at an early stage in his ministerial career, a minor contributor to the efforts to dispossess William Sommers. In addition, the epistle setting out the conception of the work is making a plea for his own reputation. The previous summer at the assizes in Taunton, he was consulted in a trial concerning accusations of witchcraft based on 'the strange fitts then, and yet continuing upon some iudged to be bewitched by those which were then also condemned and executed for the same'. Bernard was not convinced that they were possessed and, based on a misapprehension of his 'upright meaning painestaking with Bull', a rumour spread suggesting that he favoured witches, 'or were of Master Scots erroneous opinion, that Witches were silly deceived Melancholikes'.²⁸ Hence issues of possession, the

²⁵ Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, 49, 64-5. Sharpe does not note that this disdain is more or less lifted from the passage from Cotta's Short Discoverie, 59.

²⁶ MacDonald, Witchcraft and Hysteria, I-li.

²⁷ Philip Almond, Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 2004), 6-7.

²⁸ Richard Bernard, A Guide to Grand-lury Men (London, 1627), 'Epistle Dedicatory'. Hereafter references will appear in the text.

discernment of possession, and the relation between diabolism and medicine are at the heart of his interest (and self-interest) and are consequently central to the treatise itself.

It is worth paying some attention to the case as, in addition to being interesting in itself, it provides a better sense of what Bernard was responding to. In August Edward Bull and Johane Greddie were indicted at Taunton assizes for bewitching Edward Dynhem. They were also indicted for the bewitching of a gentlewoman who was 'taken with a shakinge in one side cryinge alwayes Bull, Bull, Bull' and a man who was 'tormented like the others, but hee onely speake to and for himselfe in his owne proper voice seeminge to contend with the Divell exceedingly', but Dynhem dominates the record and seems to have been more influential in setting out the issues Bernard addressed. The record opens with physical symptoms and, while they do recur, they are not the centre of attention. He was often in a 'Traunce or swoone' for two or three hours, lying as though he was dead and perhaps rigid or heavy in that '6 men beinge not able to move his head any way'. Observers reported 'somewhat to beate upp & downe in his Stomacke' and he did not respond to needles stuck into his hands and nostrils, with no blood produced by the pricking. More importantly, in his trances they heard two voices besides his own. One was 'a verie pleasant voice & shrill' which onlookers identified as 'bon. gen.', a good spirit and the other was 'deadly and hollowe' which 'they terme mal gen', a bad spirit. When these voices spoke his lips and tongue were not seen to move, but the third voice, his own, had normal motion.

Most of the record consists of detailed conversation between the spirits, with 'bg', 'bon. gen', interrogating 'mg', 'mal gen' with very occasional contributions from Dynhem, represented as 'homo', as man. For the sake of clarity and brevity, I will allow them to keep their 'stage names', although that would, as will be seen, that would have annoyed Bernard. Mg asks how Dynhem came to be possessed and by whom; bg claims to not be allowed to tell. When bg tells homo to ask again, homo responds, saying 'Come come

prithe tell me who hath bewitched me'. Bg describes them and, upon further query tells that 'Shee is at her house & he is at a taverne', possibly in Yeovil. Pressed for their names, first by mg and then by homo, mg states 'Nay that I will not tell'. Asked again, mg compromises and gives their first names as Johane and Richard; pressed again, first by mg and then homo asking, 'Come, come prithe tell em what are their names', mg yields and adds Greedie and Bull. Dynhem sent bystanders to the house of Greedie and she was found, wearing the clothes as stated and she was 'apprehended upon suspicion'.²⁹

The conversation resumed with bg enquiring if the two suspects were witches and, this being affirmed, how they came to be so. Apparently this was by descent, 'From the grandmother to the mother and from the mother to the children' with a bind joining them 'to us, and wee to them' and bg said he might seal it if he could have a look and liked it. Sworn to secrecy, Dynhem 'held up his hands before his face as if he were readinge of somewhat but his eyes & lippes were shutt fast, and casting downe his hande againe hee sighed' and bg said, 'Alas oh pittiful, pittful, pittiful, what 8 seales bloody seales 4 dead & 4 alive, oh miserable, miserable, miserable wicked people so dame their soules'. Dynhem asked why they had bewitched him and was told that it was because he called Greedie a witch. When he pointed out that she was a witch, mg responded with, 'Yea but thou should not have said soe'. It seems Bull came on board because Greedie was not strong enough on her own. Bg returned to asking about Bull's whereabouts and was told that he was in a nearby field; searchers were sent and signs of him sitting in the grass were found with reports of him running away. Bg wanted to know if 'they' had killed a Christian and was told that they had and that his name was Edward. Mg promised to give his surname in six days, at which time Dynhem 'was tormented agayne', and Edward's surname was given as Chilcott. Dynhem remembered such a man who 'dyed very strangely one yeare since'.

²⁹ BL Add Ms 36674 f. 189. There is no note made of the difference between Bull's Christian name in the indictment and in mg's revelation but there may have been an error in the opening, as the name given initially is the same as Dynhem's.

Further tips where requested about Bull's location and searchers found that he had been recently seen where they were sent.³⁰

At this point the conversation became rather more focussed on the spiritual than the practical. Mg was asked why he had taken Christ to the cliff and tempted him, replying, not unreasonably, with, 'Why? If I had wonne him all the world had byn myne'. Mg stated that he would save Dynhem's soul, presumably for himself, and the two voices agreed to compete for it. 'Then there was some sore strivinge wthi in him as they thought hee would have byn torne in peeces and at length hee groaned'. Mg claimed to 'have gotten the Conquest' with bg pointing out, perhaps slightly petulantly, that if 'I had not yeelded unto thee thou wouldest have torne him in peeces'. Flush with victory, mg agreed, claiming that if bg had not succumbed, Dynhem's 'gutte should have rotted in his bellie, his tongue have fallen out of his mouthe, & his eyes of his head'. Bg made the point that mg might have won his body but that Dynhem's soul was intact, 'yet thou shalt not have that parte in him, w^{ch} god hath reserved for himselfe'. Mg boasted that he would win his soul when he tormented him eight more times but bg refused to let him have his will and limited him to four more efforts, probably of small comfort to Dynhem. Changing tactics, bg offered to take the seal and join his rival if he would answer three questions. Mg agreed and answered 'God' to the first two queries as to who created the world and who created mankind. However, when asked the third question, 'Wherefore was Christe Jesus his pretious blood shed', he simply said, 'I[]le noe more of that'. 'And therewith hee was flunge upp round togeather but on a suddaine, hee sprung out with sore violence that he was quite out of the bedde feete all save his head & shoulders'.³¹

Upon this, mg told Dynhem not to go to church the next Sunday, encouraged to do so by bg but warned by mg that if 'thou goe thou shalt see what I will doe'. He was on his way there but when he came to one end of a bridge, 'his fitte tooke him and soe violently 6

³⁰ BL Add Ms 36674 ff. 189-90.

³¹ BL Add Ms 36674 ff. 190-1.

men could scarce save him from the water', apparently trying to cast himself into the river. He recovered and attended church but was troubled when he returned to the bridge. This time, 'his heeles [were] stricken uppe at least a dozen tymes and times rysinge higher then his head, & hee falinge downe exceedingly brused'. Making it home, over the next few days he was tormented again. Aware that the spirits were returning he got a prayer book and was at prayer upon their arrival. Mg started trying to purchase his soul, making promises of money and infinite success at gambling. When Dynhem followed bg's advice and resisted these temptations the latter cried 'Laudes, laudes, laudes', mg tried one last attempt, crying, 'Ladies, ladies, ladies, thou shalt have ladies enough & if thou wilt they shall come to bedd to thee'. Apparently realising that the book was empowering the resistance, mg tried to make him cast it away, with bg telling him to keep it.

Then he clasped both his handes in the booke & layd it uppon his heart, and forthwith the beatinge in his Stomacke, strucke the booke out of his hand and hee startinge uppe caught the booke agayne & holde it, under the bedd cloathes so faste, as 6 men could not take it out of his hand, & anon they heard victorie, victorie, victory, and presently after they heard a trumpett sound soe playne as all they in the roome heard it to make the sweetest musicke that ever was heard.

They returned to the mundane, asking about Bull's location and, as mg reported, he was to be found in a ditch but, seeing his pursuers, he fled again. Bg told Dynhem to waken, 'and soe his agonie left him for a season but came to him agayne'. The last tip-off revealed Bull to be in his house and he was found in his bed and apprehended. Mg made one last claim for Dynhem's soul and was told it would not be his. There was a pregnant pause, and at length mg said, 'Well nowe farewell I will no more torment thee but the spiritte of Bull & Greedie shall torment thee forever'. Dynhem groaned 'exceedingly, &

even rent to peeces', he came to himself with no memory of anything done or spoken by or around him in the times of his trances, 'but onely hee felt his bodie sore and payned'.³²

Cotta appears very early in A Guide where Bernard explains his concern to discourage the causal get-out clause of witchcraft as in the quote above. He states his intention to lay out the 'strange and wonderfull diseases' identified by 'a learned Phisicion' with the language slightly modified 'for common capacities' (11-2). He starts with catalepsia, the phenomenon of being suddenly struck stiff and senseless, with the eyes open and no difficulty in breathing, adding Christopher Wirtzung's compendium to his authorities and the instance of 'one Master Bakers of Coventry' who suffered this way and asking what 'common conceit... but would thinke there were Witchcraft here practized?' (12-13).³³ This is followed by two variations, one being apoplexia and the other unnamed with 'one Master Rosin of Northampton' named as being 'taken for the space of two dayes, and two nights' (13). This provides the space for the reproduction of the physical symptoms of the falling sickness which prefaced Cotta's example of the Warwickshire case, and the mental consequence, with Bernard's only addition being a marginal 'Note this' next to Cotta's description of the patient's mind being 'strangely transported into visions and apparitions: so as sometimes they complaine of Witches and Devils' (14-16). This is succeeded, naturally by a point by point reproduction of the gentleman's daughter, reduced to a bullet point format for the ease of the reader (16-18). He remains present, albeit not cited, at the end of this chapter when Bernard moves on to the complex relationship between the devil and natural disease. He sets out the task, that Satan can hide his and the witch's practices, that 'with naturall disease Satan may also intermix his supernaturall worke', thus demanding means to see through their 'deceivable likenesses'. However, 'the Divell cannot so mixe his workes with a natural disease, but the same may

³² BL Add Ms 36674 ff. 191-2.

³³ Christopher Wirtzung, Praxis Medicinæ universalis; Or, A generall Practise of Physicke (London, 1598), 136, 'Of Numness and Astonishing'. Bernard cites it as 'D. Mason in his pract. of Phys.'; this version was translated and corrected by Dr Jacob Mosan.

be detected in the manifest oddes' citing Martin Del Rio's Disquisitionum Magicarum libri sex but going on to recycle Cotta's suggestions for ways in which to discern the differences and using the same instance from Fernel (26-28).³⁴

The following chapter is a lengthy encouragement to an air of suspicion being brought to those perceived, particularly by the vulgar and the popish, as suffering from possession. The opening makes clear the scale of the judgement required. There may be no natural disease or Satanic presence in the body of the possessed 'but a meere counterfeiting of actions, motions, passions, distortions, writhings, tumblings, tossings, wallowings, foamings, alteration of speech and voice, with g[h]astly staring with the eyes, trances and relation of visions afterwards' (29). This serves as a preface to a selection of examples, the selection as much noteworthy for its absences as its presences. The first is Marwood, one of the possessed of Denham, 'a confederate with Weston, Dibdale, and other Popish Priests', citing Harsnet's Declaration,³⁵ and the second an unidentified lewde girle at Wells', seeking revenge upon 'a poore Woman' and so pretending so successfully 'as shee made many to wonder, and some to weepe, as if she had been possessed' (30). This leads into the Boy of Bilson who will appear below and then Mildred Norrington, the counterfeit from 1574 taking the account from Reginald Scot's Discovery (32-34). The greatest length is given to Marthe Brossier noted above as one of Cotta's examples, although Bernard's lengthier treatment suggests a different, or additional source.³⁶ The selected counterfeits are all poor, popish, or female, often a combination of them. This selection, with absences that would test the conclusion, provides the evidence for Bernard's explanation of their fraudulence.

³⁴ Del Rio was a Jesuit prodigy of Spanish stock working in Louvain. Disquisitionum was published between 1599 and 1601 and was influential on both sides of the religious divide, being sufficiently authoritative to be used in the Salem trials in the late seventeenth century.

³⁵ Samuel Harsnet, A declaration of egregious popish impostures (London, 1603).

³⁶ The likeliest candidate is Michel Marescot, A true discourse, upon the matter of Martha Brossier of Romorantin pretended to be possessed by a devill (London, 1599). It was translated by Abraham Hartwell and commissioned by Richard Bancroft as part of the publicity in the wake of Darrell's downfall.

Now of these counterfeits, some play their part for gaines, as the last named: some for revenge, as the wench at Wels: some to advance Poperie, as did Marwood: some to please others, which would have it so...: some of a pleasure they take to gull spectators, and to bee had in admiration, when they perceive their feates, and devised trickes to get credit, and by relation to bee made much more then they be... (38-39).

One of the consequences of this selection, one that may not have been the driving force for Bernard's argument but that sat alongside his own interest in restoring his reputation, is that the spectators who are gulled do not fare well. Some onlookers are 'filled with fancyfull imaginations, some are possessed with feare' and so tend to 'thinke they heare and see more then they doe' and their stories grow embellished. The responsible observer would visit several times, 'to see and consider with iudgement, and with mature deliberation such deceiveable resemblances' (39) Thus a by-product of this analysis is to place Bernard's suspicion at Taunton on the side of the mature, with judgement and at least suggest that those expressing disapproval of his doubt were among the gullible.

What is more important to gain a complete understanding of Bernard and the template he was working to establish for judicial practice, is to pay attention to the rest of this chapter. He starts with a set of warning to members of the jury in danger of being too eager to return a verdict when there is the possibility of fraudulence. They should employ 'very wary circumspection', 'lest they be deceived by a counterfeit'. They should not take on trust witnesses suddenly beholding 'such unaccustomed strange feates', nor trust 'their simple apprehension' without any suspicion that 'therein is deceit'. Such trust is to risk accepting 'their easie believe', lacking 'diligent search to dive further into the deceit'. Generally they should be cautious to accept 'the relation of that that they have seene & heard, with not a few additions of their owne mistake', taking the risk to succumb to 'the credulousnesse of too too many, receiving these reports as true, and over-confidently

averring them so to be' (40-41). From planting the seeds of suspicion, or at least reserved judgement, Bernard sets out three modes of enquiry to exercise before credit is given to the testimony. The first is to test the witnesses, to ask how well they can discern 'betweene reall and counterfeit acts' and the criteria they use to do so. The second is to turn to the supposed bewitched, to ask how they have been tested, and also by whom and for how long. Then they are to be pro-active, to gain 'still better satisfaction', by 'their owne endeavour, to discover the iuggling tricks' (41-42). To add a final ingredient to the complexity of discernment, he returns to natural illness. Starting with Mohammed, 'the Turkish false prophet', who apparently used his epilepsy as a means to convince his followers of his spiritual visions, he warns of cunning counterfeits similarly using natural diseases to help them aid their efforts. 'So some with melancholy affected, may become pale and meager, and being subtile in their invention, will thereof make use to play their pranks'. To make more certain assessment advice from a physician is suggested and where that is not available, 'let them use the learned mens helpe and advice in these things' (47-48). This is, of course, a return to Cotta's refrain of trusting the learned rather than the vulgar.

Having reached a point where suspicion about claims of possession has surely been established in the reader, Bernard sets out nine clear points through which members of the jury can 'acquaint themselves with the true signes of such as bee possessed, so to discover the dissembler'. Although he does not cite Cotta, the symptoms and even the phraseology are very much shared and it may not be unreasonable to suggest it is lifted, with a couple of additions. The most pertinent point is that the first, and often only, port of call is Scripture (which in itself would admittedly have impact on the turn of phrase). The first symptom is extraordinary strength, accompanied with 'exceeding fiercenesse, to be able to pull chaines in sunder, and to break fetters in pieces, to cut themselves with stones, to teare off their cloathes, & to go naked; to runne into solitary and hideous places,

and not to be tamed: Here is a Devil'. The second is when one is taken up and, without suffering pain, cast violently among a company. The third is a tendency to cast him or herself into water or fire 'to be destroyed'.³⁷ The next is wallowing, foaming, gnashing of teeth, along with being 'rent and throwne to and fro' and pining away, all for a very long time. Sight, hearing and speech are 'taken from one strangely'. Related to the fourth, when 'one is violently tormented', there is more foaming and 'suddenly to crie out'. The seventh is speaking in an extraordinary manner, 'not after their owne naturall or ordinary course of understanding', mostly extraordinary perceptions. He adds xenoglossia with the instance from Fernel that Cotta used along with a reference to Bodin and that 'Melanchton saith, that hee saw a Dæmoniacke woman in Saxony, who could neither write nor reade, and yet spake both Greeke and Latine'. The eighth criterion is the ability to predict or to reveal hidden things, adding Johann Sleiden's account of 'Anabapisticall Maides' in his Commentary to the example of the pythoiness in Acts. Finally behaviour upon dispossession when 'holy means is used, as Christ did by his Word and power'. If they are genuinely possessed they will 'cry with a lowd voice, to be sore torne, & at the spirits departing, to be left for dead, in the iudgement of the beholders' (49-52).

The first subject in chapter four is the question of agency and starts with material familiar from Cotta. It is far too commonly held 'amongst the vulgars, yea, and amongst not a few persons of better capacitie, that if any be vexed by a spirit, that such are bewitched'. This is not the case as is plainly evinced through the Gospels, where the miseries inflicted by 'the divell and uncleane spirits' are given with 'not a word of any Witch, to set the Divell on worke' (53-54). This takes Bernard away from questions of judicial evidence and the standards of testimony, back to his godly roots. If those afflicted or whose friends are afflicted were aware that 'Satan may be the sole worker' there would or should be four consequences. It would make 'Atheisticall hearts' shake off their spiritual security when

³⁷ The guidance given by Bernard is not quite so clear in that he simply states: 'When one is Lunaticke, taken off and cast into the fire, or water to be destroyed', but my 'exegesis' is from the cited texts of Matt. 17:15 and Mark 9:22.

they become aware of 'a fiend of Hell, not sent of a Witch, but of God, to be their tormentor'. It would make their first port of call for assistance to be God as 'none but hee can overrule and command Satan'. They would look into themselves for the reasons why God has chosen to send such trials. This would be an encouragement to use 'holy meanes, such onely as God alloweth of, as remedies to helpe them', such as fasting and prayer, allied with 'a searching of their wayes, and the reformation of their lives'. Appreciation of the secondary nature of a witch, if there was a witch involved, would encourage concentration on the primary cause. They would not look for vengeance upon Satan, 'as the vaine generation of men labour to bee revenged upon suspected Witches'. They 'flye with violence, like raging Tygers in heart, thinking to remove a Divell from them'. By concentrating on the devil alone, acting with God's permission, would prevent them from 'neglecting irreligiously the former sanctified meanes for their comfortable deliverance' (58-59). This is a matter he returns to at the very end of the first book, answering the query of why it is that, despite the appearance of witches in Scripture, 'bodily harmes' are never there ascribed to them. This is because Scripture never assigns sole responsibility to any who 'cannot do of themselves, without the helpe of some other'. Witches are 'Satans slaves', without the capacity to fulfil their evil wishes of their own accord 'but the Divell doth it for them'. In addition, this is part of the 'speciall wisdomes from God, to teach all that bee godly' to distinguish between the evils of the witch and the actions of the devil. This will make the practice of witchcraft recognised as evil in itself rather than 'merely' detesting their actions which depend upon the devil (84-85).

Having addressed the issue of causation and culpability, Bernard offers a question and answer section within which he lays out the broader 'rules' of possession and dispossession. The predominant source is, once again, Scripture, with a few external guides to be noted. 'What is it the Divell can doe, if God be pleased to give him leave?' Del Rio is cited, bringing focus to bear on Genesis 3:1 and the temptation of Eve. This shows

that the devil can enter a 'dumbe creature' and give it voice, offering conference if any are willing to listen. He chooses 'the subtillest creature to deceive by, and the weaker vessell to confer with' and he is a very effective negotiant (62). Having set forth Scripturally approved symptoms, Bernard tells onlookers to be wary as Satan can 'bewitch the people, making them beleeeve, that his works are the great power of God' and that the tongue of the possessed can 'utter great praises of the servants of God'. Scripture is not especially helpful when asked what sorts of people may be possessed; the categories, with the references, are as follows: 'Children', 'Young folkes', 'Men', 'Women', 'such as bee the elect of God', 'A daughter of Abraham', and 'Mary Magdalen'. It is only slightly more specific on the number of devils occupying the possessed and the possible length of their inhabitation. There may be seven, there may be more, there may be a whole legion and their presence may be for 'a long time', 'from a child, till one be growne', 'even 18. yeeres' (67-68).

The argument gets more complicated when he is asked whether a devil and a good angel may be together in one person at the same time, an issue central to the Bull and Greedie case. He is not convinced that this is likely as good angels tend to act as 'ministring Spirits' about, but not within those in need of guidance. Similarly, he has heard and read that 'a Divell may bee ventriloquus' but never the same of a good angel. In any case, there is no need for a good angel to plead the cause of a 'godly man' against the devil, 'he having the holy Spirit, and by him the Word of God, for instruction and comfort'. The idea of a good angel within 'an uncleane person, a vaine and loose liver, and one of an unreformed life, sensuall, voide of Spirit of Grace' is beyond 'all warrant of holy Scripture'. He gives voice to an objection that two have been heard in a single person, the devil in a great voice and a small voice pleading against him. He can see no reason for the devil being unable to counterfeit two voices and simply because one seems to be on the right side does not mean it is to be trusted. He cites the example of arguments between

Verrin and Beelzebub among the possessed at Loudun, in the account by Sébastien Michaelis.³⁸ Despite the blasphemies uttered by Beelzebub, the works of his companion are worse in that he was 'soothing up the vaine man [Urbain Grandier] in a foolish conceite of Gods great favour, to witnesse him to be his by an Angell, to whom the Lord hath not vouchsafed his Spirit to witnesse his Adoption, in the worke of Regeneration. A very illusion' (69-71).

The only task that remains is to give guidance on how to cast the devil out from the possessed. The answer is, not surprisingly, prefaced by a number of caveats regarding wrong means. Satan cannot be cast out 'by any power in, or of man'; his strength is such that 'man cannot binde, or overmaster' him. Neither is Satan to be cast out by 'any force of Popish Exorcismes'. Not only are there records of such exorcisms being applied over a year with no success, but he turns one instance of Bodin against the author's intention. One devil refused to emerge upon the order of the exorcist, saying that he would not come out for any man, but for a Priest named Montanus who was a Magician', thus showing the lack of respect for the priest's words. In any case, if their rites were effectual, 'what neede they set up so many Counterfeits, to pretend to bee possessed, on whom they might shew their imagined power?' Neither is he to be cast out by any magic as this is the devil's invention. It is true that cunning men may seem to be successful: 'hee may voluntarily yeeld, to uphold the divellish Art'. This is an illusion; he cannot be forced out by this means, 'because both the Art and the practice is from his owne selfe'. Devils can be cast out 'onely by the finger of God', only 'by the power of his holy Spirit' (71-73).

The means to 'have this aide of the power of God' is by fasting and prayer, as Scripture shows. This was the practice of the primitive church, not by exorcism, 'as even Bodinus a Papist doth witnesse', citing the authorities of Augustine, John Chrysostom,

³⁸ Sébastien Michaelis, The Admirable Historie of the Possession and Conversion of a penitent woman (London, 1613); the course of the possession and the consequent trial as well as the role played by Michaelis can be followed in Michel de Certeau, The Possession at Loudun, trans. by Michael B. Smith (Chicago, 2000).

Clement, the fifth century church historian Salminius Hermias Sozomenus (whose grandfather knew a neighbour who was dispossessed by Hilarion) and 'the practices of Saint Hilarion, who without the host, without adiuration, without questioning the Divell, by onely using prayer to God, cast out the Divell'. In those times demoniacs were brought into the congregation and public prayers were made for dispossession. He notes that 'such meanes have prevailed in these our dayes, and warrant wee have from Christ and his ancient Church to use the same, and not these superstitious, idolatrous, and very diabolicall practices of the Romish Antichristians'. Finally, he encourages a wary eye to be kept on the manner of the expulsion. The Scriptural examples show pain felt and unwillingness to leave displayed. If the spirits leave without 'fasting and prayer performed in faith' then there is cause for concern. Such apparent willingness means that there is 'great cause to suspect (if there be no counterfeiting) that the Divell doth, one way or other, some greater mischief, or else intendeth to returne againe, with seven other worse then the first', citing Math. 12:45 (73-76). (This, it should be noted, added to the evidence that Dynhem had not been authentically possessed.) That Bernard ends with an orthodox guide to dispossession by fasting and prayer should come as no surprise; during his service as vicar of Worksop, Nottinghamshire, he was involved in the dispossession of one appropriately named John Fox.³⁹

It is appropriate to end this section with an account of this dispossession, not least because it closes the discussion of Bernard with a pastoral case that runs counter to his reputation as a sceptic regarding possession. The possession cannot be closely dated with any certainty but it was while he was vicar of Worksop so between 1601 and 1612. He was assisted by Henry Langley, his former curate, who at this point was rector of Tresswell. This potentially narrows the range of dating as he took the post in 1611 and

³⁹ G. Andrews Moriarty, 'Bernard of Epworth, co. Lincoln', New England Historical and Genealogical Register 113 (1959), 190. Moriarty has Bernard as 'supervising' the dispossession and suggests, without reference, that a contemporary account was published, but if there was an earlier account than the one used here which gives Bernard a stronger role than he is given here, I have not been able to identify it.

held it until his death in 1636. It was probably later than Bernard's earlier, more radical phase as the main protagonist was Richard Rothwell during the latter's time in the midlands. It is noteworthy that both ministers were clients of Isabel Darcy who was encountered earlier in the case of Katherine Wright, as Isabel Foljambe.⁴⁰

John Fox lived around Nottingham, obviously a sensitive place to have a possession, and 'had no more learning then enabled him to write and read'. He would be thrown to the ground and lose all control of his limbs, although it is unclear whether this was paralysis or uncontrolled agitation. His body was 'turned as black as pitch in those fits' and he spoke with a voice from his belly, literally ventriloquism, and which was 'sometimes out of his throat, and sometimes out of his mouth, his lips not moving'. According to Stanley Gower, who provided the biography, he 'lay thus (if I mistake not) some years' and received many visits and prayers from Bernard and Langley, with Fox writing down his temptations when he was struck dumb and they responding with answers and advice.⁴¹

On one occasion there were a number of people with Fox and through him the devil told those present, 'Yonder comes Rothwel: but I will make a fool of him before he goes'. At this the company looked out of the window and saw Rothwell about a quarter of a mile off. Upon his arrival, he spoke to the gathering, saying, 'Thou sayest there is no possession, what thinkest thou now? Here is a man opens not his lips, and yet he speaketh?' The devil warned the company, 'Say nothing to me of this man, for I tell thee he is damned; and he added thereto many fearful blasphemies'. Rothwell naturally dismissed the devil as the father of lies and assured listeners of Fox's salvation. The devil disagreed, stating that, 'He is a murtherer, and thou knowest no murtherer must come into Heaven', which Rothwell countered with the example of David and the prayers of Christ for those who orchestrated his crucifixion. Once the minister dismissed allegations of the lack

⁴⁰ See above, 44-4.

⁴¹ Samuel Clarke, The Lives of Two and Twenty English Divines (London, 1660), 91-4 from whence all quotes are taken. Gower knew Rothwell later in his career, having lived with him after he left university. Rothwell told him the story himself and he had also heard it from 'divers others to whom the story was known, that are yet alive', 91.

of repentance on Fox's part, the devil accused him of murder. Rothwell replied with what we might regard as special pleading: 'Thou liest again, I have fought the Lords Battels against his known enemies, the idolatrous and bloody Papists in Ireland, Rebels to the Queen my Sovereign, by whose authority I bore armes against them; otherwise I have killed no man'.⁴² This was insufficient for the devil who, after swearing and blaspheming, told him, 'Thou didst murther one this day, as thou camest hither, and there is one behind you will justifie it'. This nonplussed Rothwell and the devil burst with 'hideous laughter' and explained to the audience. 'Look you now, did not I tell you I would make Rothwel a fool? and yet it is true, thou didst murther one this day; for as thou camest over the Bridge (which he named) there I would have killed thee, and there thy horse trod upon a flie and killed it'. Rothwell admitted he had been beguiled by this and asked for the 'wisdome to discern, and power to withstand all thy delusions', expressing his confidence in God's ability to do both this and to deliver Fox.

The devil's tactics changed and a further symptom of possession followed, an intellect and linguistic skill above the expectations of a man with little learning.

The Devil blasphemed fearfully, quoted many Scriptures out of the Old and New Testament, both in Hebrew and in Greek, cavilled and played the Critick, and backed his Allegations with sayings out of the Fathers and Poets in their own language, which he readily quoted, so that the company trembled to hear such things from one that understood no learning, and that moved neither tongue nor lip.

Rothwell found himself empowered by God to expose the 'devils sophistry' and the devil refused to talk to him any longer, denouncing him as 'BOLD ROTHWEL'. Rothwell turned to the people, refusing the credit and drawing their attention to the power of God; a moment earlier he had fallen for the devil's beguilement but now God had struck the devil dumb. He asked them to turn to prayer and thereby to ask Him to drive the devil out. The

⁴² Rothwell had served among Essex's army in Ireland in Elizabeth's later years.

devil claimed that he would distract them by being very noisy as God would not hear a distracted prayer. Rothwell was willing to take up the challenge.

I look to find thee as great an enemy in this duty now, as I have done heretofore, but I fear not thy threat, I know thou art limited; God heareth the Prayers of the upright, hath promised to give his Spirit to supply infirmities, therefore in confidence of his promise, and powerfull assistance of his Spirit, and in the name and intercession of his Son Jesus Christ we will go to prayer.

With this Rothwell kneeled by the bed and started to pray. The devil duly roared in his face and they competed for fifteen minutes with the preacher being more outspoken than the devil. When Fox's hands were raised, the cleric opened his eyes 'and brought down the hand, which he held with great ease, two men being scarce able to hold the other hand'. Eventually the devil lay silent, 'and after that departed from him'. Fox sighed deeply and the observers thought he was dying, 'but his colour returned to him, and the use of all his members, senses, and understanding'. He declared a loud Amen which he repeated again and again as the prayer turned to thanksgiving. He asked Rothwell to stay with him as he had little time to live, the devil having predicted that the first piece of meat he ate would kill him. He was reminded of the devil's lies and, sure enough, he did not choke. Once Rothwell had departed, Fox 'was stricken dumb for three years together', and suffered many temptations, all of which he wrote down and Gower had once had a copy of along with the answers of 'divers godly and reverend Ministers' but all his writings were taken by Cavaliers. 'Thus the poor man remained tempted, but no longer possessed'. Week after week of prayer, every Sabbath and every lecture day, eventually proved successful. One offered the petition, 'Lord open thou his mouth that his lips may shew forth thy praise' Fox gave voice: 'Amen: and so continued to speak, and spake graciously to his dying day'.

The Persistence of Possession in the Reign of James

Despite their different positions and their different interests, similar issues have appeared as minor notes in the readings of Deacon and Walker, of Harsnet, of Cotta, and of Bernard. For the first three, there is the issue of credibility and credulity, returning in the last two as issues of discernment and causal explanation. While I hope to have modified the 'sceptic' assessment of Harnset, at least through identifying the means by which he raised question marks against the means used by Darrell, his colleagues and forebears, as well as explaining the 'failure' of Deacon and Walker's efforts to shift the exegesis of diabolic possession to their extremes, the increased criteria of suspicion evinced by the works of Cotta and Bernard show at least some success in Harsnet's work. However, the fact that they are still operating within a discourse of demonic possession as an accepted means of explaining particular behavioural patterns, albeit with a more demanding set of criteria of measurement and judgement sets a new task of explanation. The second note is the issue of social status related to the authority of discernment, plainest in Harsnet's vituperative characterisation of witnesses he intended to discredit but still present in Cotta's and Bernard's appraisals of the 'vulgar' and the 'learned', not intending to mark demonic possession as an impossible diagnosis so much as to limit the field of those whose diagnosis is to be trusted. The third note is the relationship between witchcraft and possession; Cotta's stress on Satan's power to possess without witches, a stress taken on and reproduced with different goals by Bernard, brings a new emphasis in the literature that needs explaining. What follows is a return to the realities of demonic possession, perceived, alleged, both accepted and denied, defended and dismissed in the period, along with one representation of a possession semi-detached from 'reality', between Mary Glover's case and Bernard's guide with two intentions. The primary one, of course, is to continue to trace the occurrence of cases of possession after the more sensational ones,

some more familiar than others, and to adjust our assessments of them and the wider discourse of possession. The second intention is to show how the appearance and the fortunes of these cases and, for some of them, their representation played a part in the shifts mapped above.

The first case is one which received much contemporary attention and has recently been reconstructed in exemplary fashion by a historian. This is the most famous clear cut occasion of fraudulent claims to possession in this period, that of Anne Gunter.¹ The account that follows draws upon James Sharpe a great deal; his own, and the contemporary, conclusion of fraudulence is more than reliable. As will emerge, my emphases on the case differ somewhat and hence we have differing conclusions about the broader consequences of the case. In the midsummer of 1604 Anne Gunter, aged between 18 and 21, the daughter of a lesser gentleman of North Moreton, Berkshire, fell ill. Her father was absent in Oxford and, initially, the trouble was thought to be something akin to hysteria, with no suggestions of demonic possession. Around the same time Brian, her father, fell seriously ill and accused an elderly woman of lower social status, Elizabeth Gregory, of having bewitched him. He resorted to the popular means of resuscitation by scratching her face and reported a complete recovery.² Anne's ailment returned on 23 October 1604, this time thought to resemble epilepsy rather than 'the mother'. Her father was, again, absent and her mother brought in medical advice and a Dr Cheyney, from nearby Wallingford, could not settle on a medical explanation, concluding that she 'was not sick of any natural cause or infirmity', an assessment concurring with that of other

¹ James Sharpe, The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: a horrible and true story of football, witchcraft, murder and the king of England (London, 1999). Sharpe provides particularly helpful details of the context and the details of the broad range of people involved as witnesses, judges and as the accused. There was an earlier treatment, with different interests, in Brian P. Levack, 'Possession, witchcraft, and the law in Jacobean England', Washington and Lee Legal Review 52 (1995), partly reproduced and enlarged upon in *ibid.*, Witch-hunting in Scotland: law, politics and religion (London, 2008), 48-52. There are some trenchant and thought-provoking criticisms of Sharpe's account in Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Review article: Rewriting Stone's Renaissance', Huntingdon Library Quarterly 64 (2001), 217-223. The primary sources are in NA STAC 8/4/10, complemented by late depositions and interrogatories in Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California, Ellesmere Ms 5955/1-2.

² Sharpe, Bewitching, 6, 43; NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 88, 106.

physicians from as far way as Oxford. Nonetheless, Cheyney administered a purgative remedy, a laxative to clear her out, as it were, but this proved unsuccessful and 'her fits continued and grew to be worse & worse'.³

When Brian Gunter returned and found his daughter in this condition, his attention seems to have been less on her health than on the opportunity offered. It is equally likely that these were not mutually exclusive, that he saw the cause of her condition as external and therefore as important to address as her sickness itself. He had a long-running feud with Elizabeth Gregory, partly rooted in a football game where the violence he and his sons employed against two members of her family was blamed for their deaths, and partly in his unpleasant self-serving demeanour along with his recent arrival in the community. He saw this as an opportunity to revive the accusation of witchcraft and found an ally in a local couple, Richard and Alice Kirfoote, who had their own grievance against Gregory. Two other women, Agnes and Mary Pepwell, were added to the list, possibly because their established reputations as witches might add to the credibility of the charges. All three, together and individually, fitted into the expectancies of witches, being poor and elderly women, with Elizabeth's mother-in-law also reputed to be a witch. Alice accordingly started having fits and both physicians and clerics were called in. She was reported to have a swelling in her belly, a twisted face and trances where she was unaware of those around her, staring into space. She lay stiff and apparently extended in bed with her joints extremely difficult to bend. The consensus among the medics was that the causation was supernatural and so not a matter for their expertise. Crucially she called out in her fits blaming Gregory and Agnes Pepwell for her vexations.⁴

In order to make sure the symptoms shown by Anne had sufficient commonality with those given credence by the authorities so the accusations could move beyond local

³ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7, 54-5; Levack, 'Possession', 1625n; *idem*, *Witch-hunting*, 49. Orlin, 'Review', raises the under-explored possibility that Brian Gunter was, and remained, convinced that Anne was possessed and that either Anne or Alice Kirfoote was more central to the deception.

reputation into the legal realm, they needed fine tuning. An aid was provided by concerned onlookers, and Brian held open house from an early stage. He was given, with good intentions, the account of the Throckmorton case. He also acquired some unidentified texts relating to Darrell's dispossessions, along with the annoyingly vague 'other bookes of lyke argument'. He also got hold of Harsnet's Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures, the detailed account of the ways and means employed as well as the symptoms displayed by the counterfeit possessions at Denham in the 1580s.⁵ The witnesses, a mixture of family, neighbours, physicians and clergy and probably a mixture of people concerned about the young woman and those interested in the freak show or both at the same time, paid attention to her behaviour and, as far as we can tell, the symptoms became less easily placed within the consequences of natural disease. There was swooning, followed by fairly spectacular fits with her body twisting and contorting, her joints adopting odd positions and her eyes rolling back into her head. Her body seemed to be heavier and would often quake and shake uncontrollably, occasionally developing swellings in her belly the size of a loaf of bread. She started vomiting pins, and pins also appeared in her urine, in her stool and she managed to send them from her nose in recurrent sneezing fits. Although Sharpe describes her vomiting pins 'in the standard fashion', and vomiting and retching have indeed been seen before, this is the first vomiting of pins since Agnes Brigges in 1573.⁶

The physical symptoms were matched by behavioural ones and ones more concentrated on the specific target of culpability. Her clothes would loosen of their own accord and in particular her garters would come undone and her stockings come down, something to which I will return.⁷ When the neighbouring minister, Thomas Bird, visited, she abused him for having come to the parish to preach and to 'choke me with his pins'.⁸

⁵ Sharpe, Bewitching, 7, 62, 164; NA STAC 8/4/10 f. 75.

⁶ Sharpe, Bewitching, 44-5, 47; see above, 54.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸ NA STAC 8/4/10 f. 209.

As Alice Kirfoote before her, she identified the human agents behind the possession in her fits, having visions of the three women approaching her. In a similar crossbreed of popular and elite perceptions as encountered in earlier cases she also had visions of their agents, either devils, familiars or both. That serving Elizabeth was a black rat with the face and tusks of a wild boar, that serving Agnes was a white mouse with a man's face and a beard while Mary was sold rather short, being served by a whitish toad which went by the name of 'Vizit'.⁹ She also reported other creatures, larger but less freakish combinations, such as a bear, a bull and a black swan.¹⁰ These enhanced symptoms reached the first goal, in that physicians were becoming more likely to identify supernatural causes. Roger Bracegirdle, a physician from Brasenose College, Oxford and an old acquaintance of the family concluded that she 'was bewitched & so he having no skill to redresse it went his way' and, interestingly, advised turning to cunning folk for assistance. Possibly as a consequence, it was testified that Brian Gunter sent a neighbour to consult cunning folk in the locale with a reputation for helping with witchcraft.¹¹ In the supernatural diagnosis he seems to have been speaking with the same voice as colleagues from Oxford and Newbury.¹²

At this stage, Brian seems to have decided to take his daughter to a bigger stage, moving her to Stanton St John, to the east of Oxford, to stay with her brother Harvey. Brian had been employing his Oxford connections from early on and perhaps Harvey's home was seen as a controlled environment in which to produce more respectable witnesses, with Harvey having been an undergraduate at Brasenose in the 1580s. It may also chime with a popular remedy for witchcraft, as employed by the Throckmortons, of moving the victim from the immediate environs of their assailants. Probably during this spell one concerned physician, worried by the stress apparently showing on Brian, adopted a belt

⁹ NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 101, 144v, 210.

¹⁰ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 47.

¹¹ NA STAC 8/4/10 F. 141v; Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 7, 46, 57.

¹² NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 95v, 96, 105, 140v, 156.

and braces approach, trying both medical means and bringing clergy to the young woman as well. Three clerics duly appeared. The first was an unidentified Mr West, the second John Whetcombe, a fellow of Exeter College since 1602 while the third was Edward Chetwynd, a rising star and a recent graduate of the same college.¹³ They intended to fast and pray with Anne but were not granted licence to do so from the bishop and received abuse from Anne in her fits when they were there, useful in terms of testimony but a poor return for their willingness to help.¹⁴ In this time there was a visit that was to have greater, and different, consequences than those intended. Thomas Hinton, part of the wider family and a gentleman, came to Stanton St John with a mixture of concern and desire to see for himself the curious behaviours of which he had been told. Brian Gunter welcomed him on board, with Anne's mother briefing him and after he had witnessed one fit at the end of which Anne named the suspected witches Brian asked for his assistance. He agreed to meet with Thomas Bird, the minister mentioned earlier, in London to try and bring the case to the assizes, probably evidence of Hinton's decent social status. However, later that evening, after dinner, his suspicions were raised. Anne disappeared with a maidservant and returned to have a fit, complaining that Gregory had bitten her garter in three places. He was not wholly convinced, spotting the opportunity offered by her withdrawal with the servant and that she carried a knife when she returned. He resolved to keep a more critical eye on the demoniac and discussed his concerns with a visiting student, Alexander Jermin. Jermin told him of the previous night when Anne had been given a piece of writing which she ripped up without reading it and then reported, word for word, what it contained. While the student remained convinced of the authenticity of the possession, Hinton got him to agree to bring a more distrusting eye to a repeat performance. Hinton felt that he saw Anne making great efforts to read the paper in the course of her spasms before

¹³ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 47-8; *ODNB*, 'Edward Chetwynd'. It may be suggestive that he was among the ministers praised and identified of a similar mind to the author in Richard Bernard, *The Faithfull Shepherd* (London, 1621), 'To the Right Worshipfull and Reverend'.

¹⁴ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 48, 170-1; Levack, 'Possession', 1620.

tearing it up and gave a similar unconvinced reading to her ability to identify newcomers and their attire, suggesting that she was able, during her fits, to take mental notes and thus report, after her fits, who had been there.¹⁵ To be fair to the other onlookers, this is as dependent on the attitude of the observer as the quality of the performance. Either the sceptic or the believer is likely to have their preferred interpretation confirmed by what they see rather than the wiser perception of the sceptic revealing the credulity of the concerned seeing only the suffering.

The family took a step closer to the centre of respectability, again employing family ties, at the end of February 1605. They moved into the lodgings of Thomas Holland, Anne's brother-in-law and the Regius Professor of Divinity and the rector of Exeter College who was encountered earlier delivering a sermon at St Paul's Cross with a note relating to the possession of Mary Glover.¹⁶ While Holland himself steered clear of his relation or at least gave no evidence in the later trial, the dons flocked around her, probably with a mixture of concern and academic curiosity. These witnesses were far from easily deluded common folk. John Prideaux, admittedly early in his career but already a respected fellow, may have been drawn by reports from his colleague Edward Chetwynd. He noted a swelling in Anne's body the size of a man's head and reported that there were pins embedded in her breast which did not cause bleeding when they were withdrawn. He also recalled the names of Catch and Sweat stated by her to be the names of the familiars of Elizabeth Gregory and Anges Pepwell respectively, in addition to Mary's Vizit mentioned above. ('Catch', it may be recalled, was the name of one of the demons or familiars assaulting Joan Throckmorton). The pins seem to have been either a focus of interest, a more frequent symptom or both as William Harvey (a young clergyman rather than the famous physician) found many pins in her mouth and Robert Vilvaine found them in her nostrils. The consensus seems to have been that she had not placed them there and the

¹⁵ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 107-11.

¹⁶ See above, 253-4.

lack of bleeding was a fair indication of their supernatural associations. The same and similar onlookers could testify to the continued adventures of Anne's clothing. There were also reports of Anne having second sight, sometimes reporting conversations which had taken place in her absence and an awareness of approaching strangers.¹⁷ Although Anne and certainly her father knew many of the individuals watching on, this was not a pre-established set of believers, as it were. In fact there were individuals willing to note inconsistencies or to keep an eye out for signs of fraudulence. John Harding, the president of Magdalen College, for instance, later pointed out that her claim to an ability to read despite suffering from the loss of sight lost some of its credibility when the ability went when the lights went out and one student claimed to have worked out how she made her clothes seem to move of their own accord.¹⁸ It is, however, difficult to assess exactly when these suspicions emerged as they are all found in the depositions to the Star Chamber after she had confessed her fraudulence; it needs to be weighed against the many dons who supported Brian Gunter's innocence in this trial and were willing to give evidence in the forthcoming trial of the women of North Moreton.

It was the prescience of approaching strangers that proved to be contributory to the failure of her fakery. Thomas Hinton had been away for a while but upon his return to Oxford he visited the family at Holland's home and voiced his misgivings to Brian Gunter and to his sons William and Harvey. They dismissed his suspicions and could array a collection of testimonies from dons convinced of the supernatural nature of her condition. Hinton was not satisfied and was invited to return that evening. He did so, accompanied by four of his colleagues and they went up to her chamber and stood outside, which produced the expected screams from Anne as a response to approaching strangers. They retired

¹⁷ Sharpe, Bewitching, 103-5; Anon., The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys, arraigned, convicted and executed at the last Assises at Huntingdon, for the bewitching of the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton Esquier, and divers other persons, with sundrie Divelish and grievous torments: And also for the bewitching to death of the Lady Crumwell, the like hath not bene heard of in this age (London, 1593), K.

¹⁸ NA STAC 8/4/10 f. 21; Levack, Witch-hunting, 49.

downstairs and were joined by William Helme who explained what had happened. Helme was a respected fellow, having been Prideaux's tutor, and had been a fairly frequent visitor to Anne's bedside. Hinton explained his suspicions and Helme agreed to join in an experiment. Helme noisily went up the stairs pretending to be a stranger by whispering to himself and not entering. Despite having been identified as one of Anne's closest friends before, this ruse provided the screaming that would have welcomed a stranger. Then Hinton snuck up the stairs, avoiding giving the symptoms of a stranger and there was no reaction from within the chamber. This confirmed his doubts and, according to his later testimony, Helme was also persuaded that this ability was a trick although it should be noted that any such conviction did not last as Helme was willing to testify on Brian Gunter's behalf later on.¹⁹

Hinton's misgivings seem to have remained and he discussed his concerns with Sir Francis Knollys who lent him a sympathetic ear. The prospect of the appearance of the suspects at the forthcoming assizes just down the road at Abingdon possibly sharpened the issues for Hinton in that it could no longer be seen as a choice between voicing his doubts about the possession and allowing the reputation of the Gunters to remain unquestioned. Now it was a choice between allowing the social status of the Gunters to survive but at the possible expense of three women threatened with unjust judicial proceedings. This shift in the consequences of the decision may have been crucial in bringing Hinton to the resolution that he would return home via the assizes, voicing his conviction of Anne's fraudulence in a more official, public environment.²⁰

To a certain extent, the wind was blowing in his favour. Gunter's supporters and former accomplices, Nicholas and Alice Kirfoote were not prepared to take their efforts to court. They may have felt comfortable with trying to persuade local opinion against

¹⁹ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 112-3; for Helme, see Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: the members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714* (Oxford, 1891), Vol. II, 691; Anthony a Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (London, 1817) Vol. III, 266.

²⁰ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 114.

Gregory in particular but the arena had changed and with it the potential penalties for failure to persuade. In addition, the sense that this was a difficult case may have been communicated to the presiding JP, a relative of Hinton's, as he appointed Alexander Chocke as foreman of the jury and placed two other JPs as members, an unusually high ranking selection at this level. That much accepted, it was by no means a foregone conclusion; doubt was by no means the consensus before the trial started as Gunters managed to provide fifteen witnesses in his favour and, as will be seen, he brought much socially respectable support over from Oxford in his favour.²¹

The Lent assizes met at Abingdon on 1 March 1605. Hinton voiced his assessment to Alexander Chocke, expressing his intention to make it plain to the jury that he was convinced Anne was a counterfeit. These views were passed on to his kinsman, David Williams, who was on the bench, and he ordered the three JPs who were to be on the jury to visit her in the local inn and examine her, with Hinton kept away from the scene, presumably in order to maintain the independence of the JPs' analysis. The meeting does not seem to have been too private, merely one peopled by the respectable, in that upon their arrival Anne was standing at a chair or cupboard surrounded and supported by friends. According to Chocke's later testimony, these were mostly (unnamed) Oxford academics. The JPs quizzed her, asking if it was true that she could smell the witches as they approached. Anne responded that she had been able to do so but one of the familiars told her that that ability had been taken from her. She had, she said, been able to smell burnt thatch when they were about, probably a reflection of a popular curative practice which had been used earlier, burning thatch from the suspects' roofs. The account of the meeting is short on detail, with Chocke pleading an imperfect memory, but the JPs reported back to Williams and the second judge, Christopher Yelverton. The latter was likely to have been familiar with the earlier controversies, holding his primary estate in

²¹ Ibid., 119; Levack, Witch-hunting, 49-50.

Northamptonshire and of puritan sympathies. He was very much of an independent mind and willing to speak his mind regardless of rank and in any case was more than sufficiently senior to have licence to do so. The presence of such a senior figure adds weight to the probability of a close eye being encouraged on this case.

When the court sat, Brian Gunter called a succession of witnesses from the various stages of Anne's afflictions, from North Moreton, through Stanton St John and on to Exeter College. Anne was, however, the centre of attention, performing her fits in a manner reminiscent of the Throckmorton trial, with her father listing the symptoms and his daughter duly exhibiting them.²² She rolled her eyes so that only the whites could be seen, mumbling incoherently while she did so and demonstrated her lack of physical sensation by hammering her hands on the arms of the chair in which she was sat (although Chocke later reported that she seemed to be taking care by only using the lower part of her hands thereby showing a desire to protect her knuckles). This came to a climax with her going into a trance and being thrown out of the chair, casting herself immodestly on the floor directly in front of the jury. Chocke checked her pulse and the court officials tried to restore order to the proceedings through bringing Anne to order. Brian's final ploy was to request for Elizabeth Gregory to read a spell which he said would revive or restore Anne's condition. Williams initially refused and then substituted a different one, presumably to see if she recovered despite the 'proper' means not being used. This led Brian to complain that his daughter was not getting the same justice that had served the Throckmortons. Once Hinton had been allowed to state his position before the court, the jury were given guidance from the bench. If Williams's substitution was a result of mistrust in Anne's authenticity and Chocke was as unconvinced as his later testimony suggests, the Gunters

²² For the Throckmorton trial, see below, 498-500.

cannot have been confident they were to get the result hoped for. Accordingly, the accused were acquitted.²³

Acquittal it should be made clear, does not equate to a judgement of fraudulence. Much of the evidence to connect the women accused was from Anne in her fits and as many witnesses as could be gathered might be willing to give testimony to her naming and identifying the accused did not stop this evidence being spectral and the difficult nature of such evidence has been encountered above. In the background, however, there were other forces at work, forces which might have contributed to the willingness of Yelverton and Williams to give Hinton a hearing, and perhaps appoint a jury that was, from their perspective, trustworthy. Before the trial Richard Vaughan had been paying attention. He has appeared before, as the bishop of Chester who kept a cautious eye on the examination of Thomas Harrison, 'the boy of Northwich', in his diocese, showing an openness to the possibility of possession but primarily concerned to prevent a showpiece of dispossession. Now he had been promoted to the prestigious bishopric of London. From this position, before the sitting of the Assizes, he had requested fellows of the Royal College of Physicians to ascertain whether Anne's afflictions were natural or the result of witchcraft. As an officeholder, this request is interesting as North Moreton, Oxford and Abingdon are all well beyond the boundaries of his diocese. Three fellows visited Anne and made their report on 4 March, three days after the trial, concluding that she was feigning.²⁴

Either Vaughan passed the matter to the proper authority or Henry Cotton, the bishop of Salisbury, was sensitive to the encroachment on his patch and took it on. It is equally likely that he heard of the report and felt that he should take it for fear of being seen to be neglecting his duties. In any case, this fits the ecclesiastical boundaries but

²³ The only extant source for the court proceedings and its prelude are the depositions of Hinton and Chocke to the later trial: NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 9-18; cf. Sharpe, Bewitching, 127-9, 133, 135; Levack, Witch-hunting, 49-50; *idem*, 'Possession', 1625.

²⁴ Sharpe, Bewitching, 130-3.

institutionally, it could be asked how exactly he should be concerned as a bishop, other than if there was a possibility of a writ for slander being brought against Gunter, with witchcraft being a common law issue. It is unlikely that the bishop should turn such attention to the case without the fear of consequences of something inappropriate emerging on his watch. Shortly after the trial he took her into his residence. This took her away from her parents and, in addition to playing away from home, it meant that Brian Gunter was not present to provide ongoing interpretation, encouraging observers to stick to his script of exegesis.²⁵ Cotton had her examined by local physicians. One of these, Richard Haydock, an Oxford graduate recently established in Salisbury, tried to move beyond the less stable ground of perception on to a more empirical basis, by secretly marking pins and then inspecting the ones she vomited and sneezed out. He found they matched, thereby lessening the likelihood of any supernatural origin of the pins and therefore of the ailment.²⁶ Perhaps with the resolution that she was less of an immediate threat than she might have appeared, he passed Anne into the custody of Sir Giles Wroughton, a trustworthy member of the Wiltshire gentry, where the examination by physicians continued and William Newcombe, an apothecary from Salisbury, concluded that her fits were wholly counterfeited.²⁷ She does not seem to have made any confession and it is not clear whether the conviction of fraudulence was made explicit to her. Her fits continued through the summer and she was reunited with her father. It was entirely possible for them to retire to home, perhaps to lick their wounds or renegotiate Brian's local reputation.

Brian Gunter either over-estimated the chances of gaining his preferred analysis or simply could not bear the idea of cutting his losses and going home. He took advantage of the news that the new king, James VI & I, was visiting Oxford in August and, perhaps working with an older image of the king as one eager to hunt witches, took his daughter to

²⁵ Ibid., 169-70.

²⁶ NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 3 v, 20v, 23, 100. For Haydock, see Sarah Bakewell, 'Richard Haydock', ODNB.

²⁷ Sharpe, Bewitching, 171.

Oxford to bring the king's attention to his demonically possessed daughter.²⁸ In his hope that James would be interested, Brian was not mistaken and the king interviewed Anne on 27 August. In his hope that the monarch would take on the case as a means of witch-hunting he was seriously in error. Between the first meeting and their next encounter, at Finchinbrooke near Windsor on 9 and 10 October, James passed Anne on to Richard Bancroft and he in turn put her in the care of Samuel Harsnet, hardly the most auspicious environment for a positive verdict regarding the authenticity of Anne's possession.²⁹

Harsnet provided the best environment to elicit a confession, taking the road of comfort and sympathy rather than torture, albeit maintaining distance from her father and bringing like-minded physicians to examine her. Part of the latter was a continuation of Cotten's work, in that one medic, possibly Haydock, 'cured' her with a non-medicinal potion and a tablet to be hung round her neck, effectively placebos intended to prove the fraudulence rather than psychosomatic treatments. Harsnet also invited Edward Jorden to examine her in September. By this time her fits seem to have lessened at least in their frequency, for while Jorden's testimony refers to 'sundrye feyned fytttes' during her time in Harsnet's charge, his main attention was on the fragments of glass and pins in her stool. During his time examining her she did not 'void any pynnes in urine or otherwyse nor swallowe downe any pynne or pynnes or fall into any fytt or fytttes, trance or trances'. He suggested her last fit had been about a fortnight before Michaelmas but he was able to identify 'several pynnes' and 'three pieces of glasse' among her defecation. He concluded that her actions were not supernatural in their origins but fraudulent. One of the physicians seems to have concluded that her mimicry was assisted by the effects of the suffocation of the mother or at least that was the conclusion that James reported to Robert Cecil after his third meeting with Anne.³⁰ Harsnet also acted as panderer to Anne in providing the

²⁸ NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 151v, 163.

²⁹ Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 179.

³⁰ NA STAC 8/4/10 f. 57; *HMC: Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquis of Salisbury* (London, 1938), Vol. 17, 450-1; cf. Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 180.

attention of one Ashley, a servant of good stock, probably as a potential confidante and this was well read in that she duly confessed, initially to Ashley, then to Harsnet, then on oath, then before the king at Finchinbrooke and later in the Star Chamber.³¹

By the time James wrote to Cecil, he was convinced not only that Anne was only pretending to be possessed but that it was part of a plan of her father's to bring a judgement against Elizabeth Gregory. This brought to judiciary back into the picture and James wanted Anne to be examined by Bancroft and legal officials with the archbishop orchestrating the machinery, partly through his colleague, Richard Neile. Although James was understandably distracted by parliament and then the Gunpowder Plot, Brian Gunter was imprisoned at Lambeth Palace and brought to face the daunting prospect of defending himself in Star Chamber with an information brought against him and his daughter by Sir Edward Coke at Bancroft's behest. Brian was claimed to have put his daughter's head in the smoke of burning brimstone, made her swallow salad oil to induce vomiting as well as inserting pins into her, all to bring infamy and charges of witchcraft upon his opponents, with the first tactics taken from the the Denham pretences.³²

Anne's examination started on 24 February 1606 and it will come as no surprise to hear that a lesser gentleman of North Moreton proved unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade the Star Chamber, let alone the archbishop of Canterbury, the principal legal mind of the realm and the privy council, of his innocence, particularly when his daughter's confession was hanging in the balance against him. Without for a minute implying that the judgement was inaccurate, there are a couple of points that are worth making to temper a reading that encourages reading the Gunter condemnation as symptomatic of a growing mood of scepticism regarding the reality of possession in general. The first is that the trial took eighteen months, hardly a hasty judgement. More importantly, numerous witnesses appeared ex parte Gunter, both from North Moreton and Oxford. Indeed, Thomas Bird,

³¹ Levack, Witch-hunting, 50-1.

³² NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 97, 103, 75; Levack, Witch-hunting, 51-2; Sharpe, Bewitching, 1-3.

despite having received the calumniations of Anne when he visited her earlier, was willing to witness the unnatural movement of her clothing and that he remained convinced of the genuineness of her possession.³³

In order to further counter the temptation of a reading that emphasises too much of the arrival of scepticism or at least the assumption of suspicion, I would like to draw attention to a number of aspects that may have been lost in a narrative that concludes with the judgement against Brian Gunter. The first is that for the plot to have been worth pursuing, the credibility of demonic possession per se was had not been damaged. This worked beyond the 'vulgar' or North Moreton in that the family were willing to allow, indeed to call, learned physicians and clerics as well as gentry into their open house to judge the authenticity for themselves. In addition, there were, throughout the case, plenty of respectable medics willing to diagnose possession or symptoms beyond natural disease, at least as unexplained. There was also a willingness for physicians to work hand in hand with clergymen, far from evident of a growing distance between the two approaches or them becoming mutually exclusive. Before the case came to the attention of authorities with a tendency to look over their shoulders, doctors were willing to advise consultation of cunning folk to help where they failed, perhaps explaining the target of John Cotta's criticisms discussed earlier better than a scepticism about possession itself.³⁴

Furthermore, the clergy involved could by no means be described as puritans eager for the reputation-enhancing, confrontational opportunity of a public dispossession by fasting and prayer. Exeter College and the individuals involved were not operating with the same agenda as those in Burton, Nottingham or working with Mary Glover. Indeed there are echoes of Mary Glover, albeit with differing positions of the supposedly possessed and

³³ Levack, 'Possession', 1613, 1634; Sharpe, *Bewitching*, 162; NA STAC 8/4/10 ff. 208-9.

³⁴ This assessment of the willingness of physicians to diagnose possession tallies with the study of Judith Bonzol and I am in some sympathy with her account of some physicians being willing almost to read patients according to their social, sometimes political, demands: 'The medical diagnosis of demonic possession in an early modern English community', *Parergon* 26 (2009), 115-40. The Gunter case is at the centre of her attention.

her family, in the way in which the believability, the 'reality', of the possession shifted in the changing forums in which it was performed, moving from stages upon which it could be accepted, at home, at Stanton St John and Holland's residence, to ones upon which it was more contested, such as Abingdon, Cotton's residence, Wroughton's home and, ultimately, Lambeth Palace and Star Chamber. Finally, there are two notes which are noteworthy for the development of the discourse of possession and for its future fortunes. The first touches a point made explicit by Richard Bernard in his notes on possession. Since the Darrell cases a stronger synonymity had emerged between 'possessed' and 'bewitched'. It appears in George Gifford's efforts to negotiate between 'popular' and educated understanding of witchcraft and, with repetition, it had become a habit to look for witches as a causal element in possession cases which was not the case in the middle of the sixteenth century.³⁵ The second is the nature of the symptoms which were taken as necessary for Anne's possession to be judged as real. Part of the impact of the controversies in the recent past was that the length of the possession had been extended and the contortions, writhing and insensibility were de rigueur. On top of this, perhaps partly due to the texts employed by Brian Gunter, the vomiting of pins and the predictions and diabolically empowered perceptions were also expected.

II

An illustration of the increased demands on a reported possession to be judged authentic can be found by returning to an account treated above. The sufferings of Alexander Nyndge of Herringswell, Suffolk, in 1574 were substantial. His fits lasted, on and off, for four hours, and involved his chest swelling, his eyes staring and his back bending in. He

³⁵ George Gifford, A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraftes (London, 1593), *passim*. See particularly 12 where he justifies the gathering of the well-intentioned godly to 'intreat the Lord to shew mercy' but discourages interrogating the devil to find out 'how hee came there, and who sent him'. This is noted as a means that has been used to test the veracity of the possession, 'to distinguish them from so many counterfaits, as have bene'.

was thrown off his chair and, after some rest, 'a base soundinge or hollowe voyce' was heard, and the voice eventually gave his name. Alexander's brother, Edward, led the efforts to cast out the devil and after reading Scripture, the spirit left. Early the following morning, there was an attempted repossession with some physical symptoms, most remarkably one of his ears shrinking to prevent Edward from whispering spiritual comforts to his brother. Shortly after, the spirit left again and Alexander was left alone.³⁶ In 1615 a new version was printed. Edward is named as the author although he appears throughout in the third person and there is nothing beyond the title page to encourage the conclusion that this was an account simply giving a full version of what had happened in 1574.

The text of the first publication is included, with minor modifications to make segues to the new material, all of which raises the nature of Alexander's suffering. A new opening sets out the basic theological and Scriptural background before turning to the specific case of Alexander Nyndge, 'who was grievously tormented with an evill Spirit from the xx. of January, to the 23. of July, and is worthy to be remembred both for example, and warning'.³⁷ This change from the possession lasting one night to six months is merely stated, regardless of the account only referring to one night's action. Within this one night the degree of suffering is raised substantially. After the account of Alexander's first fit, the spirit racked him 'in a far more cruell manner'. He made 'such strange and idle kinds of gestures in laughing, dancing, and such like light behaviours' that his sanity was suspected. He refused food for so long that he seemed to pine away. Sometimes he shook 'as if he had had an ague' and the witnesses heard 'a strange noise or flapping from within his body'. He would 'gather himselfe' into a 'round heape under his bedcloathes' and bounce up a good height, beating his head against the ground and the bedstead with such violence that his company feared that he would have 'spoiled himselfe', had they

³⁶ Anon., A Booke Declaringe the Fearfull Vexasion, of one Alexander Nyndge: Beynge Moste Horriblye Tormented wyth an Evyll Spirit. The xx. Daie of Januarie. In the Yere of our Lorde, 1573. At Lyerinswell [sic] in Suffolke (London, 1573), n.p.

³⁷ Edward Nyndge, A true and fearefull vexation of one Alexander Nyndge (London, 1615), A3.

proven unable to restrain him. Furthermore, in 'most of his fits', his body swelled so that he 'seemed to be twice so big as his naturall body' and he was often 'seene to have a certaine swelling running up and downe between the flesh and the skin'.³⁸

After Edward had interrogated and intimidated the spirit, according to the new account, more physical torments followed. The demon disfigured him 'more horribly then before, forcing him to such strange and fearefull shriking as cannot bee uttered by mans power'. His strength increased to such an extent that four or five men could not restrain him, despite the fact they had the advantage that Alexander was bound to a chair, and throughout the struggle 'hee was not perceived to pant or blow' than if he had been making no effort. Sometimes he would weep copiously, producing tears 'in great aboundance' and then he would 'laugh aloude, and shrill' despite his mouth being closed tight.³⁹ The account followed the denouement of the spirit's departure with a lengthy prayer, begging for divine assistance against the temptations and assaults of the devil, recognising his sins and pleading for God to come to his rescue despite his accepted unworthiness. The text closes with Alexander's prayer after his deliverance, stressing the sole agency of God in his dispossession and accepting the usefulness of such trials to the insufficiently appreciative godly.⁴⁰

As yet, the causal relationship between the Darrell controversy and the greater expectations of the possessed in the early seventeenth century has only been suggested. The connection is stronger when it is realised that the passage on 'strange and idle gestures', the fears for his sanity, the refusal of food and the shaking 'as if he had had an ague' is directly lifted, word for word, from Darrell's account of William Sommers.⁴¹ The same is true, with tiny modifications, of the swelling between flesh and skin, the tears 'in great aboundance' and the shrill laughter and of the 'fearefull shriking'. There is no

³⁸ Ibid., A4.

³⁹ Ibid., A4-B.

⁴⁰ Ibid., B2-B4.

⁴¹ John Darrell, A True Narration of the Strange and Grevous Vexation by the Devil, of 7. Persons in Lancashire, and William Sommers of Nottingham (n.p., 1600), 15.

modification of the section describing the inability of four or five men finding it hard to restrain him despite the advantage of him being bound to a chair or the absence of heavy breathing despite his exertions and the same is true of his gathering himself into a round heap and bouncing high off the bed.⁴²

Before examining a case considered similar to that of Anne Gunter some attention must be turned to two further conflicts that were brought to the attention of the Star Chamber which have elements of demonic possession in them. Both operate within the new orthodoxy of bewitchment although neither are as clear cut either in the nature of the disputes or the estimations in terms of truth and falsehood safely made by readers in the present as Gunter's efforts. The first can be treated in brief, not least because the record is less rich than most of the others. In 1602 Judith Smith, a relation of the Abington and Gibbes gentry families of Dorset, fell ill. She suffered for three years, tormented with 'a straunge swelling and hardnes wthin her body'. Physicians were brought to her residence in South Perrott but their efforts were to no avail. Some of them concluded from the failure of their treatment, despite having prescribed 'medicines of that strength as they would not have given to any man', that 'this case was bewitched'. During these three years she 'susteyned many fitts of great tortures and torments in her body and Bowels heaving up her intrailles wth swelling and scatches as though she should have burst'. Accepting the analysis of some of the physicians, Judith called in a cunning woman, Joan Guppy, convinced that she was the source of her bewitchment. Guppy had a reputation for dealing with the ailments of humans and animals, particularly those bewitched or 'taken wth the Fayres', possibly a West Country version of the fairies more common in Scotland as studied by Emma Wilby. Guppy refused to respond to the call, an indication of the potentially difficult line that cunning folk walked between 'good' and 'bad' witchcraft.⁴³ In

⁴² Ibid., 15-16.

⁴³ NA STAC 8/149/24 f. 3; Emma Wilby, Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic (Brighton, 2005); cf. Peter Marshall, 'Protestants and fairies in early-modern England', in C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Freist and Mark Greengrass (eds), Living with Religious

June 1605 a crowd was assembled, 'being armed and arrayed with longe pikes staves swards daggers and other warlicke weapons', descended upon Guppy's home, bringing 'great overgrowne brambles to teare and rente the fleshe' of Joan, a popular means of challenging the power of witches.⁴⁴ It appeared in Star Chamber because Joan took the Gibbes family to court on the grounds of the physical assault and the assault on her reputation; it was a reasonable concern for cunning folk if they were to be given a reputation for maleficia and Joan and her husband Thomas claimed to have been of 'good report and honest estimacon' up to this point.⁴⁵ As ever, we have no record of the judgement but two things should be noted for the future: the first is that there is no record of the actual possession being questioned, by medics or the court, by the accused or the suffering family, merely the identity of the instigator; the second is that the means of addressing the symptoms did not seem to include prayer or the consultation of clerics, indeed, as far as we are aware of the symptoms the spirits were silent and the possessed left no record of engagement with devout means or blasphemous symptoms.

The second conflict is rather more complex. It began, or was manifested in, a dispute over the seating in a parish church in Cambridge between Margaret Cotton, the wife of John, a pewterer, and Dorcas Swettson, the wife of John, an apothecary, around 1602. Margaret told Dorcas that 'she was hir elder & better & that the place where [Dorcas] satt in the Church was not for hir' but Margaret's, calling the younger woman 'an arrant Queene'. Dorcas responded by saying that 'goodness did not consist in age but in good behaviour', that, 'for ought she did knowe she was as good as she was and that the sayde Margaret Cotton might sitt behind the church doore', going on to say, 'I would be loth the be detected as you have beine', alluding to rumours about a stolen book and rumours from

Diversity in Early Modern Europe (Farnham, 2009), 139-60 and H. C. Midelfort, A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany (Stanford, Cal., 1999), 50, 52-3, 55.

⁴⁴ NA STAC 8/149/24 f. 29.

⁴⁵ NA STAC 8/149/24 f. 5.

one of the maids in the Cotton household.⁴⁶ The dispute over the pew rights was a familiar competition over social status but the way the argument developed is more unusual. Harsh words were exchanged and the Swettsons brought charges of slander against Margaret Cotton.⁴⁷ Evidently disgusted at both the defeat and the expense involved, she walked with her two sons to Dry Drayton, three miles away, where Richard Swettson, the infant son of Dorcas and John, was being nursed by Lucy Boyden. They made their way in and Margaret touched the child, reportedly complaining about her legal costs and stating that 'it is no matter I will be even with them'.⁴⁸ According to John Swettson, the fortunes of the child changed a few days later. He 'would sundry times fall into trance, and for the space of about halfe an hower continue, as though he had bene ded, looking blacke in the face, and wth his eyes after a gastly manner staring in his hed, and his Cheeks and other partes of his bodye after an extraordinary manner shrunk and drawne upp togeather, and would unnaturally scratche and byte his owne fleshe'. These conditions continued for between six months and a year, with the boy 'dayly pining and languishing', coming to a climax when, in his mother's words, 'the blacke parte of his right eye comonlie called the sight did suddenlie start out of his head about a yard from hym' and she was able to summon witnesses to back her up. The child died a few days after 8 July 1603 when this happened.⁴⁹ For causing these symptoms, with some common ground with demonic possession, Margaret was imprisoned and charged with murder by witchcraft and sorcery

⁴⁶ CUL CUA Comm.Ct.II 10 f. 68r, 69v; cf. CUL CUA Comm.Ct. II 11 f. 1. The allegations of a stolen book and a pewter bowl, partly backed up by the second-hand testimony of the maid, recur through the exchanges: CUL CUA Comm.Ct.II 10 ff. 70r, 72r and CUL CUA Comm.Ct II 11 ff. 1-30 passim; CUL CUA Comm.Ct.II 10 ff. 68-76.

⁴⁷ Apart from 'an arrant Queene', the details of the slanderous terms used by Cotton are not enlarged upon but there is a hint at the richness of her vituperative tongue in a related report of her noisy denunciation of Ralph Hyde at her husband's stall in the market place, informing him that 'thou art a monster a bloudsucker an Ipocrite a Jewe & a Judas the betrayed Christe': CUL CUA Comm.Ct.II f.53r. For the final dismissal of the allegations and counter-allegations within this part of the judicial system, see CUL CUA V.C.II 8 109A, 109B.

⁴⁸ NA STAC 8/95/4 no. 12; STAC 8/105/16 nos. 14, 17 i.

⁴⁹ NA STAC 8/105/16 nos. 11, 14, 17 iii.

at the following assizes but the jury found the charges to be malicious and returned a verdict of not guilty.⁵⁰

However, this did not bring an end to the dispute or to the efforts taken by both sides to make the others miserable. The Cottons brought a series of suits for petty crimes against the Swettsons, the Boydens, and their servants.⁵¹ The Swettsons and their allies suffered more mysterious afflictions. Cotton's neighbour, the father-in-law of the Commissary to the Chancellor of the University, who had delivered the judgement of slander against Margaret, passed away and Roger Boyden, married to Lucy, was 'sodenly stricken to the ground and taken lame, both in his right arme and left legg', a condition which remained till his death. Lucy lost her voice, similarly became lame and 'after a ravenous manner did devour an extraordinary propoc'on of susteinance, yet shee pyned away to skynne and bones and so dyed'. Dorcas Swettson, two weeks old, was taken by fits which continued till her early death. The sufferings of Mary Pearson, whose exact connection to the Swettsons is unclear, had possession-like symptoms. She died after being 'straingly pulled from between twoe with whom she then lay in bed'. While she was in a fit she reported that a black mouse did 'bight her by the toe' and observers testified to a lump the size of a mouse being seen to 'creepe betweene the skinn and flesh of her legg and so ascend upward to her throat'. The deaths of Lucy Boyden, Dorcas Swettson and Mary Pearson were all imputed to the agency of Margaret Cotton.⁵²

These deaths, between June and September 1605, led to charges being brought against Margaret at the assizes at Cambridge in the spring of 1609. She had attempted to evade imprisonment unsuccessfully and the trial, before Sir Edward Coke, consisted of accusations and counter-accusations, with the allies of the Swettsons, either independently or as the sheriff's bailiffs, accused of ransacking her house in the pursuit of her, and also of bribing witnesses in their favour. The Swettsons submitted a report of

⁵⁰ NA STAC 8/95/4 no. 12.

⁵¹ NA STAC 8/105/16 nos. 17 i, iii.

⁵² NA STAC 8/105/16 nos. 18, 19, 15.

Margaret keeping a rabbit and some chickens, feeding the latter, with connotations of them being her familiars. The court judged her to be not guilty on all three charges of murder.⁵³ This second acquittal was what brought the dispute into the ambit of the Star Chamber, with Henry Cotton, Margaret's husband, bringing a complaint against the Stettsons early in 1611. A commission interrogated the various families involved as well as the gaoler at Cambridge Castle but, unfortunately, beyond the depositions making the chances look good for the Cottons, the verdict is not extant.⁵⁴ For current purposes, the primary notes are the overlap between bewitchment and demonic possession noted above and that the driving, if not determinative, forces within the case of Cotton vs Swettson were about the resolution of a conflict over social status conducted by a variety of means rather than the acceptance of or scepticism about demonic possession.

A more familiar case, familiar because of the higher social status of the possessed, the involvement of King James and because of references within Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass, came to resolution in Leicester in 1616.⁵⁵ It tends to be represented as a swift exposure, with a dramatic intervention by the king saving five of the six suspects incarcerated, the sixth having died in gaol before her release.⁵⁶ There is some truth in this although the case lasted rather longer than this implies and it is not as clear cut as this suggests, either in the earlier treatment or in the conclusion. The boy diagnosed as possessed was John Smith, the son of Roger Smith, of high social standing among the county's gentry, and the nephew of Henry Smith, the godly lecturer of St Clement Danes, London in the late sixteenth century. John was about twelve or thirteen in 1616 when his condition came to the attention of James and his retinue, but this was not his first

⁵³ NA STAC 8/95/4 no. 12; STAC 8/105/16 nos. 14, 17 i. The deaths of Mary Pearson and Lucy Boyden may be the instances behind a warrant issued by James providing the Earl of Salisbury with such funds needed 'for the charges of two maids suspected to be bewitched, and kept in Cambridge for trial'; the match is not exact as it was, of course, Margaret Cotton who was held for having bewitched the two maids and the warrant is dated 21 May 1605, a little too early: NA SP 14/14/11.

⁵⁴ NA STAC 8/95/4 nos. 12, 11, 1, 4; STAC 8/105/16 nos. 13, 14, 17 i-iii.

⁵⁵ A helpful treatment of the case with an identification of Jonson's references can be found in George Lyman Kittredge, 'King James I and The Devil is an Ass', Modern Philology 9 (1911), 195-209,

⁵⁶ For instance, James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (Harmondsworth, 1997), 49.

complaint of bewitchment or identification of witches. For 1607 or 1608 there is an account of 'the bewitching of John Smith by Randall and other witches', partly taken from the depositions of Sir Henry Hastings, the Sheriff of Leicestershire, when the boy was four or five. Despite the identification of Randall and accomplices as suspects there do not seem to have been any convictions in this case.⁵⁷

It is far from clear as to whether the condition that led to the earlier accusations continued unabated, but the next appearance of John Smith in the records is addressing the consequences of fits in the first half of 1616. Robert Heyrick, an alderman, wrote to his brother from Leicester about an astonishing case in the assizes over the previous week. Nine women have been arraigned for witchcraft and were due to be hanged the afternoon of Heyrick's letter, 18 July for 'the bewitching of a younge gentellman of the adge of 12 or 13 years old', John Smith. He was brought before the judges the previous Saturday and since then 'he hath had dyvars wonderfull straundg fyts in the syght of all the greatest parsons here, as dyvers knyghts and ladies, and manny others of the bettar sort'. Sir Henry Hastings, probably remembering his earlier encounter, tried to hold the boy in his fits but, even with the assistance of another could not do so. When Smith could get an arm loose, he would strike himself on the chest repeatedly, so hard that 'you myght here the sound of yt the length of a long chamber'. This would go on for between fifty and three hundred blows, 'the least of them was able to stryke doune a strong man', but without seeming to cause him any pain. He was also tormented by six spirits, relating to six of the witches, each in the likeness of a different animal. There was a horse, a cat, a dog, a 'pullemar' and two types of fish. When each one tormented him in turn he would cry accordingly, whinnying when the horse tormented him, crying during the cat's assaults and so on (although we are not told the noises that accompanied the travails of the fish). The response has echoes of the Throckmorton strategy in that each suspect was brought was

⁵⁷ The Manuscripts of the Duke of Rutland, HMC, Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part IV, (London, 1888), I, 422. Unfortunately there are no details of the account and hence no clues as to the nature of the symptoms or of the accusations.

brought to him during his fits, told to speak particular phrases, 'and to name theare sperits, and one of them to speake yt after another, as thus: "I such a one chardge the hors, yf I be a wiche, that thou come forthe of the child."' Each would take their turn and if any should deviate from 'that charm' John would be 'myghtyly tormented' but if it was delivered 'as he had first directed them, at the end of the last he woould fall out of his fit as quyetly as if one did lay him doune to slepe'.⁵⁸ A little can be added to the symptoms from a later essay by Francis Osborne. Although he claims to have chosen to 'relate of Story of my own Knowledge', it should be noted that he was twenty three in 1616 and it is not made explicit whether he was claiming to be an eye witness.⁵⁹ The suspects were accused of bewitching several cattle and killing some children but the 'principal Cause of the Commitment' was John Smith who was 'supposed to have layn divers Moneths under their Fascination'. On occasion, his whole body would contract 'within the Compass of a Joyn'd-stool' and he was capable of writing in Hebrew and Greek characters, 'though not knowne to be skilled in those tongues'. When a spirit came into him, 'he was so Tormented, as he did, in his Fits, foame at the Mouth'.⁶⁰

Osborne adds the provision of supplementary evidence by one of the accused. On the night of the arrival of Sir Humphrey Winch and Sir Randolph Crew, she asked for a private conversation with the jailor. Granted such an opportunity she told him that 'she used a Familiar, together with the Rest; And that they had joyned to bewitch the said Boy'. Presumably her hope was that her admission and, more importantly, her bolstering of the accusations against her supposed accomplices would hang in the balance of the judgement against her. The fear of the consequences of such betrayal were evident in her plea that 'her Fellowes might not know it', that she be lodged elsewhere, 'for fear, They

⁵⁸ John Nichols, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester (London, 1795), Vol. II, Part II, 471*.

⁵⁹ Francis Osborne, A Miscellany of Sundry Essayes, Paradoxes, and Problematicall Discourses, Letters and Characters (London, 1659), 5. The gist of his version matches Heyrick's with the only disagreement being his suggestions that it was 'Three Silly Women' (6) who were accused and, given the considerable time between the event and his account, Heyrick is the more trustworthy of the two.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

should torment Her'. Her fears seem to have been well grounded in that Osborne immediately notes, 'within few Hours [she] dyed'.⁶¹ For the purposes of the trial, this meant the evidence was now dependent upon the jailer's report of her testimony within this private and confidential discussion, evidence of a different order of merit to her direct confession. Evidently, this weakening of the directness of the confession did not have sufficient impact on its power or Judges Crew and Winch were sufficiently willing to accept the evidence from Smith's performance and his response to the commands of the suspects, for, as Heyrick reported, nine suspects were duly convicted at executed on the morning of 18 July 1616.⁶²

The completion of this phase does not seem to have satisfied Smith's appetite for accusations or provided relief to his sufferings, as a month later the fits were still present and a further six suspects were brought into incarceration, awaiting the autumn assizes. James arrived as part of one of his progresses on 15 August, leaving the following day.⁶³ He plainly had misgivings about the nature of the case, perhaps due to the scale of the accusations, perhaps due to the continuation of the fits. It was not without precedent for the demonically possessed to continue to suffer after the death of the secondary cause of their distemper - the Lancashire seven suffered long after the execution of Edmund Hartley - but this was different. Once the table was cleared of the first group sending their demons, John identified a whole new set of women set upon making him suffer. For one individual to be the target of so many malevolent actors was without precedent. It is not clear how much, if at all, James examined Smith himself initially. James was not immediately convinced of imposture in that the suspects remained in prison while he sent John into the custody of George Abbot, the archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth Palace. Here the unnamed investigators chosen by Abbot 'did in a few Weeks, discover the Whole Deceit'. At the start of September, Smith was sent back to the king, where 'upon a Small Entreaty,

⁶¹ Ibid., 7.

⁶² Nichols, History, Vol. II, Part II, 471*.

⁶³ Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (New York, 1929), 322-3.

He would repeat all his Tricks oftentimes in a Day'.⁶⁴ The conclusion of imposture, of course, changed the judicial circumstances although it is not entirely clear that it was as cut and dried as this implies. James sent a writ to Leicester, requiring the judges, along with Thomas Herrick, the mayor, and Dr John Lambe, to examine the accused in the town hall. Lambe's presence is significant in that, as a canon lawyer and servant of the bishop of Peterborough, he had no place in the assizes and so it seems likely that he was sent as an overseer or a director, passing on the findings of Lambeth and the conclusions of the king, to ensure the appropriate conclusions were reached. The examination took place on 15 October and the following day Heyrick could report a warrant releasing five of the six suspects, with the sixth, as mentioned earlier, having died before the investigations were over.⁶⁵ The likely outcome of the examination was clear, at least around court, for on 12 October John Chamberlain could remark, among the news and gossip he passed to Dudley Carleton, that Winch and Crew 'are somewhat discountenanced for hanging certain witches in their circuit at Leicester', that 'it seems some ill planet hangs over our Judges heads here as in other places, that so many in so short time fall into disgrace'.⁶⁶ While it can certainly be accepted that James effectively slapped their wrists, there was no long term impact on their respective careers. It is worth considering that James made a distinction between the first and second rounds of prosecutions, allowing the first more credence, a judgement not unaided by his own pleasure in at least instigating the exposure of a fake possession and by sufficiently admiring admissions of failure by the judges, serving to mitigate any substantial reprisals.

III

⁶⁴ Osborne, 8.

⁶⁵ Nichols, History, Vol. II, Part II, 471*; Kittredge, 'King James I', 203.

⁶⁶ NA SP 14/86/121.

Before returning to the Star Chamber for the final case relating to demonic possession which appeared there, it is worth going west to Staffordshire to examine a 'fraudulent' possession claim involving Roman Catholic priests, not least because it is rewarding to look at the symptoms seen as the manifestation of the possession and the means of its 'exposure'. The experience of William Perry, the 'Boy of Bilson', when it appears in the historiography, tends to be employed as an instance of the lessening credibility of the diagnosis and of the confident revelation of the fakery of those making claims to be possessed or making claims on behalf of the possessed. In the academic cliché, 'it's a little more complicated than that' and the case carries unanswered questions and assumptions that query the determined teleology of decline. Although some account will, necessarily, be given of the efforts of the Catholic priests to exorcise him, the centre of attention will be the symptoms which were accepted, those which were suspected and the practicalities of his exposure.

Richard Baddeley was given the duty of providing the account of Perry's afflictions and treatment with his primary task being the excoriation of papist tactics of recruitment, their untrustworthy and self-serving behaviours and their dubious allies in the mission they took on. It was a task he seems to have taken on with delight and, to a degree, his work had been done for him. Before Perry's fraudulence was known, copies of A faithfull Relation, an account by the priests of their efforts with him and his spirits was printed and being circulated among sympathetic souls in the region. This meant that Baddeley could start his text with the punchline, that Perry was pretending to be possessed, preface the specific details with a discussion of 'Popish Exorcizing', and reprint A faithfull Relation, aware that the reader could read this celebratory account well aware that the rug was to be pulled from under the priestly feet when this was followed by an account of the exposure and William's confessions. As the title of Baddeley's work makes plain, his target was less Perry than the priests. As will be seen, this masks his silent givens and his

implicit guilt by association strategy. For the present purposes, it necessitates a closer reading to make clear the operation of the tract with a consequent shift in the appraisal of what exactly was being exposed. An early indication of the company in which Baddeley intends to place the clerics who came to Perry's assistance appears in his section on exorcising. He reminds the reader of Harsnet's Declaration in which he 'setteth forth whole Pageants of counterfeit Exorcismes' at Denham in the 1580s, in which 'it was proved to be nothing but deceitfull cunning, and plaine cosenage'.⁶⁷

As issues of truth are not to be taken too much on trust, I will move through the reprinted Relation and on to the exposure to allow a lessening of assumptions. In early 1620, William Perry, the son of a yeoman and aged 12 or 13 was returning from school when he passed an old woman who took umbrage at his failure to greet her. At this he felt something 'pricke him to the very heart'. He was drained of energy for a few days 'and at length grew into extreme fits' which were sufficiently strong to test the holding power of two or three people (46). They consulted a 'zealous Gentleman' who prayed over him; he seems to have diagnosed possession immediately, as he asked 'how many was in him', to which William responded with 'Three'. A second gentleman of good repute among both Protestants and Catholics joined them. He employed 'his best prayers and meanes that at that time he thought convenient' and this somewhat lessened the 'extreme fiercenesse of the fits'. However, he also negotiated with the author of A faithfull Relation, James Wheeler, 'in that I had been present many times in the like occasions, that I would see him, and make tryall whether hee were possessed' (46-7).

After a week Wheeler managed to attend the boy and was initially disturbed that cunning folk had been consulted, that 'they had used Sorceries of Witches, which made the Child offer violence to himselfe'. Until they had burned all such impious accoutrements,

⁶⁷ [Richard Baddeley,] The Boy of Bilson: or, A True Discovery of the Late Notorious Impostures of Certaine Romish Priests in their pretended Exorcisme, or expulsion of the Divell out of a young Boy, named William Perry, sonne of Thomas Perry of Bilson, in the County of Stafford, Yeoman (London, 1622), 8-9. Hereafter references will appear in the text.

he refused to help and they accordingly did so. He read litanies, gospels and the exorcism of Ambrose and when he read of the power of Peter over Simon Magus and Paul on 'the Magician Barriosus', William 'would bee so tormented, that three or four could hardly hold him'. When they had to leave, called away by unspecified 'urgent occasions', they left holy water and holy oil. The first was successful, 'that it would make him speake, though dumbe, and his tongue turned into his throat'; the second was rubbed on his arms and legs which were so 'grievously contracted, that a strong man could hardly unfold them', with the effect that they could regain their former length. In Wheeler's absence, from Saturday through to Monday, 'with extreme fits and heavings hee brought upp pinnes, wooll, knotted thred, thrums, rosemary, walnut leaves, feathers, &c'. When Wheeler returned towards the end of the week, William was still 'in great extremities, continually heaving up, and in this time he had brought up 11. pinnes, and a knitting needle folded up in divers folds'. (Wheeler expressed his gratitude for this having happened in his absence as it showed 'that is was no collusion of us') (47-9). On the Saturday, Wheeler advised Perry to tell him all that his squatter told him, to aid their counsel. After a period when he could not hear them, he said he could not tell what he had heard before all the company, presumably, it would appear, to avoid frightening them. Once he was alone with Wheeler he explained 'that the spirit bade him not' to listen to him and that 'the Witch said, that shee would make an end of him' and that she would bring in further pains 'if it were not for me, who she called a Roguish P'.⁶⁸ Her threat broadened to Perry's brothers and sisters and he pleaded for the priest to stay until Monday, for if he should leave, 'he said hee should be torne in pieces'. Wheeler responded with action, following the instructions of the Thesaurus Exorcismorum, blessed fire and burnt all 'those maleficialia, Sorceries, these filthy things that came from him'. Despite the fire being small, contained and smelling only of frankincense, William 'would vehemently cry out that he was killed, burned, and

⁶⁸ Presumably 'P' is either 'papist' or 'priest'.

choked'. Eventually he 'drank up the smoke' telling of the pleasures in seeing his enemies tormented. Wheeler told him to pray for the witch, that she might be converted from her wicked life, and William did so, declaring 'that now hee was perfectly himselfe' and asked that all his pens, books, ink, clothes and possessions in general should be blessed. Finally, he wished his family 'to blesse themselves, and to become Catholicks; out of which faith, by Gods grace, he said hee would never live or dye' (49-50).

The following day he exorcised him again but was prevented from being there during the day because, as Wheeler put it, there were 'divers Puritans resorting to him'. As these aspirant assistants are unnamed, it is not clear whether they were particularly zealous Protestants or that this was his generic term for Protestants. Through this day Perry had many fits and reported that on this occasion as on many others, 'hee saw the divell assault him in forme of a Black bird'. Wheeler persisted with his treatment and the boy was well when he left, having blessed his food and drink. However, he was then given 'a Syllibub, the sugar whereof being not blessed, he presently at the taste thereof began grievously to be tormented'. This ability to distinguish between items which had been blessed and those not, evidence of the power of the blessings, extended to flowers, as William was prone to tear them up, separating the blessed from the unblessed, 'and unblessed Raisins he would say they were too big for his mouth' (50).

Wheeler's hopes seem to have been raised, seemingly because his efforts caused the devil to tremble more and more. He 'made the divell to swell in his mouth' to show his presence, and asked William to show how many there were within him, to which he responded by 'holding up three fingers'. He drove them, one by one, into the big toe of the boy's right foot, telling them to show their arrival by shaking his foot 'and to stirre the legge' with greater motion according to their relative status. Then he 'caused the Boy to speake', expressing his desire to live and die a Catholic and 'wishing father, mother, and all his friends to serve God'. Understandably wanting to take advantage of the occasion to

pursue his missionary vocation, with the company being all Protestant, save one Catholic, he called the 'chief Fiend' to show himself, which he did by making William stick his tongue out and swelling the end of it. He asked the fiend to use the sheet in front of him to demonstrate how he would use anyone dying outside of the Church. Having overcome his unwillingness, he 'obeyed, tossing, plucking, haling, and biting the sheet, that it did make many to weepe and cry forth'. He asked how he would treat Luther, Calvin and John Foxe, 'which unwillingly he did performe after the same manner, but in a fiercer sort'. Naturally, his next question was how a good Catholic who died free of mortal sin would be treated, whereupon he 'thrust downe his armes, trembled, holding downe his head, and did no more'. Wheeler took this to its logical conclusion, fearing that the possession was caused by the sins of William's parents, 'for their lacke of beliefe', and so turned to his mother, asking, 'will you promise mee that you will become a Catholicke, if in your sight I cast out these divels in forme of fire?' She said she would consider it but the priest worried 'that the cause remaining, the effect also would remaine'. At this William 'gave a great shriek, began to be vehemently tormented', leading Wheeler to think another devil had entered him. He turned to his task, causing the devil, using William's voice, to cry out 'The Lord in heaven, the Lord in heaven'. Wheeler persevered, stroking the boy's head with a ribbon he had blessed, but William 'yelled forth that I killed him, cursing me, saying, A poxe of God light on the P. saying moreover, I will never be converted'.⁶⁹ A Protestant onlooker commented, 'Thou wilt then do worse'. William emerged from his trance and denied having said the words, thus proving the demonic agency, and affirmed that 'he would be constant in the Romane Catholicke faith till death'. By now it was three in the morning so the priest made the devil swear to be obedient to 'lawfull Exorcists, and not to hinder the eating, drinking, or sleeping of the Child' and retired for the night (50-3).

⁶⁹ In his confession, William identifies the 'ribbon' as a stole belonging to the priest: [Baddeley,] 67.

On the Monday morning Wheeler told the parents that he had stayed as long as he promised 'and as long as I well durst for danger'. William's father suggested that his son should go with him but was told that there was no convenient place for him but that he would return as soon as possible, providing he promised not to 'deale with Witches and Sorcerers' but Perry was more focussed on the ends than the means and said he could not make such a promise. Wheeler seems to have left holy oil and water but was not willing to return. He made one last effort as William was 'in a sounding fit', and once he was anointed he came to himself and 'hee did eate, drinke, sleepe, and walke, having onely short fits'. However he had heard that once the family called in cunning folk 'hee is more grievously tormented then ever before'. After he left, he wrote his account, completing and signing it on 1 July, 1620 (53-4).

Unfortunately for Wheeler, William's family were willing to explore all the avenues for the recuperation of their son. In addition to exorcism and the resort to cunning folk, there was also the judicial avenue. They were judged to have sufficient evidence against Jone Coxe, the woman suspected to be responsible for his torments to bring a case to the summer assizes at Stafford.⁷⁰ As the evidence, as far as ascertainable from the surviving account was either spectral or through reputation, it was judged to be inadequate and, following the advice of Sir Peter Warburton and Sir John Davies, the JPs, she was acquitted on 10 August 1620.⁷¹ This was not to reject the possibility that he was possessed so much as to reject the means of proving the suspect's culpability as the Justices were willing 'to commit that care (and if it might be so) the cure of the Boy' to the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield. That the bishop was Thomas Morton, a man who made his reputation on his contributions to the polemical literature against popery, helps to explain the tenor of the tract he commissioned. Perry was taken into residence at

⁷⁰ The accused is identified as part of William's confession where he admits he chose her as an appropriate suspect on the grounds of her reputation: [Baddeley], 62, 71.

⁷¹ Warburton was a fairly godly, well-established Justice while Davies was more of a dilettante and careerist, best known for his land reforms in Ireland.

Eccleshall Castle, away from his family, although not held in isolation or mistreated and members of his family were allowed to visit (60-1, recte 57-8). It was however, a different forum with different examiners carrying a different agenda, a matter that will be discussed in greater depth in the conclusion.

Baddeley's account of William's time at Eccleshall Castle obviously has a clear direction, not least in being entitled 'The meanes of discovering his dissimulation' but a slightly closer reading, rather against the grain, is worthwhile, as it complicates the assumptions encouraged in the reader. For the month of his residence, for most of which Morton was absent, Baddeley states that 'divers symptomes gave iust cause to suspect that he did but counterfeit'. The grounds for suspicion which follow are less than completely convincing once the reader goes beyond the authority of the statement. The first ground of suspicion was 'the easie and equall beating of his pulse in his strongest fits'. This seems curious in that one of the means for testing authentic possession was the regular pulse despite strenuous fits. The next was 'his quiet rest and sleepe' and 'his cleere complexion'. This was followed by 'his swallowing of whole morsels of bread without chewing, his spitting forth from him as naturally and perfectly as ever hee could doe in his best health'. Baddeley took this as proof that his inability to speak was feigned and that it revealed as untrustworthy the claim that his tongue was turned back, as neither swallowing nor spitting 'could possibly bee done with a tongue turned upwards, and doubled towards his throat, as he would seem to have it'. This becomes less convincing when the reader recalls that the difficulties with his tongue were said to be during some of his fits rather than a constant condition. Finally, the demonically induced dumbness was said to run contrary to 'his ordinary comming forth of his fits alwayes with one kind of lowde and large tunable grone', a common enough indication of the liminal moment of transition from diabolic fit to normal conditions. He finishes his dismissal of the symptoms with a derisory list of continued conditions that furnished the evidence for the first test:

‘notwithstanding his usuall casting up of his meate, his much fasting, and lanke belly, his patience, or (as it might rather seeme) senselesse stupidity, in induring those many prickings and violent extremities, without any signe of feeling, did argue some bodily disease and infirmity’. The resolution was that no further experiment were to be used before ‘some well approved Physician’ should assess whether or not he was suffering from a natural disease, although the way the examination proceeded prevented such a diagnosis from being delivered (61 recte 57-58). An equally valid reading might be that Perry experienced fits without showing signs of such convulsions in his breathing and blood rate, that he was, during his fits, struck dumb, vomited and lost physical sensitivity during his fits, effectively ticking most of the boxes for an authentic possession.

A new means for testing William emerged after a visit by his father and an aunt when the former asked after watching a fit whether the company thought his son was possessed or not. A trap was set by telling him, in the boy’s hearing, that nothing was considered ‘so marvellous, or so much to betoken any such thing’ as an individual falling into a fit upon hearing the opening the the gospel of John. Certain that William had taken on the means of this measurement, the experiment was tried and fits started accordingly. His father asked what they thought of this to which Morton replied that he liked it very much, ‘for upon this must I begin to worke’. That afternoon he called for a Greek New Testament and set out the rules to William. ‘Boy, it is either thou, or the divel, that abhorrest those words of the Gospel’. If it was the devil, the quality of his familiarity with Greek was sufficient to guarantee the right response; if it was William, ‘then art thou an execrable wretch, who playest the divels part’. ‘Wherefore looke to thy selfe, for now thou art to bee put unto triall; and marke diligently whether it be that same Scripture which shall be read unto thee; at the reading whereof thou doest seeme to be so much troubled and tormented’. Having set the stage, the bishop began by reading John 1:12 whereupon William ‘did accordingly, as he was formerly wont, fall into the passion of a trance’. Once

this trance was over, the bishop read the first verse to William, 'yet he suspecting it was not the same text, was not any whit troubled therewith'. It is not entirely clear whether he was told of his failure, with Baddeley merely noting that he seemed 'to be greatly confounded', lacking in response, 'staring with his eyes, and casting his head on both sides the bed, whereon he lay, that he might dissemble his dissimulation the better, hee told the company y^t he was troubled by the sight of 2. mice' (58-9).

It seems slightly odd that at this point, with his fraudulence supposedly established, that he was kept under close observation. He complained of feeling very sick, writing, 'as well as hee could, did signifie that he had a great paine in his belly'. The following morning, 'making water in the Urinall, his water was as blacke as Inke; for there were some that writ very legibly therewith'. Apart from the curious image of his examiners choosing to employ his urine as ink, there is a twofold mystery. It implies that Perry was continuing his efforts to stimulate possession and that the clerics thought it worthwhile to keep an eye on him, thereby suggesting that they were yet to be completely convinced of his fakery. The account gives no clear answer as, for Baddeley, it was not a question to be addressed. He simply notes that his urine was still black, and that he 'vehemently groned' when passing water. Indeed, to prove the validity of this symptom, when one came into his room 'the Boy did show him the manner of making water, whereof a little remaine came then from him, of the same blacke tincture, which hee purposely had reserved within the skinne, to make semblance that it so came immediately from him'. The reason Baddeley draws such attention to this symptom emerges on the third day because then, 'by diligent watchfullnesse, and other meanes which was used to observe him', he was seen mixing his urine with ink 'and nimbly conveying the Inkhorne into a private place'. Confronted with this discovery, 'after an earnest, but loving exhortation made unto him', he burst into tears and confessed to fraudulence (59-60). For the present purpose, what is noteworthy is that there was no suggestion of this as a symptom in the Relation or in the confession to his

earlier episodes. It works very well as unassailable 'proof' of his fraudulence, being caught with his hand in the till in a way that left no space for contrary readings that could be produced in response to the earlier tests.

The same day, 8 October, and then on 13 October, a full confession was taken from William. The symptoms tally with those given in the Relation, with the addition of his tendency to fall into a fit at the opening to the Gospel according to John. He also told of an old man called Thomas but whose surname he could not recall, who offered to teach him tricks which would allow him to avoid school, shortly before Easter 1620.

By and by this old man began to teach me, first, how to grone and mourne; next, to roll and cast up my eyes, so that nothing but the white of the eye should bee seene; after that, to wrest and turne my necke and head both wayes towards my backe, then to gape hideously with my mouth, & grate with my teeth, to cling and draw in my belly and guts, to stretch out my legs, and clutch my hands: after that, to put crooked pinnes, rags, and such like baggage, into my mouth, that I might seeme to vomit them up. And although (said he) that some folke shall put thee to paine, by pricking, and pinching thee, yet thou must indure all patiently. After this sort hee taught and learned me some six severall times privately in a Close, where none could see us (62).

By way of explanation and as an attempt to slur the priests by association, the confession included the question as to whether the old man told him priests would exorcise him, He admitted he had, which prompted the question why he did not pretend to be dispossessed by them. To this, he answered, 'because that much people did resort unto him, and brought him many good things; and also for that he was not willing to goe to schoole againe: yet that in the end his meaning was to be holpen by them' (69-70).

There was what amounts to a codicil to his confession. This could be seen as a last effort to derogate the priests, adding to the implied guilt throughout, but perhaps also a

reflection of Morton's developing political position. He was now less centre stage to royal favour as he had been when King James had made him part of the Chelsea College, a breeding stable for anti-popery and part of the efforts to negotiate a Calvinism proving its loyalty by distance from godly polemicists like William Ames as much as papist writers. The supplement recorded Perry's resolution that 'it became not the Professors of truth to imitate the Popish priests in such cases, who falsly arrogated to themselves such an Apostolicall power, by Exorcizing to expell Divels' no matter how much it seemed an appropriate device by which to win converts. The proper means was 'the profession of Christians, to seeke to glorifie Him onely by truth, who will bee worshipped in spirit and truth' (71). Perry's fate, after a period of recovery, was to reappear before the magistrates at Stafford assizes in late July 1621, this time as accused rather than accuser. On this occasion he was brought before Warburton, in what would be one his last appearances on the bench, this time accompanied by Sir Humphrey Winch, one of the JPs who sentenced those accused by John Smith at Leicester to death. Perry was required to beg the forgiveness of God, of Jone Coxe and of the whole county 'whom hee had so notoriously and wickedly scandalized', admitting his hearty confession (73).

There may remain a note of dissatisfaction with this account. I have not explicitly made it plain whether I have been trying to convince readers that he was 'authentically' possessed by demons or, for that matter, accepting that he was as wholly fraudulent as the tract suggested. I'm afraid, to a degree, such dissatisfaction must remain, at least for now as it is not my intention to do so now. My intention has been to highlight the ambiguities consequent upon the agenda of Baddeley's treatment. Perry delivered a confession as was required of him in the circumstances of being surrounded by people distant from him socially, in terms of age and authority, in the same way that he 'confessed' his demonic possession in the earlier, different circumstances of being surrounded by onlookers, many of whom were distant from him in age and authority and

social status. That is the point, that his status as genuinely possessed and genuinely fraudulent was dependent upon the context in which the questions were asked. The 'genuineness' of either his possession or lack of possession was context-dependent; to examine any 'real' sense of possession is to ask a different, albeit related question and one that will be addressed below.

The last case relating to demonic possession to appear before the Star Chamber presents a task common to many of its predecessors, in that the record relates to the conclusion rather than the case in progress. The process of unpicking the evidence is made more challenging than normal in that there are three generations of the same family involved with their own interests, particularly as, when they appear in the records, they have been interrogated by the monarch and are facing legal punishment. As far as we can be certain, this was a counterfeit possession and so here the attention is more concentrated on the symptoms held to be convincing to those who were not in on the game (and it is not exactly entirely clear when all the individuals charged were brought on board) and what can be learnt from the manner in which the possession and its treatment became less and less under their control.

Reading the accusations from Star Chamber backwards, as it were, Katheren Malpas senior, was thought to have persuaded her daughter, Katheren Malpas junior, to 'be bewitched or possessed' by the devil in December 1620.⁷² Katheren junior's first reported fit was at the start of February 1621 and her mother's account gives a list of symptoms as the possessed 'some tymes she woulde be taken in one fashion and some tymes in another'. A 'thinge woulde lift up in her belly of the bignes of ones fist' and would move from side to side. On occasion it would be 'seene in the side of her necke the bignes

⁷² NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 1. The case gets detailed attention in Richard Raiswell, 'Faking it: a case of counterfeit possession in the reign of James I', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 23 (1999), 29-43 and appears, slightly less centrally in *idem* and Peter Dandle, 'Demon possession in Anglo-Saxon and early modern England: continuity and evolution in social context', *Journal of British Studies* 47 (2008), 738-67. While there are some differences in their conclusions and mine, they are best regarded as pieces to be read in parallel with what follows, with different intentions.

of an egge', sometimes moving into her arms or holding her hands together. It might 'make her heade shake as though she were troubled wth the palsey'. She would often 'fome att the mouth & shrike verie fearfully' and sometimes the thing would draw her belly 'flatt to her backe & woulde drawe downe her shoulder bones'. Her legs would 'turne backwarde & be verie stiffe' or she would be stretched and remain so rigid that her joints 'woulde not bend wthout breakinge'. She suggested there were 'divers other fashions and trances' which she could not recall but averred that Katheren junior's face and hands were pricked with pins to demonstrate her lack of feeling.⁷³ Crucially for what was to emerge, she reported not only that Katheren beat the walls of the room where she lay but that she did 'cry out Gammer Dawes bring hither a sallot for Puffet & Elias', presumably the names of the demons who were to be seen as the familiars when accusations of witchcraft developed.⁷⁴

Katheren junior's grandfather, Thomas Saunders, similarly denying any role in hatching any plot in December, gave a slightly more completely specific account of the first fit. About 6 at night Katheren junior was taken with 'a sudden soundinge' that encouraged him to call in the neighbours to help him. She 'was then stricken layme & could not stande & soe continewed lame until after Easter. In her first fit, he recalled, she did 'lifte up her eyes', perhaps in a manner similar to the symptom of rolling them to expose the whites of her eyes encountered before. She drew her mouth to one side, twisting her face 'very fearfully' and 'beckening her handes to the neighb^{ors} their present as though she desired them to pray for her' and he remembered the same names given to the demons.⁷⁵ His wife, Elizabeth, supported these accounts, adding that Katheren 'would have a risinge upp in her stomacke to the bignes of a halfe penny loafe & would beate her heade against the

⁷³ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 1v. It is not clear how old Katheren junior was but she must have been reasonably mature since her mother deposed that she did not see her more than a couple of occasions between Whitsun and August. It is an, as yet, unanswered question as to why Katheren junior was living with her grandparents in Upton parish, near West Ham, Essex, while her mother was living near Old Fish Street, in St Mary Maudlin, London, particularly when relations seem to have been fairly good between mother and daughter.

⁷⁴ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 2r.

⁷⁵ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 4.

wainscott & would shrugge up her shoulders & would make her boanes to crackle with in her skyne & would have some tymes her mouth drawne on one side'.⁷⁶ From Katheren senior a slightly more complete impression of the familiars can be gained, at least as they were reported by her daughter's visions. Katheren junior, while foaming at the mouth, said, 'o mother looke how she comes lik a browne dogge fominge & roaring', although Katheren senior denied that her daughter had said 'that she would have her as it is now demaunded', presumably 'her' being the witch behind the possession. On one occasion the woman they were accusing of bewitching her visited Katheren during one of her fits as a cat.⁷⁷ In fact, Elizabeth Hedlyn, the main target of the accusations, proved to have a range of species, as she also appeared 'in severalle shapes & formes ... some tymes in the liknes of a black dogge & some tymes in the liknes of a swarme of bees'.⁷⁸ One further noteworthy symptom was a 'squeaking voice' which she used at such times when she said 'the spirit did speake wthin her', explaining that the voice was like that because 'the spirit did drawe her breath backe through her throat into her breste & soe made the noyse'.⁷⁹

One question, asked of all the defendants and which added to Katheren being not only possessed but also bewitched, was whether they acquired any money as a result of her affliction. Katheren senior admitted that she had told people that her daughter was suffering from an odd ailment, but not that she 'did draw Company to see her straunge sicke & fitte' or that she was aware that any money was given by 'persons that should come to see her in pittie or Comisseration'. She did recall two or three people giving alms that she passed on to Katheren junior but could remember neither the source nor the amount, estimating that it was about ten shillings.⁸⁰ Elizabeth Saunders backed up this relatively low income and stressed that although 'some few persons' gave money, this was

⁷⁶ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 10v.

⁷⁷ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 2v, 9.

⁷⁸ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 6r.

⁷⁹ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 20.

⁸⁰ NA STAC 8/32.13 f. 1.

‘not for doinge of any tricke’, that it was not a freak show, although she accepted that she did spread reports that her granddaughter was ‘strangelie visted’.⁸¹

Elizabeth Saunders eventually admitted having started the scheme in December, pleading for gentle judgement as the plan was ‘to gayne & gett money for the better mantaynance of [Katheren Malpas,] her mother & sister & not for any other intent & purpose’.⁸² That was as much as to plead for the judgement to be solely against the counterfeiting and not any intention to defame or bring any accusation of witchcraft to court. Thomas Saunders is less clearly placed. He claimed repeatedly that he had no idea Katheren was fraudulent or even that there were suspicions in that direction until the day before she was summoned to see James. He admitted to hearing Elizabeth delivering a scolding to their other granddaughter, another Elizabeth, for suggesting that her sister was a fake but this does not run counter to his shortly following insistence that he never knew she was so. The Attorney General, Sir Thomas Coventry, was of another mind, accepting that Thomas Saunders was not in from the start, that he was angry with Katheren when he found out but was persuaded to go along with the scheme when he saw the lucrative attendance of visitors, including ‘persons of qualitee’, to Katheren’s performances. The guilt of Katheren senior rested mainly on her own daughter’s confession.⁸³ One part of the deposition seems to support the late arrival of Thomas’s awareness of Katheren’s mendacity: after the interest had broadened in both in terms of numbers and status, he employed one Mr Franklin, who he described as a physician, to assuage Katheren’s illness, spending twenty shillings for the treatment. The clergymen by then assisting the woman they thought to be demonically possessed told him that Franklin ‘did deale & use sawcerie’, that he was a cunning man, probably disapproving of his services and hoping to discourage Thomas from these means. What was probably more persuasive was

⁸¹ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 2r 12r.

⁸² NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 12r.

⁸³ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 4r, 5r, 7v, 11r, 9r, 16r; cf. Raiswell, 31 for a less charitable reading of the same depositions.

Elizabeth's expression of disgust at the wasted income, apparently saying to him, 'Gods bread, Tom Saunders why wouldest thou give this fellowe money being thou knowest she counterfeit'. The judgement is a matter of choosing between whether his knowledge was presumed, was implicit, that he genuinely did not know or that he knew and was being foolish.⁸⁴ The depositions do not give enough for any firm conclusion. The end to the employment of Franklin did not end medical consultations, merely redirected them, with a preacher being sent with a urine sample to consult Theodore Gulston of Blackfriars, the failure of his prescription functioning to lessen any thoughts of natural disease.⁸⁵

Either the family realised that their income would rise if they worked to draw in 'better' visitors or their concern for Katheren grew as her fits continued. The assessment depends on who is being assessed, as their next action preceded Thomas Saunders' calling upon the cunning man. They turned for clerical aid, looking to their vicar, Mr Jennings, and the lecturer, William Holbrooke, both of whom responded to the plea. Jennings has proven to be difficult to identify but Holbrooke was at least of moderate godly stock. He was known for promoting the reformation of manners, not a puritan monopoly and he had a brush with the authorities over nonconformity in 1617. Raiswell notes him preaching at Bromley in Middlesex and St Andrew Hubbard in London in 1621 and he may have spread the word, looking for support.⁸⁶ Perhaps on the ministers' advice, they played by the book and asked Sir Henry Marten, the Chancellor of the bishop of London, for a licence to fast and pray over Katheren.⁸⁷ That the licence was granted suggests an early date because at the start of 1621 the bishop was John King, a man with common ground with the godly, while his replacement, after his death in March, was George Montaigne, of Laudian sympathies albeit less rigorous in his administration than some of his

⁸⁴ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 5, 9r.

⁸⁵ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 5.

⁸⁶ Raiswell, 39-40.

⁸⁷ NA STAC 8/32.13 ff. 6v, 2v.

colleagues.⁸⁸ Jennings came and prayed with Katheren junior and Holbrooke came twice in Easter week with Elizabeth Saunders rather frustratingly reporting that 'there was afterwarde severall tymes other persons who did weare blacke clothes lik unto ministers but whether they were ministers or preachers' she could not say.⁸⁹

This respectable interest had what may have been the desired result of bringing more visitors. Advantage was taken of the rising interest with onlookers being refused to have 'accesse unto her with out givinge money therefore or promisinge to give', Thomas admitting that he and 'some others [did] sitt att the ante door of the house ... to keepe people from going in', effectively an admission that, perhaps on the grounds of health and safety, an entrance fee was being taken.⁹⁰ However there were two less helpful consequences probably unanticipated. The first is reflected in some of Coventry's queries. He wanted to know how public the meetings were and his questions about the clergy appearing show that there were fears of a Sommers or Glover redivivus.⁹¹ This, of course, raised the possibility of what was to come to pass, the fears of the authorities of religious-political propaganda at a time of renewed tensions relating to disputes in the public sphere about the religious dimension of foreign policy and the Jacobean religious loyalties on the international stage after a decade of relative peace and quiet.

The second consequence, made more likely by the shifting personnel although there were, as will be seen, strands of evidence that it was already a potential, was the turn to identifying the secondary cause of the possession in accusations of witchcraft. This is an instance of the closer association of possession and bewitching discussed above.

⁸⁸ It may be reflective of the chancellor's sympathies as much as the bishop's, as Marten was of a godly inclination and did much to mitigate the impact of Montaigne's policies on the parishes, later providing a voice against the Laudian changes to worship: *ODNB*, 'Sir Henry Marten'. King, it may be recalled, preached at Whitehall, addressing the question of the authority of discernment of possession at the time of Mary Glover's possession: see above, 281-4.

⁸⁹ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 2v. Thomas adds 'one Mr Wilson of the parish of westham' to Jennings and Holbrook as those advising him not to employ the cunning man but apart from the title, the common surname and the absence of any clear identification of him with a religious title make it uncertain whether he was a minister or not: NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 5r.

⁹⁰ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 9r. Elizabeth Saunders noted the numbers attendant at the sessions around Easter: NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 11v.

⁹¹ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 15r, 9r, 18r.

The appearance of the visions of demons or spirits was not absent earlier but, as far as can be ascertained, the visions became more frequently identified with familiars or even as forms of the alleged witches further into the possession. This is partly reading between the lines of denials and so inherently a matter of impression, not aided by the fact that the questions have little chronological structure. Two suspects emerged although it differs from the Gunter case in that these were not targets which drove the possession so much as believable suspects chosen on an ad hoc basis. Elizabeth Saunders admitted that Katheren junior 'did often tymes during the tyme of her fittes say & exclayme that she was bewitched by goodwife Hedlyn' but claimed that she never heard her say 'that she was bewitched by Goodwife White nor by wicked spiritts'. Alongside this Elizabeth reported that Katheren did say '& affirme the Goodwife Hedlyn did appeare unto her att severall tymes', either 'in the liknes of a browne dogge & other tymes in the lines of a white sheepe', but Goodwife White had never appeared as was alleged.⁹² Thomas Saunders backed this up with Hedlyn's supposed forms being 'the liknes of a blacke dogge' or 'the liknes of a swarme of bees'.⁹³

Around this time the family became more pro-active in searching out the witch or witches. When the clergy became involved, the emphasis was still on finding a cure, as with Franklin, or eliminating the explanation of natural disease, as with Gulston. Goodwife White seems to have been the first choice, probably a believable suspect to the onlookers, perhaps a woman with a reputation. They were quickly discouraged because, when she heard of the suspicion, White visited Katheren junior and was sufficiently formidable for Katheren to immediately withdraw the accusation, claiming to have been mistaken. This may help to explain Elizabeth Saunders's emphasis that she never heard Katheren junior accuse White in her fits.⁹⁴ They looked further afield for White's replacement. Thomas Saunders seems to have known of Hedlyn, that she lived in Plaistow but had to gain

⁹² NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 3v.

⁹³ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 6r.

⁹⁴ NA STAC 8/32/13 f. 6v.

guidance to her house from a resident called Smith. To get broader support for their claim that Hedlyn was a witch, around early April 1621, Thomas went to Plaistow to talk to a resident, Anne Godfrey who had been troubled the previous December. This may have been to see how far the symptoms matched, an investigation of genuine suspicions about Hedlyn, or a recruitment drive working on the supposition that if there was more than one accusation against her, the tide of credibility would rise. Certainly the latter assumption informed the interrogations in Star Chamber. Thomas was asked if he persuaded Anne that Hedlyn was the cause of her affliction and that, once convinced, she did 'feigne her selfe to be sicke and to practise & exercise the like trickes & devises as the said Katheren Malpas did'. Indeed the allegation suggested that the two women synchronised their fits and that they encouraged her 'to Counterfeit the squeaking voice w^{ch} the saide Katheren Malpas did use at such tyme'.⁹⁵ Anne seems to have taken the task up with enthusiasm, either because she was convinced of the cause of her former ailment or because of general hostility to Hedlyn. With Thomas's encouragement, she brought a complaint to the Quarter Sessions (without Thomas supporting her complaint with his own), a complaint which fell flat and resulted in an indictment of Anne on the grounds of a pretence intended to threaten the life of Hedlyn. She was duly found guilty in July and placed in gaol for the eight months until the next assizes.⁹⁶

Obviously the appearance of Anne in court and the guilty verdict raised the public profile of Katheren's related case. Despite Anne's misfortune, Katheren's fits continued through the summer. Although there is no evidence of continued interest from the clergy involved around Easter, there was sufficient attention to bring the case to the king's notice when he was at Theobald's in Hertfordshire. The family were summoned to be examined by James in the autumn of 1621. This summons, quite reasonably seems to have struck them with fear. Thomas considered flight to avoid Hedlyn becoming armed for legal action

⁹⁵ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 7v, 9.

⁹⁶ Raiswell, 44.

which could leave them 'stript out of all and utterly undon'. Katheren senior told her daughter that 'she should speake the truth unto the kinge & not to accuse the s[ai]d Goody Hedlyn wrongfully'. Katheren junior's response is interesting: either she had internalised and accepted the diagnosis and was convinced by the story she had been telling, possibly her mother was sticking to her guns, or her testimony is a lie. Katheren junior told her that it was Hedlyn 'that did bewitch her' and that if she, that is Katheren junior 'were raiked with hott Irons she would confesse not[;] it was she & not others' that were the cause of it all.⁹⁷ Clearly they were unsuccessful in any efforts to convince James. They must have made some efforts, given the elements of denial among the depositions to Star Chamber. That their earlier efforts failed is shown in the very fact that they were brought under the eye of the Attorney-General in February 1622 and examined through the next few months. As is the case with all Star Chamber cases, we lack the final verdict, but the tone of the interrogations, along with Elizabeth Saunders' at least partial confession and suggestions of a confession from Katheren junior, a guilty verdict is a safe assumption. In May 1622 Elizabeth explained the intention of raising money for the upkeep of the family and that, in the course of three weeks she taught Katheren various tricks and she became adept in heaving up her stomach, writhing her hands, leaping around and skipping, making her spine 'crackle' and such 'anticque gestures'.⁹⁸

The lessons from the Malpas case are various. Without ignoring the admission of some level of guilt, there are interesting absences and elements of 'authenticity' at least in the perception of many involved at different times and among different elements of those involved. To start with the main absence, it should be noted that there was little space among the symptoms for the more 'godly' forms of resistance or dialogue with the possessing spirits central to predecessors like Darling or Glover. The focus was on gaining a cure and later on identifying the witch behind the affliction. More 'religious' elements

⁹⁷ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 9, 3r.

⁹⁸ C. L. Ewen, *Witchcraft in the Star Chamber* (n.p., 1938), 55-6.

seem to have been employed when the ministers were involved, with Katheren Malpas senior denying that anyone did 'persuade & direct' her daughter that 'if any Bible prayer book or godly or devout booke were offered unto her to read she should flinge them farre away from her as is alledged', a query relating to Thomas Saunders' testimony that some times she read the Bible when she was out of her fits 'but when her traunces began then the extremity of her fitts would cause her to cast the Bible away'.⁹⁹ In the early stages, not only was there sufficient acceptance of the possibility of possession that many neighbours and some more respectable onlookers visited, although the respective degrees of concern and less well-intentioned curiosity are impossible to assess, but it seems that Thomas Saunders took time to take on the mimicry involved and there is the intriguing albeit uncertain suggestion that Katheren junior herself maintained the reality of the possession. Beyond the closest family, not only were the local and possibly less local clergy sufficiently convinced to contribute to dispossession by fasting and prayer, the account given to the authorities was sufficiently acceptable to win the rare licence to do so. The credibility of the possession began to unravel as the stakes were raised, with the attention turning to the pursuance of witches and Anne Godfrey's failure to get a conviction but even this did not end the fits and the performance until the forum changed to the assessment of James and to the Star Chamber, with the unhappy accident of timing with the rise in the tensions of religious politics raising the danger of political purpose in an effort at public dispossession by ministers with their own suspected axe to grind. In short, demonic possession itself was not incredible but the wider circumstances and the increasing lack of control alongside the higher stakes made it less likely to survive the realpolitik of the early 1620s.

⁹⁹ NA STAC 8/32/13 ff. 2v, 6v.

The Doubtful Fraudulence of Fewston

The preceding section may have given a mixed impression. On the one hand there have been a series of cases seen as counterfeit, by contemporaries and historians alike, while on the other there have been questions raised against the certainty and the means by which that certainty has been reached. While I trust a degree of credit can be given to the dimension of muddying the waters by drawing attention to the uncertainty of conclusions regarding particular cases and that the continuation of the acceptance of the discourse of demonic possession, at least in the abstract, across the board and in the particular by medics, divines and the canonical guide to jurymen, is accepted, there may be added to that a sense of frustration. This may be a feeling of equivocation, perhaps even prevarication, inflicted by a refusal to make explicit any sense of whether or in what sense many of these cases covered so far were 'real' possessions. This neglect is to a purpose in that issues of 'true' and 'false' diabolic possessions are rather more complicated than we tend to assume and deserve to be addressed at greater length and in a more complicated manner than a straightforward either/or categorisation encourages. In order to set the stage for such an examination, one last case will be discussed. This is not intended to enhance the sense of frustration but to highlight some aspects that need to be discussed as part of the means of identifying the criteria for assessing claims to authenticity, both by contemporaries and, with a different agenda, historians.

The remaining allegations of demonic possession are those produced by the gentry family of Fairfax of Fewston, North Yorkshire, near Harrogate, and their neighbours, the Jeffray family. The surviving account was written by Edward Fairfax, the translator and minor poet, educated at Clare College, Cambridge. It remained unpublished until the nineteenth century although it certainly circulated in manuscript and was read by Francis Hutchinson, courtesy of Joseph Wasse, a native of Yorkshire and a fellow of Queen's

College, Cambridge.¹ While Fairfax rarely makes his goals explicit and despite the quality of his account it does not seem to have been intended for publication; it almost certainly was intended for readers among his peers as a defence of himself, his family and their reputation through a remarkably detached, if not unfeeling, narrative, analysis and intelligent engagement with the experience of his daughters' and his neighbour's daughter's demonic possession. To suggest that he was writing from a particular position is not to suggest that he is untrustworthy, merely that his assessment must be read with an awareness of his primary intent. He opens by introducing himself, which in itself suggests that the intended readership was not confined to those familiar with him. He assures the reader that 'I am in religion neither a fantastic Puritan nor superstitious Papist', is settled on 'the sure ground of God's word to warrant all I believe' and 'a faithful Christian and obedient subject' (32).

He begins to give 'some notice of the Persons', starting with 'the patients' and moving on to the 'women questioned for this offence' and their spirits. The manner in which he makes the introductions is noteworthy, as it sets out some of his agenda, parts of it with subtlety, some less so. His daughter Helen was aged 21, healthy and well balanced, 'free from melancholy, of capacity not apprehensive of much, but rather hard to learn things fit, slow of speech, patient of reproof, of behaviour without offence'. This can be read, in addition to the 'facts', to eliminate the symptoms of possession as a consequence of melancholy or an over-active imagination, as well as establishing Fairfax as a clear-minded, balanced assessor of the patient, disinclined to beatify her. The second patient is Elizabeth, aged 7, 'of a pleasant aspect, quick wit, active spirit, able to receive instruction, and willing to undergo pains'. The third is Maud Jeffray, aged 12, who 'suffered much from

¹ Edward Fairfax, *Demonologia: A Discourse On Witchcraft As It Was Acted In The Family Of Mr. Edward Fairfax*, ed. by William Grainge (Harrogate, 1882) hereafter references will appear in the text; Francis Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay concerning witchcraft* (London, 1718), 35-6. Grainge mentions a slightly earlier edition by the Philobiblon Society, a small group of academics, divines and gentlemen of society which printed short runs, mostly of primary sources and which came to an end in 1884 but none seem to survive. The case appears occasionally in the literature and is fairly central to the analysis of Andrew Cambers, 'Demonic possession, literacy and "superstition" in early modern England', *Past and Present* 202 (2009), 3-35 with some overlapping interests with the following analysis.

the same hands'. He has no more to add as 'I know her not so well... for this lamentable occasion did acquaint us only; neither know I her parents but by sight' (32). This last absence of further detail is an implicit anticipation of, and pre-emptive defence against, suggestions of co-operation between the families in fraudulence.

Having introduced the patients, Fairfax's next set to introduce is the suspects and their spirits, as 'the children demonstrated their shapes'. The reader is encouraged to share his judgement by the inclusion of their descriptions, connections and reputations. The first is Margaret Wait, a widow who arrived some years earlier with a husband. They brought with them 'a repute for witchcraft and theft' and the husband was later hanged for theft. Margaret's reputation for witchcraft grew and her spirit 'is a deformed thing with many feet, black of colour, rough with hair, the bigness of a cat, the name of it unknown'. Her daughter shared her name and reputation, with 'added impudency and lewd behaviour' and her spirit was 'a white cat spotted with black, and named Inges'. The third was named Jennit Dibb,² 'a very old widow', with her mother, two aunts, husband and some of her children 'all been long esteemed witches'. Jennit's spirit 'is in the shape of a great black cat called Gibbe, which hath attended her now above 40 years'. She was aided by her daughter, Margaret Thorp, recently widowed, 'for which she beareth some blame' and a 'docile scholar of so skilful a parent'. Her 'familiar is in the shape of a bird, yellow of colour, about the bigness of a crow', named Tewhit. The fifth was Elizabeth Fletcher, 'notoriously famed for a witch, who had so powerful hand over the wealthiest neighbours about her, that none of them refused to do anything she required; yes, unbesought they provided her with fire, and meat from their own tables; and did what else they thought would please her'. The sixth was Elizabeth Dickenson, of whom he had little to say, either of her character or spirit. 'The report of her from my neighbour Jeffray you shall find dispersed in the subsequent discourse', effectively the same approach, or

² On the first occasion she is mentioned, she is named as 'Dibble' but everywhere else she is 'Dibb' so I have adopted the latter.

deliberate failure to find out more in the interest of preserving the distance from his fellow sufferer. The seventh woman who 'much afflicteth the children' appeared in many visitations and talked to the children but they 'know her not, and therefore call her the strange woman'. All that is added is that her spirit was 'in the likeness of a white cat', called Fillie which she had kept for twenty years (32-4).

Fairfax's last step in laying out his stall before setting out the narrative was to mention rumours of forgery and of natural disease. This comes directly after complaints about a readiness of such people to seek remedy for maleficia from 'those whom they call Wiseman', that is, cunning folk, and how little 'the truth of the Christian religion [is] known in these wild places and among these rude people' (35) thereby associating such suggestions with inherently untrustworthy people. However he makes it clear that the people spreading such rumours were not merely 'the vulgar' by remarking that such explanations were made to the justices where they were welcomed 'either for the person's sake who presented it, or, for that those magistrates are incredulous of things of this kind; or, for perhaps both these reasons', thus setting the seed for later implications. Leaving allegations of counterfeiting to one side for now, he preempts the latter suggestion by assuring the reader that he did not stampede to a diabolic explanation, by making it clear that 'some books were lent me in physic, but they did not describe their agonies as I thought' (36). Indeed he later notes that, upon Helen's initial tribulations, they thought she had 'perfect symptoms of the disease called "the mother;" and for a long time we attributed all she said or did to it' (37). Much later he occupies the religious high ground by reiterating the repeated suggestion that he should scratch the suspects, 'as a remedy ordained of God' but that he preferred to leave 'their charms, togs and scratching to them that put confidence in them, and to the devil who devised them'; Fairfax 'only relied upon the goodness of God and invoked his help', with such mercy eventually arriving, 'so that we are not disappointed of our hope. His name be praised therefore' (88-9).

Having portrayed himself, his family and the suspects, he turned to the task of setting out a detailed narrative of their travails, beginning on 21 October 1621 with Helen's first symptoms. She was sent into the parlour to check the fire and when she did not return, his eldest son, William, was sent after her. He found her 'laid along upon the floor, in a deadly trance'. They could not revive her and she 'laid several hours as dead', eventually recovering and reporting a dream of a sermon by Alexander Cooke, the vicar of Leeds, who would return in the early visions. She was well the following day but for some days after she had many 'of the like trances' in which she seemed to speak 'to her brothers and sisters, who were dead long before', conversations she affirmed after her recovery (36-7). After an account of her developing symptoms, to which I will return, in November she 'saw a similitude of a man come in at the top of a chimney, and presently fell into a trance'. The man claimed to have mended Maud Jeffray and offered to do the same to Helen. 'She answered, "I will have none of thy amends. God shall mend me when it pleaseth him, and none other..."' (43). Shortly after, they heard of similar sufferings fallen upon Maud Jeffray which seem to have started about the beginning of October but remained unknown to the Fairfaxes until the middle of November. She had seen 'a vision of a boy' while she was milking the cattle and then 'fell often into many trances, and great extasies'. Her family, 'as it is said, went to a wizard' and she recovered for six or seven weeks but then relapsed 'into greater infirmities' than before. 'And this was the amending of that child which the spirit told of when he offered to amend my daughter' (44-5). In addition to the potential understanding of things beyond her knowledge (which needs such lack of knowledge to be taken on trust of course), the account of the cunning man further distances Edward from the Jeffray family as well as confirming the inefficacy of such means. The third sufferer was added around Christmas when Elizabeth Fletcher visited, claiming to want to clear herself of suspicions spread by a vision of Margaret Wait that she was behind the troubles. Her real intention was to touch the younger daughter and she

indeed took the opportunity, lifting her up and placing Elizabeth beside her. Accordingly, the following Sunday, 6 January, Elizabeth said 'she saw a poor boy, who appeared to her sundry times and in divers places in the hall', these reports apparently witnessed by forty visitors present for the celebration of Christmas (60-61).

Once the narrative concentrates on the successive trances and visions, there are quickly established patterns with some themes emerging and retreating and a few unusual elements which may be particular to the region. On 3 November Helen complained about being poisoned and told that a white cat had been on her, 'and drawn my breath, and hath left in my mouth and throat so filthy a smell, that it doth poison me'. At this point no clear diagnosis had been made and her parents tried to assure her that it was but a dream. Helen persevered with her version and it was noticed that 'after this blowing in her mouth by the cat, in many of her trances, she voided much blood at her mouth' (38). It was only the best part of a fortnight later that her father really came on board. On 14 November she saw a black dog by her bedside and shortly after had an apparition. She saw 'a young gentleman, very brave; and a hat with a gold band, and ruff in fashion; he did salute her with the same compliment, as she said, Sir Fernandino Fairfax useth when he came to the house to salute her mother'. He claimed to be a suitor and offered to make her 'queen of England and all the world if she would go with him'. Helen refused and said, 'In the name of God, who are you?' Her suspicions were confirmed when he forbade her to name God and he withdrew for a while. When he returned, he was accompanied by 'a fair woman, richly attired', who he claimed was his wife. Despite the woman being 'fairer by much than she was', he offered to leave her if Helen accepted him. Perhaps there are echoes of similar visions with differing gender roles from Robert Briggs.³ Helen wisely declined the offer and the gentleman departed. When he returned, on his own, but with a knife, he suggested that she kill herself, replacing the knife with a rope upon her refusal but she

³ See above, 52.

found this no more persuasive. Lowering ambition slightly, he told her to remove a pin from her clothes and put it in her mouth, to no apparent purpose but indicative of the expectation of pins within possession narratives (38-9; cf. 133).

At this point the visitor grew more serious, trying to take her to the beck and Helen taunted him, claiming that he would not be so threatening if her brother or father were there. He dismissed this threat and so she replied that she would send for Mr Cooke, who the visitor dismissed as a liar.

At these words Mr. Cooke seemed to come in at the parlour door, in his gown, which he put back, as she after reported, and she saw his little breeches under it. She began to say, 'You are welcome Mr. Cooke, take a stool and sit down. I am sore troubled with one here. See! he standeth back now, and trembleth. He offered me a knife, and a rope, &c. And so told Mr. Cooke all that had passed. Then Mr. Cooke took a parchment book from under his arm, and began to read prayers, and bid her not be afraid, but put her trust in God. (At that instant her brother took the bible and read in the Psalms.) And she said, 'Hark! Mr. Cooke readeth.' At which instant the tempter went away, but the other like Mr. Cooke, did exhort her to have a good heart, and to trust in God (39-40).

With the return of the tempter the following day and another successful argument when Helen refused his offers, identified and dismissed him, the family concluded that a detailed record was required, at least to aid comprehension. Half of the conversation could be taken down during the trance and Helen had few occasions when she could not remember and recount the rest to fill in the gaps as well as confirming her part in the talks: 'her relation of the devil's words and actions approved them as we had conceived and set them down. Which rule served afterwards and erred not in any of the following collections' (40-1).

The physical symptoms of possession are not central to Edward's account, perhaps because they were not spectacular, perhaps because they were less directly helpful as evidence specifically against the accused. Helen's frequent 'voiding of blood' has been mentioned and as its appearance in the text is rare, it seems reasonable to deduce that there were occasions when she vomited blood but they are lost under the generic fits and trances description. When the three possessed were being examined in court, one by one they fell into trance, and Helen 'did spit blood blood there a great quantity' (126). In September 1622, Elizabeth saw Margaret Thorp, 'who put her finger in her mouth and so caused her to spit a great deal of blood' (134).⁴ After Helen had one particularly remarkable vision, which will appear below, 'she cast up all in her stomach' (46). In November 1621 she was taken by a trance where she stayed on her feet and carried on sewing with her eyes open, 'but she was speechless, and not sensible of anything done or said to her'. She had similar symptoms that evening, making signs for a needle and thread to be brought and she resumed the sewing. Her mother thought Helen seemed to be looking at something on her knee so Edward placed the bible where whatever she was looking at seemed to be. At this, 'in great displeasure she threw herself backward, and fell into a deadly extasie, and so continued very long' (52-3). The same condition of muteness returned the following day and she read silently. Later, William read to her and she held the candle, moving it from side by side to follow his reading although 'her eyes were fast closed and she saw not at all' (54). There was a later period when deafness returned, or at least an inability to hear anyone other than the spirits, but she was capable of verbal response to them (130). About five months earlier than this, in April 1622, Edward reported the consequences of the actions of a feline spirit on Helen and Elizabeth in that 'both of them [were] made blind by the cat'. It is hard to be sure how this was different to a general unawareness of what was going on around them in many of their trances, apart from the

⁴ There is a possibility that this is an echo of Mary Glover's placing of a finger in her own mouth.

condition continuing through until the next day, when 'their sight was restored' at nine o'clock (107).

An early trance of Helen's was reported as being so painful that 'she was in great agony and wept so extremely, that her words by reason of her sobs and tears could not be understood' (53). However, physical pains, contortions and torments, while not being absent, occupy relatively little space compared to earlier possession testimonies. After an acerbic exchange with a vision of Margaret Wait 'she fell down as dead' and later told of how the visitor had 'pulled her down by the legs, and took use of them from her'. She was lame that night, needing to be carried to bed and remained so the following day, with movement restored before dinner (54). Some of the physical manifestations of possession appeared more frequently towards the end of their sufferings. On 4 October 1622, Elizabeth was in a trance, 'and was in great extremity in her throat and body, and after so stiff in her neck and arms that they could not be moved' (135). The very last report suggests that this was a more frequent condition than appears in that in Elizabeth's last three trances, all on 27 February 1623, 'she had the stiffness of her members, and risings in her body, and the like passions as before' (152). Regarding the 'risings', there is one explicit mention earlier and a hint elsewhere. On 29 January 1622 both Helen and Elizabeth were in a trance 'and had many strange convulsions and risings in their bodies, and stiffness in their arms and hands, and whole bodies sometimes, to the wonder of the beholders' (67; cf. 135).

It is likely that this emphasis on the visions and the speeches is a reflection of Fairfax's desire to eliminate the accusations of natural causation and counterfeiting. Sometimes the statement can be perfunctory, as in one episode ending with the observation that these 'things could not come into her head but by supernatural means' (57). Sometimes he is more lengthy. Towards the end he gives a list of dates when 'some of their speeches in trance are far above their capacities', of dates when they made

actions 'in which the agents were more than natural' and, directly addressing the readers, telling them to 'mark they things they told, which came to the intellect not per sensus'. He concludes that 'their afflictions of the body also are so violent as cannot be counterfeited, especially by an infant. These observe, and they will be found more than sufficient to satisfy the sharpest sighted curiosity, though nothing can mollify the stony and senseless incredulity of some' (125). This sense of bitterness is very much present at the end of an earlier account of identifying the witches in person, who they had only encountered in visions, where he describes that these abilities 'were such motives to assure those that saw it done, that none among so many witnesses but were fully persuaded that these women were the persons that troubled them. And it is most certain that such things could not be counterfeited', going on to set out the duration of the concurrent sufferings of Maud Jeffray and the sisters, 'which consideration taxes well the folly, or rather malice of those men who give out that John Jeffray and his wife devised this practice, and that his daughter drew my children into it; which slander needs no further confrontation to wise men. For the parties who shall perform all things require in the management of so cunning wickedness, had need of long familiarity and great practice betwixt themselves, before they were fit to act their parts upon the stage' (81).

The core of Fairfax's account is the trances of Helen and Elizabeth, the visions of various spirits and likenesses which visited them, and the conversations they had with them. These formed the starting point for the accusations, beyond established reputations, although they were not the only evidence to be used against the accused. Half of the conversation was taken down while it was being conducted and the unheard part, the contribution of the visitors, along with a description of the appearance and behaviour of the visitors was reported afterwards, with the exception of the relatively few occasions when the possessed had no memory of their trances. Because this forms the spine of his narrative and because the space necessitated by explanations and cross-referencing

would made it unwieldy, I will move through them chronologically.⁵ However, there are experiences and perceptions that are unusual, possibly being regional emphases, and some tropes that are recurrent and deserve separate and particular analysis, which I will therefore draw out after the more narrative-driven section.

The initial fits of Helen were introduced above, and shortly before Helen had the conversation regarding the cunning man appearing in a trance and offering remedy, there had been a discussion about cunning folk. Some had said that leaving a single penny with such people was a means to give them the ability to heal. In this Helen's mother remembered Margaret Wait senior leaving one penny more than she needed to when she paid for some corn, telling her to hold on to it until she came back for it. It was not uncommon for the exchange of personal items to be a means of giving a witch access to a house and when Edward heard that Wait had left a penny he urged them to search for it, to no avail. When Helen was rejecting the means of the cunning man in her vision, she asked him where it was; when told it was gone she accused him of taking it. Then he changed into different shapes but she refused to look at him 'for thou dost turn thyself into some ill-favoured likeness, therefore I will not look at you'. She told him she planned to go to church but he threatened to meet her on her way 'and hinder her', in a similar way to the efforts of Bull and Greedie in Somerset.⁶ After her recovery the search for the penny was renewed and it turned up. Edward had already stated his intention to burn it, a common manner of purging witch-related material and it appeared during the visit of Nicholas Smithson, the vicar of Fewston. When Edward made plain his resolution, the cleric gave his approval and they did so (43-5).

In her next trance, this fear returned. A woman appeared to Helen, 'as she often reported, like to Wait's wife in all things save that she looked somewhat younger'. The

⁵ In an earlier draft I tried to produce a 'typical' group of trance experiences but the number of variables and combinations lessened the analytical value so much and the necessary contextual explanatory detail made the process unmanageable. Hopefully the combination of narrative and particular which follows is a more fruitful compromise.

⁶ See above, 382-7.

woman greeted her and offered her a penny, telling her to 'buy with it what you please'. She laid the penny upon Helen's knee but she told her to go and take her penny, 'which the woman did accordingly'. However, she returned shortly after, carrying a child in swaddling clothes. She told Helen, 'I will have thy life, and the child shall suck out thy heart's blood!' Whereupon she set the child to Helen's breast where it 'sucked vehemently for the space of half an hour' in which time Helen 'grieved sore, and seemed to us who stood about her to be very sick'. This led to the second vomiting mentioned earlier at which point Wait took the child, asking, 'Hast thou given it to me? Well, God's will be done!' With that, she departed (46).

After the session on 10 November with the frenetic needlework and the agonies of the following day, Edward took her to the parlour and counselled her to defy 'the devil and his ministers' and to say, 'O Lord, open thou my lips, and let my mouth show forth thy praise!' thinking that her silence was caused by fear. She was still unable to speak and fell into another trance. He called company, 'and we prayed together for her'. She came to and her memory was restored. She told of her vision, where two women and three boys 'threatened to kill her and carry her away, bed and all, which was the cause of her weeping'. Curiously, they said they had no power over her until she wore a clean smock in one particular place, 'which if she put on she should never live'. That night, as she read the Bible in the kitchen Margaret Wait senior came and told her to stop reading. She tried to read on despite being struck dumb. 'At last the woman pulled out of a bag a living thing, the bigness of a cat, rough, black, and with many feet'. It came up on the book and despite Helen's best efforts, could not be kept off. This was the occasion when she moved the candle as William read to her. When she came to, she said that Margaret had told her 'that the creeping thing should eat up so much of the book as she had read'. Margaret followed another threat to take Helen's life with a temptation, exhorting her to 'give her soul unto her god, and she would make her like unto herself'. Helen rejected the offer, saying, "Thy

god is the devil, and thou art a witch! Wouldst thou have me like thee?" These words we heard'. Wait's response, as mentioned above, was to make her lame for a day (53-4).

At the end of December, Helen had three trances in which appeared, for the first time, a figure who became a frequent character. In each trance 'a boy appeared to her, apparelled in scarlet breeches, a ruff in fashion, and a hat with a gold band'. He told her he had been before, in the form of a black dog, on a stool under the table, which she recalled was true. Then he told of a conversation Edward had had with Martin Laycock, an uncle, and of the company they had joined with when they went on to a lawyer's house, three miles away, none of which she had been told, either the conversations or the names of those present. Finally he told her that she had seen him, in the form of 'a little black dog' every day for a week between the kitchen and the milkhouse during the last summer which she thought was true, despite her having forgotten it (56-7).

Early in January 1622, after Elizabeth Fletcher, often referred to by her maiden name of Foster, had touched Elizabeth Fairfax and she had joined her sister as possessed, the appearance of the visitors stepped up a notch. The following day, when Elizabeth sat on the knee of a servant, she fell into a trance. The boy, Fletcher's companion, reappeared and threatened to take her away and drown her. Elizabeth said, 'Out with thee - get thee away to them that own thee! Thou art Bess Foster's spirit, and didst come to the house with her'. The boy went but returned with the woman that night. He offered her 'a black creeping thing, which was dead' and the woman 'had a red thing, quick'. The same day Helen saw 'strange and deformed things which spake not at all', succeeded by the boy and the woman who told her that if she let them carry her to the water it was not their intention to drown her. 'She answered, they would have drowned her if they could, but God was above the devil'. After several days of both daughters having trances, on 10 January, Helen saw 'a terrible monster with three heads, dropping with

blood, a body and tail of a dragon, in the hand thereof a weapon with which it threatened to strike her'. Not surprisingly, this made her 'more fearful' (61).

Helen had an earlier conversation with the vision of Margaret Thorp, Jennit Dibb's daughter, about her compact with the devil. On 9 March Helen fell in trance and was visited by Dibb, Thorp and Margaret Wait junior. Thorp had brought 'her lease', which 'she spake of before'. She had brought 'a large paper written with blood', that she wanted to show Helen, 'and had gotten it of her master to that end, with much ado. Helen advised her to throw it into the fire and to forsake her master. She asked Thorp what her master promised, to which she answered, 'He promised enough', to which Helen responded, 'He hath nothing to give but fire'. Thorp was unpersuaded and departed. A visiting JP thought this line was worth pursuing and so Margaret Thorp was brought to the house. Helen fell into a trance and 'was senseless to all persons present' other than Thorp. Thorp was interrogated 'of all these circumstances of the leases, the writing of them, and other particulars'. She made no confession when Helen told her all her spirit version had told her in her vision earlier. The JP was fairly convinced and told Edward he would 'try if Thorp's wife were a witch', by making her say the Lord's prayer with the expectation that, if she was a witch, she would be lost when she came to the plea for the forgiveness of trespasses. Edward said nothing but watched the test and Margaret was accordingly incapable of saying the crucial phrase, initially omitting it and, when pressed, 'she stood amazed', incapable of saying anything, 'of which many people were witnesses, to their admiration' (87-8).

During the trial, which requires separate treatment, there were exchanges with different emphases. On 21 August Helen had a trance which took her memory, not only of the conversation she had, but even after being partly restored, she could not recognise her family. The first step in recovery was when she felt her mother's wedding ring, which was perhaps empowered because of its religious connotations, 'and so by degrees she

acknowledged all the rest'. As she improved, she told William that a week earlier Thorp had told her that when she returned from the assizes 'she would make her deaf, and as weak as was ever any, and then they would bewitch her no more'. This seems to have reflected her condition, for when she told of this she was still deaf, 'so that no noise, no, not thunder could move her, and of her person so feeble that she could not go without hold' (132). A week later Margaret Wait and her spirit visited Elizabeth and told her that she was fresh from Maud Jeffray and she returned the next day 'and gave her pins, which she willed her to put into her mouth', a reiteration of the earlier instructions Helen had received to take the pin from her clothing and put it in her mouth (133). One last example of the growing efforts of the spirits alongside the confidence of the sisters in their resistance, came the following Monday, 4 October. Elizabeth was in a trance, and 'was in great extremity in her throat and body, and after so stiff in her neck and arms that they could not be moved'. She saw 'one in bright clothing', who we will meet again, 'who said that he was god'. Elizabeth saw through him, saying, 'No! thou art the devil, and hell was made for thee, for thy pride, and thou art the same that came to my sister Hellen'. At that he 'turned into a deformed shape' and Elizabeth simply observed, perhaps dismissively, 'How ill-favoured art thou now!' (135).

Within these reported visions, two figures are recurrent, the well dressed boy and 'the bright one'. A 'young gentleman' appeared as early as 14 November 1621, tempting Helen with worldly power and a good marriage, only to summarily dismissed (38-9). Something similar, described as 'a boy' but dressed in 'scarlet breeches, a ruff in fashion, and a hat with a gold band' came later. No temptations are reported, merely 'much strange discourse', and he furnished her with details of conversations which took place elsewhere and of which she had known nothing (56). On 7 January Elizabeth mentioned 'a boy' accompanying Elizabeth Fletcher bringing a black creeping corpse (61) but Helen gave more developed reports over the next few days. Shortly before dawn on 11 January, the

chamber door was opened 'by one in stature not so high as a man, attired in white glistening garments'. He took her to the window but she returned to the door. Upon her recovery she mentioned 'that it had a little hand, and somewhat strained her wrist to make its fingers meet about her arm' (61-2).

This developed two days later. Helen fell into a trance in the hall and 'one in bright clothing appeared to her, a man of incomparable beauty, with a beard, and his apparel shining'. On his head he wore a 'sharp high thing'. From this, from his mouth and his clothes 'streamed beams of light, which cast a glorious splendour around him'. He told her he was God, 'that the devil had troubled her by God's sufferance, but she was so dearly beloved of God that he was come to comfort her'. Helen told him that if he was God 'or some good thing' he should come close and comfort her, quoting Job regarding his vision of God. The man approached but Helen was still unsure. She said, 'Thou makest me doubt whether thou be a good thing or an evil. When I name God ill things fly from me, but thou at his name comest nearer to me, which makes me that I cannot tell what to think'. He said he was an angel and began the Lord's Prayer. The onlookers, hearing what she said and her repetition of his replies, were even less convinced, joined in prayer 'and besought the Lord to strengthen her against this great temptation'. She moved through the prayer with him, faltering at 'Forgive us our trespasses', and seriously struggling with 'Lead us not into temptation'. At this point the witnesses, offering support, repeated the words three or four times, and she completed the prayer. The witnesses added appropriate prayers against temptation, 'all which time the man in bright clothing held his peace, and finished not the Lord's prayer he had begun'. With her suspicions probably heightened, she interrogated him again, asking, 'If thou be God, let me hear my father speak, for he hath often comforted my heart'. This he granted and responded in the affirmative when asked if he, being God, knew her father's thoughts. She asked to be resolved if he really was God, that if he was 'any evil thing, that in the name of Jesus Christ he should depart from her'

but he persisted in his claim, going on to forgive her sins. She pushed further, asking to be shown 'some of thy great works which thou didst before my time'. He said he would but now was not the time; similarly, when she asked 'that he would take her unto him', he agreed 'but not yet'. He departed and she came to, now convinced that he was God or an angel, despite the best efforts of her family to persuade her otherwise. The next morning, 'with some difficulty we persuaded her to the contrary, by such reasons and scriptures as our small knowledge could afford' (62-3).

On 17 January, four days later, he returned. He was 'the same glorious apparition' and said he was come for her and wished for him to accompany him. She had clearly accepted her family's counter-arguments as she defied him and said, 'Thou didst deceive me, and I did pray to thee, (God forgive me for it!) for I know what thou art'. He repeated his claim, but to no avail: 'O silly fool! dost thou think to deceive me again? No, no; God did not reveal thee unto me, and will rebuke thee for taking his name upon thee'. She repeatedly told him to depart but he asked her to join in prayer with him. She responded aggressively, saying, 'I will say my prayers, but that shall be to thy great sorrow'. Perhaps frustrated with her irrefragible conviction, he threatened to kill her, 'and presently she saw many horns to grow out of his head, and his beauty and glorious light, were gone, and he changed into a most terrible shape'. Seeing a more appropriate manifestation of an evil spirit, Helen responded triumphantly. 'Now indeed thou art like thyself, wouldst thou slay me? No thou canst not slay me with all thou canst do. Thou wouldest slay that little infant there; (meaning her sister Elizabeth) thou canst not slay her. Thou may'st see how strong God is, that thou canst not slay that infant, nor touch a hair of her head'. The creature turned itself into various shapes and Helen refused to talk to him any more, nodding her head to give him 'signs to begone', which he eventually accepted (64).

The glamorous spirit left Helen alone after this but he made similar demands upon Elizabeth. The first was on 4 October 1622 as recounted above. At Elizabeth's rejection of

his divine claim 'he turned into a deformed shape' and Elizabeth gave her assessment: 'How ill-favoured art thou now!' (135). The second vision seems to have been a different bright figure, this time a child. On 30 November she was in bed and said, 'God bless me!' Immediately 'one in bright clothing' came to her bedside 'and said, "I am here!" The child said, "I will go with thee!"' William overheard this and feared she was being misled. 'She answered, "Nay, this is God, I will go with him!" Then he told her that he had gotten her sister Hellen; at which she wept, and he departed. And she still thought he was God' (146). On the following day she was in another trance, and 'a man in bright clothing appeared unto her, and said that he was God'. Her dismissal was even sharper than the first one and she clearly distinguished between the man and the boy. She responded initially in a fairly straightforward manner: 'No, thou art not he whom I love; I love God but thou art not he. Thou goest to and fro seeking whom thou mayest devour'. When he asked how she knew that, her disdain grew: 'I heard it read; thinkest thou I cannot tell what I hear read? Thou art not God, for God loves not to have witches in his company, and thou hast them in thine'. When he asked which witches she was referring to, she pointed to Margaret Thorp stood behind him and added, 'Thou wert so proud that God made hell for thee, and cast thee into it', in case he had failed to get the message the previous time. Once again he turned into 'an ill-favoured shape' and Elizabeth gave her appraisal: "'Now thou art like thyself; thou art as high as Richard England.'" So he departed and she was presently well' (147).⁷ Two days later, on 3 December, she 'talked to the bright man', who seems to be the same as the bright boy, for Elizabeth more or less re-enacted Helen's last encounter with her equivalent. She castigated him, saying, 'Thou didst deceive me! Thou didst once carry me to the water to put me in, but they followed and saved me'. As with Helen, he threatened to slay her and 'turned into a very deformed shape'. Once again, Elizabeth gave her assessment, that 'Now thou art like thyself; but thou canst not slay me' (147-8).

⁷ Richard England was a servant of the family (100).

Elizabeth had two more days when well-dressed or bright figures appeared, on these occasions with more company. The first is treated briefly. On 7 December she 'saw the bright man, who turned into a deformed monster'. A little later she saw Margaret Thorp with Tewhit, her spirit. She followed them, asking who God was, and who made her, that is, Thorp. She said that God did not make her, to which Elizabeth replied, 'Yes, God did make thee; but the devil will have thee!' Thorp returned later, talking to Tewhit. Elizabeth asked what they were talking about and was told that 'they conferred how they might kill her; and said she must die before Christmas'. Elizabeth was evidently not unsettled by this threat, for she retorted, 'Away fool - babbles! Thou tellest me that? I must die when God will!' When the well dressed spirit came again, two days later, 'a man in scarlet cloak and breeches, and a green doublet', she gave him short shrift, identifying and ordering him, 'Thou art the devil, get thee hence to hell!' Then she saw Jennit Dibb who told her that 'the man in scarlet was her master', that they would kill Maud Jeffray and then her. Elizabeth 'edified them', telling them that 'they could do no more than God would suffer them, and she might die when God would' (148-9).

The success, albeit sometimes hard won success, the possessed achieved in resisting the temptations, in discerning the spirits, and the godly arrogance in their denunciations is all fairly orthodox, although Thorp's production of the contract with the devil is unusually developed. One exchange between Helen and an unnamed young woman, who was, as will emerge, Margaret Thorp, is noteworthy partly because it is an explicit setting out of the boundaries between the good and the evil but also because it opens the porous boundary between the educated and 'popular' in the discourse. It had been a particularly hard few days, with both sisters seeming to be close to death, preparing for death, 'taking leave of all the family, and shaking hands with every one' (67). Helen had spoken to the woman, admitting that her life was being taken, but forgiving her and exhorting her to repent. On 10 February the young woman returned, offering 'a piece

of money', as with the pennies discussed above, and to make her well. Helen rejected these means of recovery and the woman threatened to kill her. Helen seems to have recovered from fears of death, renewing her confidence in God's protection, as can be seen in her reply. 'I care not for thy threats, for if you could have prevailed I would have been in my grave long since, but God doth defend me and you cannot hurt me, but, down upon thy knees and call to God for mercy, if he have any grace for thee, but there is little hope for thee'. The woman was unimpressed, telling her victim that, 'I serve my God better than you do yours'. Helen was similarly undeterred, announcing, 'Our God is the God of heaven, even Jesus Christ our Saviour, whom we serve, and your god is the devil of hell, and he can do nothing but what our God doth suffer him', perfect orthodoxy. However, her next question shifted the ground in that she asked 'Tell me where dwellest thou?' The woman said on the moor side, but would be no more specific, and I shall shortly return to issues of space and movement. Then she told the woman to come nearer and when she refused Helen told her that if she had, 'I would have given thee a mark, that I would have known thee again, but it is no matter, for I see thou hast a mark by which I can know thee wheresoever I see thee'. This is a mixture of the tradition of scratching the witch and the witch's mark, a tradition adapted as part of the English negotiation between the witch's familiar and the demonic servant. Lastly, the woman told her of an earlier conversation Edward had that morning when Robert Atkinson and William Richardson told him more about Maud and about their suspicions of Elizabeth Fletcher, a classic symptom of the possessed having access to unknown information (68-9).

One of the defining actions of English witches was present when Elizabeth and Helen Fairfax desired to visit Maud Jeffray at her home. She had visited them on 22 February and, having discovered how similar their sufferings were, they were 'moved to desire more acquaintance'. Elizabeth Smith, the servant, went with them on 3 March. All three were taken by 'so great extremities' that it was decided that they were too weak to be

brought home immediately. During the night 'they had many visions and trances'. Jennit Dibb allowed them to 'see a spirit suck upon her head, and another under her arm'. Elizabeth Smith, among the onlookers caring for the patients, saw a black cat moving on the furniture. They reported having seen Margaret Thorp 'suffer the bird to suck upon the spot on her cheek, which by the sucking bled much'. Helen and Elizabeth were taken home the following day; when their father arrived to collect them, after they had recovered to a degree, he had to bring them home on horseback, 'carried as dead persons, not once moving all the way' (83). Three days later a new woman appeared to Helen and Elizabeth, telling them that she was 'daughter to one Umpleby's wife, and that her mother was a witch', fitting into the pattern of the suspects set out at the start of the account.⁸ They saw 'the woman let a spirit suck upon her breast'. Helen congratulated her, 'Thou art a cunning witch indeed to let thy spirit suck there upon thy pap's head, for nobody can find a mark upon thee if thou let thy spirit suck there. Hast thou any children?' The woman said no, to which Elizabeth responded with an air almost of relief, 'It is well; for God help the children that must suck where the spirit sucketh!' At that the woman turned her back and went away without looking at them any more. Then Margaret Thorp appeared 'and let her bird suck upon her cheek and upon her breast'. Jennit Dibb with her cat, Gibbe, and Margaret Wait junior with her cat, Inges, also appeared although it is not clear that they were also suckled (85).

The second reported activity seems to belong more to the educated version of witchcraft, although given the location in north Yorkshire and the time, it may be reflective of the legacy of the Lancashire witches of 1612. On 18 April 1623 both Elizabeth and Helen were made blind overnight. They were told that 'all the witches had a feast at Timble Gill', possibly a stream at nearby Timble. Here their 'meat was roasted about midnight' and

⁸ Edward Fairfax tried to follow up this identification and found the woman, a widow with such a reputation, but admitted he knew nothing of any daughters and so being unwilling to pursue it further, merely stating his confidence that his daughters would be able to 'challenge her upon sight', as they did other suspects (85). This is as near as he and therefore the reader, gets to identifying 'the strange woman'.

at 'the upper end of the table sat their master, viz., the devil'. At the lower end was Jennit Dibb 'who provided for the feast, and was the cook; and therefore that she could not come to the children that day' (107). It is not clear whether there was any explicit connection with this being Maundy Thursday. At the end of May, on Ascension Day, Helen was snatched up by Thorp and her cat and carried away, 'over the thick quickset hedge behind the house'. Her movement was spotted by Thomas Forrest and Thomas Harrison who were surprised to see her heading off on her own. 'The women said, "They see thee, come back again..." and so Helen was returned but once the men looked away, 'Thorp's wife and her cat carried her over the water above Rowton bridge, and over Ralph Holme's ground, then over the moor' and on 'over the great hill there' finishing on 'the great moor on that side upon a hill'. When they arrived, Helen 'saw many women together, amongst whom was Dibb's wife and the strange woman, who had a great fire there' (114-5). The feasting, the gathering of a number of witches for festivities, and the devil at the head of the table, has echoes of the witches' sabbat, albeit lacking some of the more lurid details of some accounts.

There is a tactile dimension to this account that is worth some attention as it is a recurrent demand of the sisters and is either explained or explained away by Edward Fairfax as an orthodoxy, despite being an unusual means of discernment. Elizabeth is bewitched by Elizabeth Fletcher touching her and this is far from unorthodox: once she had achieved her goal and departed, Dorothy Fairfax, the girl's mother, said that 'if Bess Foster was a witch, the child would ail something, or be like the other' (60), the scene bearing resemblance to the first suspicion being raised against Margaret Cotton in the previous chapter.⁹ What is more unorthodox is the desire of the possessed to touch the characters in their visions. This appears in Helen's encounter with the 'young gentleman' on 14 November 1621, when she is trying to ascertain his nature. She told him, 'You are

⁹ See above, 426-7.

no man if you cannot abide the name of God; but if you be a man, come near me and let me feel you'. He would not approach, 'but said it was no matter for feeling' (38-9). The routine appearance of touching characters in vision is usually left unexplained, such as when Helen was assailed by two boys, it is simply part of the report that 'with her hand she did beat them about the head, which were bare for want of hair; and she felt their heads, and they were hard like the heads of other boys' (59). One later vision of Elizabeth's, perhaps reminiscent of the Throckmorton spirits, mentioned a boy claiming to be God who she dismissed as Elizabeth Fletcher's spirit. 'Then came the black cat, with whom the boy fought, so that she laughed to see them. The boy struck at the cat, and the cat with her teeth and claws did assault him to bite and scratch him'. After some time fighting, she 'desired to feel them, and could not feel the cat, and then said, "Thou art a spirit." But she felt the boy and said, "Thou art Bess Foster's spirit, thou art a body! Turn into thine own likeness!"', whereupon he changed into Jennit Dibb (146). Edward provides an explanation with a rather tenuous Scriptural model which may evince an effort to give respectability to a practice he was not sure about.

Of the feeling and handling of the women, let them note how often and infallibly the trials were made by the children, and how they were distinguished without effort, the women from the spirits at all times when they made the experiment; and to them apply the rule of Christ, St. Luke, xxiv., 39., upon which dependeth the main ground of faith the resurrection of the dead in the flesh (109; cf. 125).

One detail in the last mention of the sabbat is worth pursuing as it represents an undertone that runs ambivalently through Fairfax's narrative. The witches met at a stream and the representation of the travel mentions a bridge and being carried over the water. Threats and efforts to abduct and kidnap the possessed occur throughout and there is an ambiguous relationship with water. Crossings and bridges have an important liminal significance in popular culture, and water, as a source or a threat, as a means or a

boundary, works similarly. In an early vision, Helen was offered temptations by a young gentleman, offering marriage and suggesting suicide. His last request was for her to go to the the beck to fetch water, a seemingly innocuous request. Helen's response is interesting. 'No, my father and mother will not let me fetch in water - shall I go to the beck for you to put me into it? Or, will I kill myself to go with you, think ye? If my father or brother were to come, you dare not tarry!' (39). Helen saw the request as a death threat, as a suggestion of suicide and a proposal all in one. There is a similar, but more brief, vision at a similar stage of Elizabeth's possession. 'She also saw a woman and the bigger boy, who told her that they did not intend to drown her when they carried her to the water. She answered, they would have drowned her if they could, but God was above the devil' (61). Helen suffered from a slightly more successful effort on 2 May, when Jennit Dibb and Margaret Thorp took her away, 'carried her to the river, and put her into it'. Thorp was 'in the water up to her knees to put her further in', but Helen escaped and ran back towards the house although on the 'way she fell into a deathly trance' and was found by her father and carried home (112). An earlier effort on 2 January 1622 was even closer to success. Helen heard a knock on the door and opened it, at which two boys rushed in. The smaller boy 'caught her about the middle with both his hands; the greater held her by the arm with one hand, and with the other stopped her mouth lest she should cry. So in great haste they forced her back into the back house, and told her they had long watched for her, but now they had her, and would drown her'. She struggled, cried for her mother, and was told that she would soon be past calling. She defied their confidence, telling them that even if they were successful, her soul would be with God. They took her to the river side, one of them observing, 'This place is not deep enough, let us carry her up the stream'. They did so and tried to throw her in but she held on to the bushes and resisted their efforts, the boys proving unable to 'get her hands loose, nor get her down further, though they laid hold of her feet and pulled violently'. When she told of this later she added that at the

water's edge, 'she saw a woman come to the other side of the river, and stand there looking upon her'. Due to snowy weather, the woman's prints remained the following day and could be traced leaving the riverside as Helen reported, heading into 'a bank of wood through which lay no way at all' (59-60). Threats of drowning, mostly delivered by 'the bright man', along with mockery or abuse aimed at his failed efforts, recur through the account. Towards the end, Elizabeth rebuked the 'bright man', 'Thou didst once carry me to the water to put me in, but they followed and saved me' (148). Early on, 'the tempter' tried to persuade Helen to leap out the window or to meet him in the back court, to which she replied, 'Shall I go to the mill, for you to put me into the water?' (40).

One instance shows an aversion of witches to water which is perhaps implicit in the instance of the woman watching from the far bank, possibly associated with the swimming of witches, possibly as a boundary marker. On 4 November 1622 Elizabeth and her brother Edward were in the barn, watching an oxen being slaughtered. She saw Margaret Wait senior and Margaret Thorp come down the vicar's close, 'and when she came to the water-side, her spirit the black creeping thing took her by the hair of the head and brought her over the water, so that she did not touch it, and she came to the barn' (138). Possible aversion to water is far from a consistent element for the river appears more often as a site of conflict or indecipherable symbolism beyond being a site of transition, a marginal space sometimes in the power of the witches. The first instance means returning to the mill mentioned in Helen's rejection of 'the tempter'. It appears in an account from a vision, later verified by one of the contributors. Elizabeth Bentley stood talking to the milner, John Simpson, when 'she saw a woman which seemed to wash clothes in the river, betwixt my [Edward Fairfax's] house and the miller's'. The woman had four of the Fairfax children with her, 'of whom she took sometimes one and sometimes another, and seemed to carry them to and fro, into the water and out again, divers times for a good space'. Bentley asked Simpson if the Fairfaxes had a new servant who was doing the laundry and supervising

the children. Simpson said that there was no new staff, that it was not washing day and he could see no-one there. She repeatedly told him what she saw and he eventually 'angrily said that "If thou seest anything it is the devil." At which words Elizabeth Bentley was afraid and shut the door of the miln' (70-1). The second instance offers an adaptation or appropriation of the swimming test and emphasises the heterogeneity of either the space, the witches or both. On 16 April Jennit Dibb's appeared to Helen and told of how she had appeared shortly after the arrival of the Fairfax family, 'in the likeness of an old man, by the water side'. Helen recalled seeing the figure and Jennit said that she had a beard at home 'which she put on sometimes, as then when she appeared unto her by the river's side like the old man'. On this occasion she had four loaves of bread, two representing Helen and Elizabeth, two representing Edward and William. She set them on the water, 'where the two that were for her and her sister sank to the bottom, and so she got on them; but the loaves for her brethren did swim, and because they did not sink she could get no power on them', an inversion of the usual sign of culpability or innocence for suspected witches. Dibb added that she had put a drop of blood on each loaf 'and if the water had changed the blood, they would have had their lives'; the blood remained the same 'and therefore they could not kill them but only trouble them' (106). The third instance is, as far as can be ascertained, a demonstration of power. Elizabeth went 'to the beck-side and saw a cloth in the water which was frozen to a stone, which she pulled out and laid to dry, and thereupon fell in trance; and came into the house, and went forth to fetch the cloth, which she took up, and let it fall again; and Thorp's wife came to her and told her she would be worse than ever she was; upon which words, she fell into a deadly trance' (146-7). Finally, beyond the more straightforward division between good and bad of Edward Fairfax's analysis, a more positive association with water can be found in the treatment of Maud Jeffray. Helen was told of an occasion when her father took her to 'the Wiseman', presumably a cunning man who prescribed a diet of three peaches a day. The visit meant that 'Maud Jeffray went not

to St. Mungo's well, on Friday, as she intended' (121). This is reminiscent, although with more positive effects, of Katherine Wright's proclivity for wells in the early stages of her troubles, with wells associated, in Maud's case, with healing rather than suffering.

There have been occasions of attempted abduction mentioned above and this is such a recurrent trope that it is worth emphasising. When Helen was unintelligible due to excessive weeping in November 1621, upon her recovery 'she declared there came to her in bed two women and three boys, who threatened to kill her and carry her away, bed and all, which was the cause of her extreme weeping' (54). Another attempt was rather more physically dynamic but equally unsuccessful. Jennit Thorp 'in the garden came to carry Hellen away', but she ran from 'alley to alley, and so avoided her, and wept and made a noise withal'. Her father heard her and brought her into the house, where Thorp told her that 'the time when she carried her away before she purposed to carry her to her mother's house, viz., Dibb's wife's house, where the witches have a feast' maybe an effort to make her a recruit, a sacrifice or merely a observer. Thorp made another effort slightly later the same day when Helen went into the kitchen, with Thorp rushing in the back door, 'but with great force, and sore weeping, she [Helen] escaped her into the kitchen' (116-7). The way in which Thorp is shown trying to take Helen when she was outside and therefore possibly more vulnerable, Thorp's disempowerment once Helen was inside and her last effort involving her rushing in the back door encourages a return to the issue of boundaries mentioned above. Two examples, displaying opposing powers but sharing significance given to liminal spaces, are worth closing with. In an early conversation with Margaret Wait, Helen was reminded of a time when she was sent to the home of Elizabeth Fletcher to pick up some money, the time when, according to Wait, her bewitchment began. This was shown on her return trip, when 'you did sleep upon the stile in Bland Fields, and you could scarcely get over Rowton bridge for sleeping, and again you did sleep in your own pasture a great while' (48). The diminution of the powers of the witches can be read in an

encounter very near the end of the account. On 27 March 1623 Elizabeth was in a trance in which she saw Jennit Dibb with a loaf stolen from their house. In this time Helen was coming 'homewards from Fuystone Mill and did meet Thorp's wife upon the bridge. They touched each other, yet passed without words' (152). The combination of the mill, the crossing point of the bridge and physical contact but, by this time, with no suffering as a result can be read as a re-establishment of secure boundaries.

To arrive at the 'happy ending' of an encounter between one of the Fairfax daughters and one of the suspects meeting with no accusations or sufferings is to get ahead of the game and to miss a dimension that is crucial to analytic purposes. That is, it is to skip the legal dimension and the parallel culmination of the experiences of the Fairfax sisters and Maud Jeffray. To understand the way in which it developed, attention has to be paid to earlier gathering of support and the deduction has to be careful because much of what Fairfax argues is understated and implied rather than explicitly delivered. On December 6, 1621, a neighbour, Henry Graver, came to visit in order to see Helen 'and found her in a trance, in which she remained not long'. When she came to, she reported that 'two hares fought before her very cruelly, so that they drew blood one of another' (47). Graver was of similar rank to Edmund Fairfax, seemingly slightly higher in social status, and clearly Fairfax thought he was worth recruiting as a supporter. Shortly after, he had a conversation with Margaret Wait senior in person while she was actually in one of Helen's visions. She denied playing any part in his daughter's travails but 'I still threatened she should be carried before a Justice'. Accordingly, he sent for Graver and Nicholas Smithson, his vicar, 'to whom I reported the strangeness of the case'. He expected advice, perhaps encouragement, 'but I found myself deceived in that expectation, for these men were great friends to the woman, and turned all their speeches to entreat I would suffer the woman to depart, and to make further trial before I brought the woman in question'. Surprised and disappointed, Fairfax consented (49-50).

Early in January Fairfax was given evidence, at least through guilt by association. During a vision on 1 January Helen saw a particularly malicious boy who produced a small child from his bag which he proceeded to beat although, to be fair, it turned out not to be a real child, merely a picture of her.¹⁰ Having claimed to have a thousand demons under his command, he told her that, 'Henry Graver and the vicar of Fuystone are good men, for they do not bear with you'. Before returning to his predictions of her death, Helen castigated him, saying, 'Get you to them! He is not worthy of being a vicar that will bear with witches, and for Graver, he is afraid of you' (58). Suspicions were taken further on 12 February when an especially chatty vision of Jennit Dibb occurred. She bore pictures of both Helen and Maud, admitted having been a witch for many years, named her daughter, Margaret Thorp as an accomplice and Elizabeth Fletcher as the ringleader. 'She affirmed to her that they were hired to bewitch her by the best man in Fuystone parish, and that he did look upon her the last time she was at church, but did not speak to her, and he would do so again the next time that she came thither'. Helen thought about it, and concluded, 'The best man in Fuystone is Henry Graver (for Robinson is of our parish, viz., Otley), and indeed he did look at me, but spake not to me'. Thorp agreed that it was not Henry Robinson and added 'that the women in the castle can tell who hired them', the two women in gaol in York being Margaret Wait senior and Fletcher.¹¹ Naturally, when the family attended church the following Sunday, Edward kept a careful watch and reported that 'Henry Graver did look earnestly at them, but spake not to them at all; whereof special notice was taken' (73). The allegations stepped up a grade at the end of February. The sisters had been relatively quiet since the middle of the month but John Jeffray had procured warrants to apprehend Elizabeth Dickenson, Jennit Dibb and Margaret Thorp for bewitching his daughter. At this stage the Fairfaxes had not identified the last two as the

¹⁰ Witches having pictures of their victims and using them to inflict their maleficia was a central practice in the Lancashire witches of 1612: Thomas Potts, The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancashire (London, 1613), B, T2.

¹¹ Henry Robinson was a gentleman resident at neighbouring Swinsty Hall and the most substantial parishioner of Otley: Fairfax, 93n.

assailants of Helen and Elizabeth and Dickenson was never to appear to them. However, on 22 February Sir Thomas Fairfax, Edward's brother visited to see his nieces. Hearing of this Jeffray brought his daughter, this being the first time the three met. They fell into trance together and talked to 'the old woman'. Helen asked for the pictures with no success. 'Then the woman told her that Henry Graver did hire them to bewitch her'. Helen was unimpressed, pointing out that 'Thou didst tell me that before' and asked 'why didst thou tell me that again', although it might be noted that the broader company and the visiting relative of higher social status made the repetition useful to the family. Good fortune brought the constable who had just apprehended Margaret Thorp and Margaret Wait junior and were still with him.

At their coming the children lay all in trance, not being sensible of anything said or done to them by any person; but if Thorp's wife or Margaret Wait spake to them, they answered readily, charging them that they were witches, and did bunch [i.e. kick] them; and of this their speaking to them and none else, many trials were made or a long time together (76-7).

The following day, the suspects were to be examined for bodily evidence of their witchcraft. The constable and two neighbours took Helen to the house 'to make trial if she could challenge any in the company there met to be the women who troubled, whom yet she did not know'. When she arrived she told her father that she thought that, 'here be two of the witches in the house, Peg Wait, and the woman with the spot on her face, whom I know not'. Edward's instructions were that if she matched the women with those in her visions, then she should challenge them and she went back with the constable to speak to Margaret Thorp, saying, 'I know not your name, but you are the woman with the spot on your face, that doth so often appear to me and trouble me, and you are a witch'. Then she was taken to Jennit Dibb, in a chamber with twelve women, presumably those examining her, 'and challenged her to be the the old woman who showed her the pictures, and she

asked her for the pictures'. Edward observes, perhaps a little disingenuously taking it as evidence of the women's guilt, that 'ever after in her trances when she saw either of them she called them by their names, which till then she had never done' (78). The process continued on 24 February, despite it being Sunday. Margaret Wait junior was brought to the possessed 'for many people were desirous to see the trial of these speeches of the witches to the children'. Margaret kneeled before Helen and asked for forgiveness. Helen asked, 'Why, Peg Wait, dost thou thus trouble me? If thou wouldst come to me in sight of everybody, I would forgive thee willingly'. Despite Margaret explaining that she was there in body, neither sister believed her and it was noted that they seemed incapable of hearing anyone else other than Margaret. A visitor, Robert Pannell, asked if he and his companions could make further tests and Edward gave him leave because 'the said Pannell used to serve upon juries at the assizes, being a freeholder of good estate, and therefore might perhaps be one upon her trial'. They tested whether the possessed could hear only the suspects and no-one else and then interrogated the sisters after the women had been taken back to Widow Pullein's where they were being kept, concluding that the perceptions of the women when they were physically present and when they appeared in visions were the same (79-80). A similar trial was conducted a week or so later. An unnamed JP 'desired that my daughter and Thorp's wife might be personally brought before him'. Again Helen could only see and hear Thorp 'and the woman (against her will, but enforced thereunto by the justice) interrogated of all these circumstances of the leases, the writing of them, and other particulars, which the wench answered, repeating to the woman all that she had told her concerning the same'. Effectively this was the same process but with a different emphasis, the 'leases' being the contracts with the devil mentioned earlier. This was also the occasion when Thorp's ability to say the Lord's Prayer was tested and she was found wanting (87-8).

The connection, possible, alleged or proven, with Henry Graver seems to have moved from the centre of attention through the first half of March. However, it came back with a vengeance on 20 March with the appearance of 'the strange woman' who had been tormenting the sisters over the previous days. On this occasion she pleaded for the hazel staff which Helen had picked up the previous day; it had been fought over and these days were characterised by beatings and attempted beatings on both sides. The woman also 'entreated her to steal a paper for her' for if she could not get this paper and 'if it were seen it would hang her if ever she was known; and if it were not locked up she would steal it herself'. Part of the paper contained the testimony of Thomas Forrest regarding his experience of being chased by many cats near Margaret Wait's house and the sisters being told that the witches would have bewitched him had they been able to touch him. More importantly, the paper also contained a record relating to Graver, worth quoting at length.

That which concerned Henry Graver written in the paper was this:- The 20th of February my daughter Hellen being in trance saw Dibb's wife, who told her that she had been at the church, and the man which hired them to bewitch her (as before she said he would do) did there look at her, but spake not to her at all, and yet he passed by her as she talked with Robert Atkinson, and went and leaned upon the table in the choir. That it was Henry Graver indeed, and that he hired them to bewitch her father and mother, but they could get no power on them, and that she got power on her first by touching her at the church, but that touch was not enough, yet the same Sunday in the afternoon as she came from home in company of John Pullein's wife and Wilkinson's wife, she then touched her again and got power on her. Also the 2nd of March the strange woman in the hall told Hellen that she would now tell her who it was that hired them to bewitch her, and said it was Henry Graver. She answered, 'I have been told that already; why dost thou tell me it again? We think him an honest

man, and that thou dost slander him.' The woman said, 'Nay, but it is true, and I will tell thee a true thing in that matter,' which was, that Henry Graver did hire Thorp's wife and Wait's wife to bewitch her and Jeffray's daughter, and gave them money, and that he went to the house of Wait's wife divers times after she was first questioned, and before she went to the gaol; that he had talked there with her and encouraged her, and said she could not be hurt because they had taken away no life, and promised that she would want nothing. And he gave her money from time to time, and maintained them lest they should tell of him, for he is afraid of them. The wench then asked the woman how she knew what talk Graver had with Wait's wife at her house. She did answer that she was there, and sat by the fire in likeness of a cat, when Graver came thither, and so heard their talk. This was the sum of that which the paper contained, and which the woman required Hellen to steal (91-2).

Before moving on to the legal proceedings and the related experiences of the possessed both at home and in York, there are two notes to be mentioned. The first is that the request for the paper came at the end of a section in the narrative where the leases or contracts with the devil, in terms of admission of their existence, accounts of their conditions, the remarkable provision of one such contract by one of the suspects in a vision, and Fairfax's explanation of the phenomenon. The paper was as close as it was possible to get to a copy of the contract between Graver and his servants, adding to the thesis of Cambers regarding the importance of texts and textuality in this case.¹² To this a note of caution needs to be added in that this text was an account of evidence acquired spectrally as was its desired acquisition and so contestable as evidence in a legal context; however much its textual nature may have given it some stature it was still grounded in the evidence of spirits.

¹² Cambers, 'Demonic possession'; cf. 39-40, 54, 63, 150 and passim.

On the first day of April, the assizes opened at York. Edward attended with Helen, leaving Elizabeth at home, and six of the suspects were present too. The following day, 'the strange woman' appeared to Elizabeth, 'and told her that her master, viz., the devil, was then gone to God Almighty to ask leave of him to get down her and her brother Henry Fairfax'. She returned on Wednesday, 3 April, and 'told her that God had denied to give her master leave to get them down (for such was the woman's phrase), in which he did not well to deny him'. Fairfax showed his awareness of Scriptural precedents in citing Job and I Kings and added that this encouraged him in pursuing the suspects through the court, 'for that all the six being at York, then not one of them did appear unto her, or trouble the child, neither at any time when they were in durance, or any restraint laid upon them, did they execute any of their power upon the children, yet so soon as they were loose they forbore no longer to molest them' (94-5). This was as much as a belt and braces approach, putting his trust in the power of God and the powers of restraint in the (divinely approved) legal system. Both levels of trust proved to be reliable, at least in the short term, although the assizes failed to deliver the judgment Fairfax hoped for. Through April, visitations were reported when the suspects were released. Jennit Dibb reported a meeting 'to confer with the master in what sort to proceed in bewitching of the children', giving Helen the opportunity to remind her of God's refusal of permission (110). Margaret Wait and her daughter appeared to Elizabeth, 'being bailed on bonds with sureties' and that night 'the witches lay upon the children in bed and greatly vexed them' (112). This was the period of the most intense attempt at abduction and of the reported feasts.

When Edward turned to an account of the actual trial, the reader is aware of the acquittal, and his tone is one of surprise and disappointment, with an undertone of suspicion about the means of examination and the forms of intervention that created such means, all beneath a veneer of stated trust in the individuals running the court but leading to an amazement that it ended the way it did. He steps back from the narrative, summing

up that these have been 'the particulars of the afflictions of my poor children, which they endured, of which no man, either christianly religious or morally honest, can doubt, for they are confirmed already by the oaths of myself and family, and of such neighbours and strangers as saw and heard'. Moreover, they had been given in evidence to 'two sundry assizes and two several juries, consisting of knights, many justices of peace, and other gentlemen of quality, who consciences were so well satisfied that the children were bewitched, and that these women were the offenders, that they indicted them and put them on their trials'. However, the court was merciful and judged them to be innocent. Fairfax is happy to see them escape death in the name of Christian charity; he is less happy with the way it happened.

Notwithstanding, the proceedings which made the way easy for their escape, I fear, was not fair; either the hardness of hearts to believe, which made some of the best sort incredulous, or the openness of hands to give in some of the meaner, which waylaid justice, untying the fetters from their heels, and unloosing the halters from their necks, which so wise judges thought they had so well deserved (123).

When the Fairfax daughters were examined in court, first Elizabeth, and then Helen, fell into trance. The justices demanded 'experiments to prove if they counterfeited or not'. While their treatment was less 'civil' than he hoped, 'yet their curiosity found nothing but sincerity in my children'. When the same experiments were applied to Maud they concluded that she was fraudulent, a conclusion Fairfax asks the reader to measure against the fact that her sufferings worsened after the trial, that she seems close to death and surely to be trusted, 'except perhaps she can counterfeit dying'. The consequence of this assessment of Maud was 'that the wench's father was committed to gaol, and the testimony of him and the witnesses he brought never heard'. Fairfax expresses perhaps slightly disingenuous confusion over the legality of this action: 'yet he and they appeared upon bond to prosecute and give evidence for the king; and their oaths were taken but not

their testimony; quo jure I know not; of this I am sure, they were material witnesses, and could have said much against the delinquents'. He took umbrage that, while John Jeffray was judged to be a malicious fraudster, he received 'an aspersion, not of dishonesty, but of simplicity'. Jeffray was said to have 'devised the practice, to which they drew my eldest daughter, and she the younger, and that I, like a good innocent, believed all which I heard or saw to be true and not feigned' (124).

Further details of the actions and a possible explanation are provided when Fairfax returned to the legal proceedings after a section condensing the proofs of the actions and visions being beyond natural disease and counterfeiting. On 8 August, he 'preferred sundry indictments against the women questioned' and, along with other witnesses, delivered their evidence before the grand jury. In common with the trial brought to deal with Anne Gunter's accusations, there seems to have been an awareness that this was a case to be treated with care, for there were six JPs on the grand jury, 'all of them gentlemen of such wisdom and discretion, that they can hardly be paralleled by any jury for divers years past'. The judge delivered 'a good caveat' to 'be very careful in the matter of witches'. They questioned him thoroughly and he was satisfied with his performance, feeling 'that nothing was left undone or said which the wit of man could esteem needful for searching out of the truth, and in giving satisfaction of the certainty of so strange a case'. At that stage, the jurymen were 'abundantly satisfied' with the answers to their doubts 'that without difficulty they found every indictment to be billa vera'. The next day the six women were brought to their arraignment and Edward stood with Elizabeth giving evidence. While the judge asked his daughter questions, she fell into trance as did Maud and then Helen, 'who did spit blood there a great quantity; which the jury of life and death took special notice of'. All three remained comatose and 'as dead persons they were all carried forth'. Sir George Ellis and some of the other JPs 'made special trial of them', testing for imposture but Fairfax had no idea of the questions asked or actions taken because neither

he 'nor any of mine' were admitted to the examination. One servant accompanying one of the sisters was removed and she was placed in gaol, 'not for any offence, neither for any other intention as I conceive, but to sever from the child all she knew'. 'Of her sister also they made some experiments more violent, whereof the marks remained for a time after: yet in her also their curiosity found nothing but sincerity'. The marks may well be from efforts to test her physical lack of sensation during her trance rather than torture (126-7).

Fairfax knew little of the examination of Maud other than to say that when they returned to the bench they 'reported that this was a practice confessed'. Fairfax expected this conclusion to be followed by the court requiring Maud, 'whom they averred to have confessed the practice', to publicly 'have told the circumstances, and opened the truth of all the said practice (if it were so) that all men might have seen what part the wench had played in this practice' as well as how far the sisters had colluded with her. However, 'they took not the fair course', simply sending John Jeffray to prison and stating that Maud confessed that 'she said nothing, but as her father and mother did bid her', an assertion that she denied, both before the judge and thereafter. Leaving the reader to draw their own conclusions, Fairfax simply makes the point that 'nothing done or said either by the wench or her father, did or could justly cast any aspersion of practicing or counterfeiting upon my children, or any other of my family'. The judge, 'on what occasion moved I know not', told the jury that the evidence did not match the indictments, and set the suspects free.

At which manner of proceeding many wiser men than I am, greatly wonder. It hath been told me that one John Dibb, son of Dibb's wife, procured a certificate to the judge, that the women were of good fame, and never till that time ill-reported of for witchcraft; and that Henry Graver solicited and induced many persons to set their hands to the same upon advantage of which certificate such magistrates as are incredulous in these things work their deliverance (127).

Having delivered his disappointment in the behaviour and judgment of the assizes in as restrained terms as he was probably capable of and his suggestion of dubious practices by Graver on behalf of the suspects in relatively controlled fashion, Fairfax returns to the continued sufferings of his daughters. However, if one trail of justice had failed him, the other, the purely divine did not. His offspring were relieved and vengeance taken in a manner that runs at variance with the more godly humble suffering and dispossession by means of fasting and prayer would allow. There is a note of pleasure in a more Old Testament sense of judgement in his conclusion.

Within a few days after, viz., on Sunday, the 15th of December, 1622, Jane Jeffray, and presently after Hellen Jeffray, the elder a child of ten years, and the younger of eight years, being the daughters of one William Jeffray, of Norwood, and Dionise Haber, a maid servant, did all fall to be in the same state that my children had been in, and are now in great extremities. So that God of his great mercy hath heard our prayers, and delivered my children out of the hands of the devil and his ministers, to our unspeakable joy and comfort. And the witchcraft seemeth to be removed to that man's house, to the wonder of many, who account to the more remarkable, for that the same William Jeffray was a special instrument to draw and persuade some in authority near him that my children ailed nothing, and that the whole matter in them was counterfeit (151).

The Creation and Maintenance of the Possessed Human

To turn from the latest specific instance of a dispute over the demonic possession to the historiography is to turn from the phenomenon to the explanatory model. This section will concentrate on the surprisingly narrow historiography devoted to identifying models to explain possession in toto. The frameworks established, individually and cumulatively by the historians discussed below are proposed in order to provide a sieve which is made to measure the highest proportion of the cases of possession. Thus these sieves are to be tested by assessing their success in proving appropriate for the cases gathered above. There are three caveats that must be stressed at the opening. The first is that, while I have attempted to note every instance of possession, including the marginal figures like the servants of the Throckmortons, the family and employee of the gaoler in Huntingdon and such like, we cannot and will not have a complete record. In addition to those treated here the survival of the papers of Richard Napier (and the work of Michael MacDonald) allow a glimpse into dozens, possibly scores of individuals with fears of, symptoms of, or concerns about family suffering from possession turning to this practitioner walking the line between medic and cunning man.¹ In addition to the suggestion of unrecorded instances, the means of measurement needs to be judged. If one believes oneself to be possessed, does that count? Does it need corroboration from contemporaries? What if it is contested? Is contestation to be given lesser credit the greater the temporal distance between the instance and the analysis? Is the contestation to be given greater or lesser credit according to the specific social provenance of the doubter? Is it up to the historian to judge and if so, on what grounds? The least worst conclusion, it seems to me, is that a recognition of the impossibility of any hard and fast statistical conclusion is necessary and that it is more profitable to make it clear that the models within the historiography are to be

¹ Michael MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: madness, anxiety, and healing in seventeenth-century England (Cambridge, 1981), 155-6, 198-9.

assessed by proportionate success rather than any absolute sense of applicability. The second is that some of the models discussed below vary in the strength of their suggestion, from areas to be explored to a more dogmatic assertion. For the former to be tried and found wanting or of limited use is in a different field of engagement to the bolder statement. Accordingly I will try to keep a standard of recognition of the nature of the claims made in the historiography. Thirdly, despite the tone of criticism that runs through this section, it should be made clear that the theses discussed below are those judged to have been worth engaging with within the field of explaining demonic possession. Even if they are criticised, such criticism is a form of compliment in that they were judged to be worth criticising.

The first area to be opened is who the possessed were. James Sharpe notes possession as a 'live issue among the gentry', that '[t]ime and again possession involved their children', using the examples of the Throckmorton, Fairfax, Starkey and Gunter families.² Adding Mary Glover, Thomas Darling and William Sommers to the mix of the possessed, he notes 'most of them involved the families of the gentry or of people, like the Glovers, who were well connected in their community'. In drawing out the dynamics of a possession case he notes how 'the local gentry would visit to lend support to members of their social stratum suffering misfortune'.³ The association with the offspring of the gentry is made more specific, for instance by Almond, observing that 'children and adolescents were more prone to possession than adults' and this quickly moves from being a likelihood to the given that needs explaining.⁴ For Sharpe it is softer in that 'it becomes obvious that the bewitchment of children and adolescents was a recurring phenomenon' or elsewhere, 'it seems to have been mainly children and adolescents', citing the same cases but

² James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (Harmondsworth, 1996), 195.

³ Idem, 'Disruption in the well-ordered household: age, authority, and possessed young people', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), The Experience of Authority on Early Modern England (Houndmills, 1996), 194, 195.

⁴ Philip C. Almond, Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: contemporary texts and their cultural contexts (Cambridge, 2004), 22 (quoted), 23, 25.

substituting William Perry for Anne Gunter.⁵ An exploration of the possibility of a greater propensity for females to be possessed, based on the sources employed in one particular paper, is suggested, that these sources 'do create the impression that young women were more likely to be involved in these cases than were young men'. In this instance it is left open; Almond gives a stronger emphasis in that females, 'and particularly girls and young women, were also more prone to be possessed than males'.⁶

With this likely social context identified it gains a characteristic that is both descriptive and able to become a causal factor. That characteristic is religious discipline. This has become almost a commonplace in the literature, whether the chosen term is 'puritan' or 'godly'. Sharpe describes Helen Fairfax as 'a young Puritan woman', her visions are from 'the mind of the daughter of a godly and cultured gentleman', the result of the tensions of being raised 'among gentry in a godly household' and 'Puritan' is the default adjective through Almond's treatment of the Warboys case.⁷ The treatment in Sharpe's analysis is more cautious in what is described as 'an exploratory piece' but nonetheless, the parents in the model to be tested are 'most frequently of a godly frame of mind', the sufferers are '[t]eenagers in godly Tudor and Stuart households' and 'the normal emotional and spiritual rigours of a godly upbringing provided a sufficient basis for fears of demonic possession to flourish'.⁸ In his discussion of a case that fits the model well, that of Mary Glover, Michael MacDonald sees the religious context as vital. He goes on to widen the brief when he acknowledges the earlier suggestion of this causal context by Keith Thomas who, in MacDonald's words, 'observed that a great many of the most highly

⁵ Sharpe, 'Disruption', 191; *idem*, *Instruments*, 196.

⁶ Sharpe, 'Disruption', 191-2; he gives it stronger emphasis in *Instruments*, 196; Almond, *Demonic Possession*, 22.

⁷ Sharpe, *Instruments*, 201, 202; Philip C. Almond, *The Witches of Warboys: an extraordinary story of sorcery, sadism and Satanic possession* (London, 2008), *passim*.

⁸ Sharpe, 'Disruption', 191, 195, 205-6. He ends with the observation that similar symptoms were seen in those not raised in 'godly gentry households' (immediately following the list of Throckmorton, Glover, Gunter and Fairfax families). This is taken as evidence of 'the widespread cultural dispersion of notions of possession' (207-8). It would be equally persuasive to see this as evidence of the absence of any determinative element in the godly household.

publicised possessions occurred in intensely pious environments'.⁹ It is worth returning to this work, not to suggest that this canonical text is a 'tainted source' but to make explicit the basis Thomas builds for this thesis and to open a couple of pointers for slightly later.

Thomas opens by observing that a 'conspicuous feature' of the possession cases for which sources survive 'is that they frequently originated in a religious environment. Indeed it could plausibly be argued that the victims were engaging in a hysterical reaction against the religious discipline and repression to which they had been subjected'. He cites an article on the Salem witch trials and goes on to instances of fits appearing during devotional exercises, such as for Darling and the Throckmortons. He moves on to note that an 'intense régime of religious observance could thus provoke a violent reaction. In France the best known cases of possession occurred in the nunneries for the same sort of reason'. Freud is cited, arguing that the actions were repressed desires with the added note that more recent psychiatrists would see it as a 'severe type of schizophrenia'. There follows the note of religious rebellion without culpability, citing the ethnographer I. M. Lewis. The illustrative example chosen is Robert Briggs in order to demonstrate that possession was 'seldom diagnosed in circles where religion was regarded as a thing indifferent, and it was frequently the godly or ex-godly who were afflicted, their hysterical symptoms returning instantly upon the sight of a preacher or prayer-book'.¹⁰ At this point, I will note no more than the thin foundation of English sources Thomas lays for this thesis and leave a more thorough test for a moment, for the last part has become a regular part of the historiography.

Regarding Mary Glover, MacDonald notes the useful fit of the model of possession as an opportunity to 'lash out against the oppressive piety and obsessive control' of such pious households.¹¹ Sharpe picks up the thesis, with some caution, but is willing to say

⁹ Michael MacDonald (ed and intro.), Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover case (London, 1991), xxxvii.

¹⁰ Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (Harmondsworth, 1973), 572-4.

¹¹ MacDonald, (ed and intro.), Witchcraft, xxxviii.

that 'being possessed or bewitched did allow young people considerable access to licensed misbehaviour and attention-seeking'.¹² This is taken slightly further with children who were expected to 'present themselves in as disciplined and comely a way as possible', by becoming 'writhing and screaming children' they 'immediately subverted these ideals by becoming a major centre of attention'. This is within a silent slip from mostly godly, and mostly gentry, to an assumed godly gentry household.¹³ Almond takes this furthest, shearing it of caveats, in his suggestion that 'analyses of demonic possession have pointed to its function as a form of rebellion against adult authorities'. The behaviour of 'young demoniacs' was 'an extreme reaction to the restrictive piety of the households in which many of them were being brought up'. Possession was 'a culturally available means by which children and adolescents, and especially young women, escaped their subordination'. It 'enabled them to break through the culturally imposed limits on their speech and behaviour. The worst excesses of their rebelliousness could be excused and laid at the Devil's door'.¹⁴

As a preface to testing this model, I should draw attention to the less cited opening to the discussion by Thomas, that '[t]he affliction does not seem to have been confined to persons of any particular age, sex or origin'.¹⁵ To start with the predominance of possession cases among the gentry, I will make no assumptions where the sources are unclear and the identified places on the social spectrum will be, necessarily, broad estimates. For those who can be located fairly surely among the middling sort or the poor there are plenty of examples. Anne Mylner, Mistress Kingesfield, Agnes Brigges and Margaret Cooper, Thomas Darling, William Sommers and Mary Cooper as well as the two Swettson infants and the older Boydens, Richard and Lucy, along with Judith Smith, Mary

¹² Sharpe, Instruments, 202-3.

¹³ Sharpe, 'Disruption', 198-9, cf. 205-6.

¹⁴ Almond, Demonic Possession, 23, 26. The most straightforward use of the functionalist argument, free of caveats and watered down, can be found in Kathleen Sands, Demon Possession in Elizabethan England (Westport, CT, 2004), 9.

¹⁵ Thomas, 572.

Pearson and Maud Jeffray can all safely be identified as middling, a mixture of rural and urban.¹⁶ Jane and Hellen Jeffray, the two who suffered from the vengeance of God on behalf of the Fairfax family, were poor, and could confidently be joined by Katheren Malpas, Joan Jorden and Mildred Norrington, possibly by Katherine Wright. The servants associated with the Throckmorton possessions are hard to place socially as it could be a temporary status for a family member on the rise to lower gentry or a transition to marriage among middling sorts.¹⁷

Moving to the thesis of possession as a response to an environment of godly discipline, it is worth starting with some of the most frequently cited cases. The Throckmortons and the Fairfaxes are among the most popular, with the Starkeys and their kith and kin often included. The grounds for the Throckmortons being designated 'puritan' is threefold. Gilbert Pickering lived in Titchmarsh Grove, a godly parish, and among their supporters were clerics and students of divinity. Additionally, there is the connection with the Cromwell family. The first thing to note is that to be resident in a godly parish does not mean one is godly; there were plenty of ungodly in places like the 'city on a hill' of Dorchester.¹⁸ In addition, the colleges attended by the scholars offering support were not among the 'usual suspects' for puritan sympathies and finally, the Cromwell family does not inherently mean godly; Oliver Cromwell, of course, only came to be the familiar zealot in his 30s.¹⁹ More importantly, there is a big hole in the middle of the account of the family's sufferings. For all the clergy offering help, there was never any sign of fasting and prayer turned towards the expulsion of the demons. Once the possession was identified the focus was always on finding the human culprit responsible for the instigation. This is not to suggest 'ungodliness', merely a moderate, commonplace piety of mainstream

¹⁶ See above, 40-2, 42-4, 54, 59-61, 103, 136-7, 162-3, 426-7, 424-6, 464.

¹⁷ See above, 501, 447-9, 217-8, 57-8, 63-4, 75-6.

¹⁸ See David Underdown, Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Country Town in the Seventeenth Century (New Haven, Conn, 1992).

¹⁹ John Morrill, 'The making of Oliver Cromwell', in idem (ed), Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (London, 1990).

Protestantism. The treatment of the Fairfax family is similar with Edmund being judged as much by his descendants as on his own. He made his moderation plain in introducing himself as 'neither a fantastic Puritan nor superstitious Papist' and while this was, of course, in his own interest, it is an assessment borne out through the tract. While he frowned upon Maud Jeffray's father for turning to cunning folk, he too made no effort at dispossession by fasting and prayer.²⁰ While both Almond and Sharpe note his concern that some may think his children feigned their possession to win his affection, there is little evidence that they were lacking it and none that they lived under a rigorous, demanding spiritual régime.²¹ The repressive household of godliness is even less convincing for the possessed at Cleworth. Nicholas Starkey, it should be recalled, tried a seminary priest and took in Edmund Hartley, a cunning man, long before he turned to puritan agents of dispossession.²²

This last example can be taken further in that, as at Cleworth, the cases which had the presence of the devout as a means of aid, received such treatment after the troubles began. This was the experience of Robert Brigges, the main example chosen by Thomas, and similarly so for William Sommers and Katherine Wright, Anne Mylner, Thomas Harrison, William Perry, Anne Gunter, Katherine Malpas and John Fox.²³ To see a godly environment as a cause of possession or at least to see possession as a reaction to such an environment is to put the cart before the horse. All of these sufferers would fit on a spectrum from orthodox Protestant to downright ungodly. To raise an eyebrow at the suggestion of the devout falling to the invasion of demons is not to claim that this was never the case. Alexander Nyndge, Mary Glover and especially Thomas Darling fall into

²⁰ Fairfax, *Demonologia*, 32.

²¹ Almond, *Demonic Possession*, 25; Sharpe, *Instruments*, 207; remarkably his second example of possession as a means of seeking for parental affection is Anne Gunter.

²² See above, 89-90.

²³ See above, 87-95, 46-51, 136-8, 62-6, 40-2, 212-7, 436-9, 403-5, 450-3, 397-401.

this category as do, in a different way, Mary Honnywood, Edmund Coppinger and Henry Arthington.²⁴ The danger is that this should be taken as the norm.

The spread of age and the gender division produces mixed results. There are many who can be fitted into the broad category of 'children and adolescents' from those whose age can be ascertained, roughly thirty from around seventy, taking the category to run from birth to the early twenties. There are some reservations against taking this as an assertion that children and adolescents are 'more likely' to be possessed. The first is that early modern England was a young society; once this is taken into account the concentration is less unrepresentative of society as a whole. In addition, to place all under the same flag is troubling. At the extremes, this includes the two Swettson infants of middling stock alongside the gentlewoman Helen Fairfax in her early twenties; there is more dividing these individuals than they have in common. The same could be said for Grace Throckmorton and Ellen Jeffray, both aged 8, but worlds apart socially. In terms of gender, it looks more promising in that, as far as can be measured, roughly twice as many of the possessed are female than male. Similar reservations should be voiced, though. Other than gender, how much does the young, poor Katheren Malpas have in common with Lady Susan Cromwell, 17-year-old Mildred Norrington with the elderly gentlewoman, Mary Honnywood, the moderately pious Elinor Hardman, aged 10, with the mature innkeeper's wife Mistress Kingesfield? This is not to dismiss either gender or age as either in need of explanation or a means for explanation, merely to suggest that a broad brush approach risks masking as much as it reveals. It is noteworthy that the division by gender and age shifts when the collective possessions of Warboys, Cleworth, and Fewston are removed. All three were dominated, it seems, by younger women and girls, although the emphasis should be on 'dominated' as the first two had older women and one boy in the mix. The extraction of these collective possessions from the total ratio leaves the gender

²⁴ See above, 45-7, 227-9, 103-24, 316-21, 322-3.

balance more or less equal and the age range unremarkable. This can, of course, be read in two ways. The first is that this sample offers little conclusive in terms of concentrations, of those more likely to be possessed. The second is that recorded instances of collective possessions tended to occur in concentrations of young female gentry. Given the problematisation of the causal nature given to repressive piety noted above, I am disinclined to suggest generalising causal dimensions beyond the diagnosis of possession. It seems more profitable to share the opening remarks of Keith Thomas that possession was an open affliction, relatively unlimited by age, sex or social position, although it will not be left there as more profitable avenues can be explored.²⁵

I

There is a sense of disappointment in a conclusion that amounts to a recognition that there is no clear conclusion to come to. What follows, it should be stressed, is more than a response to this disappointment. I hope to have raised doubts about the habits of the historiography but it was not my intention to remove questions of gender and age from the means through which to understand the possessed. I intend to complicate the issues, to change the questions and so to propose a more complicated model for who was likely to be possessed. Rather than work with a dichotomous understanding of gender and an externally imposed distinction between children or adolescents and adults, I want to start from the inside and work out and propose a model that works with a spectrum of identity and a performative understanding of gender and age. In particular, I hope to show the value of a processual understanding of gender but especially of humanity and bestiality. This will entail stepping back a little in addressing the distinctions between humans and animals (or, more accurately, non-human animals), the boundaries between them and

²⁵ For a helpful parallel analysis that encourages statistical caution along with the possibility of 'dramatic and as yet unexplained regional differences' across Europe worthy of future research, see H. C. Midelfort, A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany (Stanford, Cal., 1999), 7, 220.

especially their porosity but this necessary move will be taken alongside a promise that its particular pertinence to demonic possession will be made clear.²⁶

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are of a different mindset on the nature of humanity and on the relations between humans and animals to our set of assumptions. As Erica Fudge suggested, 'Cartesianism's greatest success, perhaps, was that it turned "human" from a verb into a noun', that is, into a set of givens inherent in the creature rather than 'the product of actions or of a network that relies on and includes animals'.²⁷ The triumph of Cartesianism was a slow, cautious and qualified one in England and the period covered here was a transitional phase, not so much between 'pre-Cartesian' thought and Cartesianism but a time of tensions and strains within an Aristotelian orthodoxy, albeit one being questioned, and Reformed theology. In fact the early modern interpretation of Aristotle's Generation of Animals provides the first gendered dimension of the human/animal relationship: according to this (and easily read in chime with early modern Christianity) women were imperfect men and judged by Aristotle's perfectionist standards they were therefore 'monstrous'. Built on this foundation was an established tradition of comparing women with animals and, one step further, perceiving women as closer to animals than men.²⁸ What will emerge as equally salient for the present purposes is that this period saw a pervasive tension between being human and becoming human. ('Humanity' was often seen as something subsequent to the first movement of the foetus rather than conception.) While many writers were willing to proclaim the hard and fast line between humans and animals, the volume of their proclamation reflected an equally strong perception of its conditionality and contingency. The possession of a soul with the chance

²⁶ There are some encouraging observations in this direction, both on the tendency of humans, from their nature, to risk becoming bestial, particularly in the context of demonic possession, in Midelfort, History of Madness, 133-4. Not least important is the note that the unclean spirits of the gospel, once cast out of the humans, moved into the Gaderene swine, representing both the vulnerable state of the humans and their more natural home.

²⁷ Erica Fudge, Brutal Reasoning: animals, rationality, and humanity in early modern England (Ithaca, New York, 2006), 191.

²⁸ Merry Wiesner-Hanks, The Marvellous Hairy Girls: the Gonzales Sisters and their worlds (New Haven, 2009), 45-6.

of immortality was more processual than we tend to assume. The foetus had a vegetative soul; as infancy passed it became dominated by the sensitive soul and moved into the potential for a fully formed rational soul, with the latter forming the distinction between humans and animals. As will be seen, this processual becoming human was far from determinative, inevitable and assured.²⁹ For now, the point is that the tension between being and becoming human raised possibilities, insecurities and curiosities.

I will deal with the possibilities and insecurities first and turn to the equally important curiosities shortly. Animals were both self and other, as something that one, as a human, could register oneself against by difference, but also as something that one might become. This may be seen as a reflection of the tension between being and becoming. Human dominion over the animal kingdom was made less clear cut by the Fall with flawed humanity, while holding the responsibility of being made in God's image, still carrying the danger of descending the hierarchy into the bestial realm. A consequence of the fact that humans had the privilege of volition, denied to animals, meant that such a descent was worse than a relegation to equality with animals; the gift of culpability brought with it a greater sense of judgement and of being judged, to being worse than animals.³⁰ While this may seem to be rather abstruse and a primarily elite concern it was not exclusively so. In 1595 Valens Acidalius, the German classical scholar, published his Disputatio nova contres mulieres, qua probatur eas homines non esse, 'proving' that women were not human. It is noteworthy that while Acidalius did not make it plain exactly what women are, he was willing to connect them to dogs and demons. His work was answered within a month by the Lutheran theologian and professor of Hebrew, Simon Geddicus, with Defensio sexus muliebris. While much of this, and the numerous tracts setting out the pros and cons that it produced, may have been an exercise in satire and rhetoric among scholarly friends and rivals, that is not the whole story. The works had a long publishing

²⁹ Fudge, Brutal Reasoning, 47-8.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 60.

history in a variety of translations and spawned many apocryphal stories such as one divinity student on Cologne taking the risk of defending the thesis of Acidalius and consequently being beaten to death by angry mothers.³¹

The friability of the boundary between human and animal as well as its part in popular interest will become plain as I move on to the curiosities consequent upon it. In addition, its relevance to demonological issues will become clearer. The first, and broadest, appetite for curiosities is the 'hairy women', the central characters of the study by Wiesner-Hanks cited above. Women with facial hair and with unexpectedly hairy bodies proved an attraction to elite courts across Europe, occupying a border position between human and animal, reminiscent of the fabulous creatures familiar from Pliny, Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville but now in the flesh, as it were. While their male counterparts were attractive and placed alongside dwarves, exotic animals and so forth to provide courtly entertainment, well dressed and educated 'hairy girls' (and the Gonzales family at the centre of Wiesner-Hanks' study ticked all the boxes by being from the Canary Islands) were in demand in portraits, scholarly and more sensationalist literature long after their death. While the trope of bestial woman was common in political polemic, for our purposes it is noteworthy that part of the evidence for anomalous women being witches, in the Spanish play La Celestina and, of course, in Macbeth, was that they were bearded.³² Given that the collection of curious characteristics of the weird sisters is, to say the least, eclectic and this was not an expected part of the witch stereotype in England, this should not be taken too far.

A related topic is lycanthropy. With the comparative rareness of wolves in England and the absence of traditions of werewolves there, the attention was primarily in sensational literature with some attention in demonological work. The 1590s saw the success of A True Discourse Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe

³¹ Wiesner-Hanks, 177-9.

³² Ibid., 42-5 and passim.

Peeter, A Most Wicked Sorcerer, a garish account of a Dutch man transformed into a wolfish creature and prone to murder, rape and incest, maintaining his human culpability while in animal form.³³ For the demonological interest, the focus was on the limitations of diabolic powers. John Cotta observed that some reported 'that the diuel hath perswaded some foolish Sorcerers and Witches, that hee hath changed their bodies and substances, into Catts, Asses, Birds, and other creatures'. Taking into account the constraints of Satan within the limits of nature, he concluded, with Augustine as his authority, that 'diuels cannot create any nature or substance, but in juggling shew or seeming onely, whereby with false shadowes and outward induced shapes covering those things which are created of God', thereby causing 'them to seeme that which they are not'.³⁴

Among the many unflattering comparisons employed by Samuel Harsnet in his assessment of John Darrell was to place Darrell and William Sommers alongside 'the pretie feates of Bankes and his horse'.³⁵ This was the showman and Morocco, his intelligent horse, who proved capable of convincing audiences that the horse could play dice and that he could identify whores, thieves and fraudsters, effectively, that he was a creature capable of rational thought. He did so in London as well as in France and Scotland and remained of sufficient renown or infamy to carry on appearing in religious works, social commentaries, plays, pamphlets and almanacs well past the height of his fame in the 1590s.³⁶ Part of the attraction, of course, was Morocco's apparently greater capacity than that which should be available to a horse or, in more scholarly terms, the evident possession of a rational soul by an animal. What is significant here is the means by which he was suspected have acquired such abilities. In 1609, Thomas Morton, when

³³ S. J. Wiseman, "'Hairy on the inside': metamorphosis and civility in English werewolf texts', in Erica Fudge (ed), Renaissance Beasts: of animals, humans, and other wonderful creatures (Urbana, Ill, 2004), 50-69. The same account is treated in its original context with a consequential different set of priorities in William de Blécourt, 'The Werewolf, the Witch, and the Warlock: aspects of gender in the early modern period', in Alison Rowlands (ed), Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe (Houndmills, 2009), 191-213.

³⁴ John Cotta, The Triall of Witch-Craft (London, 1616), 33, 35.

³⁵ Samuel Harsnet, A Discovery of the Fraudulent practises of John Darrell (London, 1599), 225; see above, 348.

³⁶ The variety of the texts in which they appeared into the 1620s, along with an analysis of Morocco's place on the boundary between human and animal can be found in Fudge, Brutal Reasoning, 123-46.

he was in the process of being translated from the deanery of Gloucester to the deanery of Winchester and later to be crucial figure in the examination of William Perry, passed on a tale of Morocco's fortunes in France. At Orleans people were impressed but also suspicious. In order to regain credit Bankes 'promised to manifest to the world that his horse was nothing lesse then a Divell', that is, that he was not inspired by demonic spirits. (He did so by making Morocco find a member of the audience who had a cross on his hat, to kneel down and kiss it, thus satisfying them of his goodness, the audience 'conceaving (as it might seeme) that the Divell had no power to come neare the Crosse').³⁷ Gervase Markham, the author, playwright and poet, felt it worthwhile to reassure his readers that the abilities, regarded as 'unnatural, strange, and past reason' as shown 'both to Princes, and to the common people' by the 'Curtall which one Banks carried uppe and down' were not beyond human tutelage. The tricks were such 'that it was a generall opinion, and even some of the good wisdoms have maintained the assertion, that it was not possible' that a horse should be able to perform in this manner 'but by the assistance of the Devill'. Markham was confident that he could teach almost any horse such tricks if he was given a month to train the horse and devoted the final chapter, eleven pages, of his lengthy treatise on horsemanship, to such training.³⁸

To turn from the urban elite to the rural poor seems like a considerable leap but they shared an appetite for the sensational, albeit with different priorities and greater impact, at least on the individual level. In Market Harborough, Leicestershire, in 1569 Agnes Bowker, a maidservant, claimed to have given birth to a cat. The complete 'truth' of the matter is unavailable and, in a sense, irrelevant. What is important is that this drew the attention of the local people, the authorities and, eventually, of Edmund Grindal and the Privy Council and that the stories told were seen to be within the bounds of the believable

³⁷ Thomas Morton, A Direct Answer Unto the Scandalous Exceptions which Theophilus Higgons hath lately objected against D. Morton (London, 1609), 11; for Perry, see above, 440-6.

³⁸ Gervase Markham, Cavelarise, Or The English Horseman (London, 1607), eighth pag., 26-7. A curtal or curtail is a horse with its tail docked.

by those telling them. Agnes told of being 'delivered of this monster', having had sex with a cat six or seven times. Having been abandoned by one of her (human) partners, she tried to hang herself but the girdle she was using broke; in this state she was approached by 'a beast in likeness to a bear' which encouraged her to try to drown herself. The midwife reported that Agnes told her that on several occasions 'a thing in the likeness of a bear, sometimes like a dog, sometimes like a man' came to her and 'had the knowledge carnal of her body in every such shape'. Furthermore, Agnes told her that 'an outlandish woman, a Dutch woman', approached her and, having asked why she was miserable, told her that she was not with child but carrying 'a Mooncalf', which could mean a dolt, a growth in the womb that was not a foetus, or any grotesque or malformed creature (as it was used to refer to Caliban, the deformed servant of Prospero, in The Tempest). In later examinations Agnes returned to a black cat which 'had knowledge of her' repeatedly. In the midst of speculation about what the birth portended alongside experiments on the creature's corpse to ascertain whether it was freshly born, Agnes was taken into various houses and interrogated by concerned and curious gentlewomen. She told one that she was 'conjured' but could not tell more because she had promised to keep it secret 'and have given myself both body and soul to the devil if ever I utter the matter any further than I have already'. She later expanded upon and possibly changed this version, claiming to have been sick and having been caught out in an attempt to blackmail her master, an unsavoury schoolmaster, Hugh Brady, who advised her to 'give thyself wholly to the devil'. This was done by giving herself to one that he would send 'in the likeness of a man' which she did, sealing the deal by making her nose bleed and passing on to him a bloodstained rag. After this he returned, 'as Brady had said he should, like a greyhound and a cat, and had to do with her sundry times carnally'. There are almost limitless possible explanations or understandings to be suggested and this has been done very ably by David Cressy; for current purposes the main note is that it was credible for a woman to breed with various

animals hence implicitly stressing the thin lines between humans and non-human animals and the appearance of the devil as the power behind the throne.³⁹

To show how natural this figure of fear was, as well as its easy connection with Satanic goals, the trope is to be found in an everyday condemnation of drunkenness by a moderate English Protestant writer, Thomas Young. The English appetite for drink is seen as unmatched in the world and it is chief in 'all the subtle sleights, tempting baites, and craftie allurements, which Satan useth for the overthrow of mankinde'.⁴⁰ He gave an example of three Germans who were so 'taken in their cups according to their brutish manner of that countrey' that they sketched the devil on the wall and toasted him. The next morning they were all found strangled, having 'dallied with the Divell so long untill they brought themselves to utter ruine and destruction'. The bestial characteristics of drunken behaviour were such that if one 'overtaken with his cups' was around, 'we would have spit at him as a Toade, and cald him drunken Swine, and warnd all our friends out of his company'. It is striking that the Scriptural reference chosen for the seductions of liquor was David playing his harp to, at least temporarily, rescue Saul from his grief, one common in descriptions of attempts at dispossession.⁴¹ The most detailed connection between the impact of drink and the loss of humanity is when Young sets out the nine types of drunkard. The first is 'Lyon drunke', one who gets aggressive, breaks windows, 'cals his Hostesse Whoore' and starts fights with friends and family; the second is 'Ape-drunke', one who 'dances, capers, and leapes about the house'; the third 'sheepe drunke', one who becomes 'very kinde and liberall' and gives everything away; the fourth is 'Sow drunke', one who 'vomits, spewes, and wallowes in mire'; the fourth 'Foxe drunke', incapable of doing a deal without a drink but once drunk will become 'so craftie and

³⁹ David Cressy, Travesties and Transgression in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of discord and dissension (Oxford, 2000), 9-29. Erica Fudge has discussed this collection, stressing its useful exploration of the marginal and the curious as a way of casting light on the centre but also expressing its relative neglect of the relationship between humanity and animality: Fudge, 'Introduction', in eadem (ed), Renaissance Beasts, 4-7.

⁴⁰ Thomas Young, Englands Bane: Or, The Description of Drunknesse (London, 1617), ep. ded.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, C2^r, D^v, D3^r.

politique' that he can con anyone; the sixth, merely maudlin but the seventh 'Goate drunke', becoming so lecherous 'that hee makes no difference of either time, or place, age or youth, but cryes out a Whoore, a Whoore, ten pound for a Whoore'; the eighth 'Martin drunke', compared to the swift, prone to start before all others and finish after them, with an extraordinary appetite. The ninth is interesting in that it reveals Young as other than a puritanical kill-joy. This is 'Bat drunke', that is one 'that will not openly be seen in such actions, but as the reremowse or Bat, delights in secret places and flies by night'. Such a one will sit, looking sour and disapproving of their poor neighbours as if 'they had drunke a quart of Vinegar at a draught'; at night, however, they will sneak into a hostelry and pour drink into 'their fat paunches': 'on this sort are many hypocritical professors which abuse sacred Religion, carrying in the day times Bibles under their armes, but in the night they slip into Alehouse or Tavernes'.⁴²

One last example is worth introducing before I bring the bestial to the specifics of demonic possession. The woman who is the subject of two broadsheets of 1640 is relevant because the treatments raise issues that will recur. The first is a ballad of easy humour masked as advice to potential suitors. It sets the woman in folkloric traditions of elves, fairies and Robin Goodfellow, promising something or someone more exotic in the present time. She is described as of good stock and wealthy, pleasantly dressed and bejewelled: 'a dainty Lasse is she, A Boores daughter in the Low country', with 'Boores' the first sign of what is to come. She is comely from her feet to her shoulders and a fine dancer. When she is hungry, however, a silver trough is brought out, 'Wherein she puts her dainty snout, And sweetly sucks till all is out'.

And to speak further for her grace,

She hath a dainty white swines face,

Which shews that she came of a race

⁴² Ibid., F2^v-F3^v.

that loved fat porke and bacon:

Yet would I not her kindred wrong,

Her nose I think is two foot long,

Also her breath is very strong and fulsome.⁴³

Apart from the play on Boers and boars, the point is that she has taken on the head of a pig due to an inordinate appetite for swine, literally an expression of 'you are what you eat.' This is to take the consumption of meat one step further than the regular concern among early modern writers regarding the process of ingestion and the excremental matter produced.⁴⁴ The second treatment is slightly lengthier and dresses its wry humour in the respectability of a more educated guise. The appearance of the Dutch woman, now named Tannakin Skinker, is prefaced by a number of historical instances of animals giving birth to different species and prodigious human births, producing animals. Tannakin was born in 1618, with a healthy body: 'only her face, which is the ornament and beauty of all the rest, had the nose of a Hog, or Swine: which was not only a stain and blemish, but a deformed ugliness, making all the rest loathsome, contemptible and odious to all that lookt upon her in her infancie'.⁴⁵ After a digression of similar curiosities, including a Scottish girl aged seven, 'who was so hairy, hands, armes, face, and body, that you would have thought Orson to have bin her Father, and some she Beare her mother', the author turns to the cause of Tannakin's deformity. It is 'most probable... that it came by Witchcraft'. The region of her birth was, it is stated, renowned for a concentration of witches and there is no better comparison that comes to mind 'then that of the Lancashire witches some yeares since; of which I make no doubt, but this whole City hath taken especiall notice of'. The issue is 'whether Witches have power to effascinate an in[f]ant in the wombe of the mother'. Having established the possibility, using Circe and a list of classical examples, the

⁴³ A Monstrous shape. Or A shapelesse Monster (London, 1640).

⁴⁴ Cf. Erica Fudge, 'Saying nothing concerning the same: on dominion, purity, and meat in early modern England', in eadem (ed), Renaissance Beasts, 70-86.

⁴⁵ A certaine Relation of the Hog-faced Gentlewoman called Mistris Tannakin Skinker (London, 1640), A3.

author tells that it is 'credibly reported' that the mother refused alms to an old woman. The woman, 'suspected for a Witch' was heard to say, as she walked away 'As the Mother is Hoggish, so Swinish shall be the Child shee goeth withall'. This is followed by an account of the gentlewoman eating from a trough and some asking to hear her speak. Her linguistic ability was limited to 'onely the Dutch Hoggish Houghs, and the Piggs French Owee, Owee', which 'bred in some pittie, in others laughter, according to their severall dispositions'.⁴⁶ The tract moves into a series of tales of aspirant suitors unable to overcome their queasiness in pursuit of her wealth, before a last gesture at respectability. It closes with a suitable note of mysteriousness, telling of many seeking Tannakin's residence in Black Friars or Covent Garden to aid the author's account, but he has little to add, only that 'some have protested they have seene her, by the helpe of their acquaintance', but most have been unable as the fascination had driven her into hiding. He can do no more than to deny any competing and different accounts, 'for what is here discovered, is according to the best, and most approved intelligence'.⁴⁷

To turn to the accounts of demonic possession encountered above with an eye for animals, bestial behaviours and the tendency of diabolically inspired movement over the boundary between human and animal is a turn that is well rewarded. I will move from the surroundings towards the specific symptoms, from the agents and visions to the bodies and behaviours of the possessed and in that common ground with the preceding will be plain. On a couple of occasions it will be necessary to return to the discourse of the constitution of humanity and the fragility of becoming human in order to make clear some elements that are less self-evident to our post-Cartesian eyes but much will, I hope, be capable of standing on its own two feet (an ironic turn of phrase in this context). Some of the areas of attention become more commonplace through time but it is a difficult task to

⁴⁶ Ibid., A4-B.

⁴⁷ Ibid., B4.

be sure how far this is a matter of them becoming orthodoxy and how far it is reflective of the more extended accounts available.

I will begin with the part played by animals and by demons taking on the visage of animals, primarily in the visions of the possessed. This is less detached from the issue of boundaries than may appear as they frequently make a reality of the metaphor of the boundary between human and animal, making efforts to transgress the boundaries of the human body, literally to get inside the body of the possessed, to bring the non-human into the human and that they do so disguised as animals is an unremarked phenomenon. The first appearance of a demonic animal in the English possession accounts was as a preface to the sufferings of Robert Briggs. In spiritual insecurity after misapprehending a sermon at Middle Temple, he fled across to the south of the river and was followed by 'an uglye dogge, shagge[y] heare, of a darke fuskey color, betweine Blacke and Redd'. Disturbed by its sparkling eyes and its persistence in trailing him, he became convinced that it was 'no dog but a divell come heather of purpose to waite for my sowle'.⁴⁸ In 1584 the early visions of Margaret Cooper mentioned a bear following her into the yard and then an odd snail-like creature carrying fire, coming to a climax with all present seeing something 'much like unto a Beare, but it had no head nor nor taile, halfe a yarde in length and a yeard in height'.⁴⁹ Elizabeth Throckmorton was understandably disturbed by visions of Alice Samuel's efforts to place a mouse, a cat, a frog and a toad in her, Elizabeth's, mouth.⁵⁰ Demonic animals were much more common in the Starkey household at Cleworth. Margaret Byrom reported a 'great blacke dogge, with a monstrous taile, a long chaine open mouth coming apace tawardes her', followed by 'a bygg blacke catt' which took away the use of her hands and eyes and then by a large mouse which took the rest of her senses. The 'great blacke dogge' reappeared as a shared vision, this time with 'a firebrand in his mouth'. For the Lancashire seven the demons, either departing or attempting to re-

⁴⁸ See above, 48-9.

⁴⁹ See above, 60-1.

⁵⁰ See above, 81.

possess, taking on animalistic forms was commonplace: for Margaret Byrom it was the form of a crow's head when it left, for Ellen Holland it returned 'like a great beare with open mouth' and turned into 'the similytude of a white dove'. For Elinor Hardman it was also a bear, this time 'with fyre in his mouth'. For Jane Ashton, who suffered most, it is not clear whether they are descriptions or similes: the spirit would 'shake her as an angry mastife a litle cur dog' and departed, as 'a great breath, ugly like a toad, round like a ball'.⁵¹ The animals in the possession of Thomas Darling were wide ranging and pro-active. His initial symptoms involved a green cat that 'troubled him' and whose appearance lessened with only one later appearance. In the course of his more spectacular visions, he had a screaming battle with a dog from hell and one torment had him crying out, 'A beare, a beare', and 'he teareth me, he teareth me', going on to suffering the assaults of a bear, a hell hound and a dragon. The day before Darrell arrived he saw Satan coming from under the bed, accompanied by thunder and lightening and a 'beare, a beare, a dragon, a dragon'.⁵²

Although William Sommers was not blessed with the appearance of a dragon (in fact Darling and Helen Fairfax are the only recorded demoniacs in England to be so flattered), his visions constituted a reasonable menagerie. Early on, William was being tempted or led astray by 'sometimes a mouse, sometimes a dogge'. The black dog returned after his initial dispossession, offering ginger and gold, accompanied by a mouse with offers of expensive clothes. He reported a variety of guises, from a generic 'rough ugly beast' to being 'like a cocke-chicken, Like a Crane, and like a Snake, like an Angell, like a Toade, like a Newte, like a set of violles, and Dancers', and finally 'with a fowre-forked cappe on his head'. The devil colluded in encouraging him to 'confess' to being a counterfeit, appearing initially as a black dog, both threatening and attempting to bribe him, promising to return as a helpful mouse and then as an ass threatening to throw him

⁵¹ See above, 93-4, 98, 129, 132-4. Darrell was said to have told of the forms of a rat, a mouse and a cat in the attempted repossession during a later sermon in Nottingham: Samuel Harsnet, Discovery, 128-9.

⁵² See above, 103, 112, 117-8.

into a well. The grandest performance was during the first Commission in Nottingham, when he had a spectacular physical fit in court, repeatedly saying, 'a black dogg a dogg a dogg', which three of the commissioners claimed to have seen snapping at William's face.⁵³

Demonic animals were now, in different forms, part of the expected signs of possession. In 1599 Joan Jorden reported a spirit 'in the likenes of a cat', which tried to wake her up, kissed her and 'slavered on her' before going on to render her mute and immobile. The agents of the three women accused of bewitching Anne Gunter were a black rat with the tusks of a wild boar, a white mouse with a man's face and a whitish toad. On other occasions she was visited by a bear, a bull and a black swan. Similarly, six of the witches claimed to be tormenting John Smith in 1616 had their own agents, a horse, a cat, a dog, a 'pullemar' and two types of fish. William Perry's assailant was more modest, with him reporting on the devil attacking him 'in the forme of a Black bird'. Mary Pearson, one of the sufferers whose trials were blamed upon Margaret Cotton in Cambridge, had an even more lowly attacker, although the black mouse did 'bight her by the toe'. Katheren Malpas junior reported the forms taken by those accused of attacking her. Her first report of the presence of Elizabeth Hedlyn was to tell her mother to 'looke how she comes lik a browne dogge fominge & roaring' and the second, when Hedlyn took on a variety of shapes, apparently, 'some tymes in the lines of a black dogge & some tymes in the liknes of a swarme of bees'.⁵⁴

Demonic animals appeared as Edward Fairfax set out the *dramatis personæ* and, although some of the most fascinating conversations were with the demons in human form, they remained a constant presence. Most of the seven suspects had a reported spirit or familiar and many had a name. Margaret Wait the elder sent 'a deformed thing with many feet, black of colour, rough with hair, the bigness of a cat', though with no more

⁵³ See above, 139, 155, 169, 176, 174.

⁵⁴ See above, 217, 406-7, 430-1, 438, 428, 449-50.

specific species than the comparison by size. Her daughter had 'a white cat spotted with black', which was called Inges. Jennit Dibb had a very loyal spirit 'in the shape of a great black cat called Gibbe'. Margaret Thorp's 'familiar is in the shape of a bird, yellow of colour, about the bigness of a crow', named Tewhit. The anonymous seventh woman had a talkative spirit called Fillie 'in the likeness of a white cat'. One of the cats breathed into Helen Fairfax's mouth, causing her to spew blood and a fortnight later the mere presence of an unidentified black dog brought on an apparition. On a slightly earlier occasion, another feline familiar appeared and both Helen and Eliabeth were 'made blind by the cat'. Some of the spirits had particularly active periods or were just downright strange. Helen was sat reading the Bible when a vision of Margaret Wait senior appeared. When Helen ignored the command to stop reading Margaret 'pulled out of a bag a living thing, the bigness of a cat, rough, black, and with many feet'. Despite Helen's best efforts the cat would not stop sitting on the book and when she came out of her trance she reported that Margaret had told her 'that the creeping thing should eat up as much of the book as she had read'. Upon her first encounter with the well dressed boy, she was told that he had appeared earlier as 'a little black dog' on several occasions which she confirmed. When the women and their spirits were trying to take the sisters and kill them, there was a macabre incident when Elizabeth Fletcher and the boy returned, having been cast out of the house earlier. He offered Elizabeth Fairfax 'a black creeping thing, which was dead' and Fletcher 'had a red thing, quick'. After an intense period of daily trances, in January 1622 Helen saw 'a terrible monster with three heads, dropping with blood, a body and tail of a dragon, in the hand thereof a weapon with which it threatened to strike her'.⁵⁵

There are three recurrent characteristics of the possessed that will have been noticed but need their place within the distinction between human and animal made explicit. The first is that matter of strength. There have been many instances of observers

⁵⁵ See above, 461-2, 465, 467, 472-4.

struggling to physically control the demoniacs, often with limited success and showing more signs of exertion than the individual they were trying to control. The way this was described makes clear the way it was perceived. For instance, in an early episode in January 1596, John Starkey leapt out of bed, throwing himself around, 'being exceeding fierce and strong like a mad man, or rather like a madd dogge,... snatching at and biting every body that laide hold on him, not sparing in that fitte his owne mother'.⁵⁶ Similarly, when Thomas Darling was left in godly conversation with Jesse Bee and went into a fit, he was groaning, screaming and 'turning as round on all foure, as a pigge on a spit'.⁵⁷ Richard Mee (a butcher!) testified that in the fits of William Sommers he would gnash his teeth, foam and 'sodenlie scrich like a swine when he is in sticking'.⁵⁸

The second characteristic that has a relationship to the hierarchy of creation that needs to be made explicit is consciousness. Self-knowledge, awareness and the functioning of reason were crucial in the process of becoming human, of being above animals, and of maintaining one's distinction from the 'mere' mortality of beasts.⁵⁹ This will be developed more particularly below; for now the detachment from the evidence of self-knowledge, the loss of self-awareness and the irrationality of the possessed in their fits and trances, to differing degrees in different cases, will be more than familiar from the accounts above. The failure to use the rational part of being human is usually characterised as a descent to the level of the animal. This can be taken further in two ways. The first is the awareness of the presence of time. In the course of dismissing such as produced arguments 'to induce the ignorant to thinke them selves (in their estates) to be farre inferiour unto the brute beastes of the field', William Hill argued that the soul was not of the earth, contained 'nothing moyst, nothing ayrie, nor fierie' because 'there is nothing in these natures which may have the force of memorie, understanding, or imagination; which remembreth thinges

⁵⁶ See above, 90.

⁵⁷ See above, 111.

⁵⁸ See above, 137-8.

⁵⁹ Cf. Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 3, 35.

past, foreseeeth things to come, and apprehendeth thinges present'. All these elements were part of the divine gift of soul.⁶⁰ It followed that their loss or diminution were a descent into beastliness. The frequent loss of memory in the demoniacally possessed can be seen as an assault on the rational soul. Such a temporary loss can be seen as an inadequacy in an appreciation of one's condition in temporal creation and hence an incapacity for the virtue of prudence in that the loss of a present caused a loss of an understanding of ones past and an inability to exercise foresight and planning. The second, and related, failure of rationality is the matter of linguistics. Speech was seen to exist after reason, itself evident of the presence of the rational soul. For coherent and autonomous speech to be delivered the presence of the rational soul was a prerequisite. Its loss was a sign of the soul under threat and the threat of a descent into animality. 'Also, the tongue is called the glorie of man, because that besides all reasons, by his speech he is discerned from the bruit beasts'.⁶¹

The place of linguistic malfunctioning, as it were, in the symptoms of demonic possession can be set out at length and then linked to particular explicit instances of relegation to the lower orders of creation. Rather than the inherently open interpretation of muteness, I will concentrate on the descriptions given to the sounds made by the possessed and in this there is a revealing consistency. Thomas Darling emitted a 'greevous roaring' in one fit, 'grievous groaning and fearfull skreaming' in another and 'rored fiercely like a beare' in a third. In one day when he had a total of 27 fits, it was reported that 'he shrieked pitifully, blearing out the tung, and having his neck so wrythen, that his face seemed to stand backward'. On the day of his dispossession he gave ursine roars again, shortly before seeing one of the departing spirits leave his mouth as a mouse.⁶² The details are thinner for Katherine Wright, although she is reported to have

⁶⁰ William Hill, The Infancie or the Soule: Or, The Soule of an Infant (London, 1605), A4^v, B^v-B2^r.

⁶¹ John Dod and Robert Cleaver, A Godly Forme of Houshold Government (London, 1630), Q4; cf. Fudge, Brutal Reasoning, 26, 29.

⁶² See above, 105, 107, 112-3, 121.

screeched before she spoke in the voice of the devil during a senseless fit.⁶³ The Lancashire seven were prone to bestial noises and the accounts offer a few more details. On one occasion all of the possessed apart from Margaret Byrom and Jane Ashton started fits 'by a verie suddaine and fearfull skrikinge, barking & howling, in such a hideous noyse, as cannot be expressed'; each would take it in turns to begin with the others following, 'in a ring of 5. bells for order and time'. Neither Jane nor Margaret were left out with the former barking and howling in the presence of a JP while the latter did the same when being examined by Matthew Palmer, adding some shrieking to top it off. The roundelay returned upon the arrival of Darrell and More with Jane starting 'a straunge skriking and howling' which was taken up by the others. John and Anne Starkey 'cryed out mightily, with such outrageous roaring and belling', the latter likely the imitation of stags during rutting season, and nearly all of them concluding with 'a supernatural loud whupping'. On the day of fasting and prayer all seven contributed to the 'howling or crying' and in the midst of one of the sermons, Margaret Byrom, followed by the rest, broke out 'into exceeding loude crys, all seaven roaring, & belling in such extreame and fearfull manner that they troubled us al'.⁶⁴

It will come as no surprise to hear that the more lengthy tracts on possession in Nottingham provide plenty of instances. William Sommers was giving 'strang and fearfully shriekings' early on and there was later testimony to him crying out 'in a strange and supernaturall manner': sometimes he 'roared fearfully like a beare, and cryed like a swyne' and one witness recalled that Sommers 'did scribe with 3. severall voyces so hideouslie as they were not like anie humane creature', one like a bear, one like a bull and the third 'a verie small voyce, and such as this Examinant thinketh cannot be counterfeyted'. Robert Aldridge recalled the possessed have supernatural strength, accompanied by 'swelling, stritching, roaring, and yelling verie fearfullie' while he was 'gnashing and foaming'. Later

⁶³ See above, 66.

⁶⁴ See above, 92, 93, 127, 128.

on the gentleman John Strelly found his doubt lessened by Sommers's extraordinary physical endeavours, efforts at self-harm and the movements within his body, accompanied by him 'foaming, wallowing, gnashing his teeth, shrieking, roaring', and 'uttering in his trance strange speaches, his mouth wide open his tongue drawne into his throate'. These were common themes in the statements and accounts of his actions, sometimes broadly expressed, sometimes with specific animals identified. He made 'strang & fearfull shrieking as cannot be uttered by mans power'. 'Divers times he scricched or cryed aloud in a strange and supernaturall manner' or that 'he exceded in ... roaring, and yelling verie fearfullie'. His 'heideous crying' was 'like a bulle beare, or swinne'; 'sometimes like a bull, bear, swine, and in a small voyce unpossible to be counterfeited'; 'sometimes he roared fearfully lyke a beare, and cryed like a swyne'. The contributions of Mary Cooper on this side rather pale by comparison (although her physical symptoms were spectacular): from her belly 'hath bene h[e]ard a loud whurping, also a noyse like unto the whurring of a cat'.⁶⁵ Thomas Harrison had a decent collection of animal sound effects, mewing like a cat, howling like a dog and roaring like a bear. On one occasion he had a particularly 'sore fit', during which he was 'biting his own hands, gnashing with his teeth, foming like a boare and casting blood and filth out of his mouth'.⁶⁶ Judith Smith, the troubled woman from Dorset, accompanied her physical contortions with 'scritches as though she would have burst'.⁶⁷ Finally, the utterances of Mary Glover including some noises which it is slightly difficult to know what to make of and some more clearly reported as animalistic. The more curious sound was regular: in her repeated trances, as part of the repeated slow movements, her mouth would make shapes and move from side to side, 'and then gaping strangely wyde delivered out of the throte a vyolent blast with this sound (tesh) in a long accent upon the end'.⁶⁸ A similarly routine part of her symptoms went

⁶⁵ See above, 151, 152, 165, 194, 163.

⁶⁶ See above, 214, 216.

⁶⁷ See above, 424.

⁶⁸ See above, 230.

along with a swelling moving up her body and into her throat at which time she was reported to be 'roring with a hoarse and quavering voyce', carrying on with 'roaring cries and tossings' until the swelling moved out. The best was saved till last, on the day of her dispossession. In a particularly frantic period, Lewes Hughes prayed for God to rebuke the devil and Mary's response was that she 'turned to him and did barke froth at him'. Then she trashed around and a number of women worked to restrain her and prevent any indecorous exposures.

Her voyce at this time was lowd, fearfull and very strange, proceedinge from the throat (like an hoarse dogg that barkes) castinge from thence with opened mouth aboundance of froath or foame, whereof some did light on the face of one that kneled by, as his wife was mooved to cast him her handkerchife to wipe it off[f]. The noyse and sound of her voyce one expresseth (in his noates of observation) by the word cheh, cheh, or keck, keck: another, by twishe twishe, or the hissing of violent Squibbe: another to a Henne that hath the squacke: an other compareth it to the loathsome noyse that a Catt maketh forcinge to cast her gorge: and indeed she did this very often, & vehemently straine to vomitt.⁶⁹

I will close with four occasions on which the descent from humanity to bestiality was, in different ways, most explicit. In March 1596 Thomas Darling's fits stepped up to a greater register. Having thrashed around, having swooned into a trance, he became very rigid and whenever anyone tried to bend him, he emitted a 'greevous roaring'. Then he went into the shape of a hoop, with his belly above his head and feet and after falling down, 'groning verie pitifully', he ran around on all fours, before thrashing around and vomiting and then recovering. While the scampering was rather rare, towards the end of his sufferings he had a conversation with Satan in one of his visions. The observers heard him say, 'dost thou say if I wil not worship thee thou wilt make me a four-footed beast? that

⁶⁹ See above, 232-3, 268-9.

lieth not in thy power, since God hath made me a reasonable creature: my faith sathan is strong'. His next torment was the one when he was assailed by a variety of frightening animals.⁷⁰ Four of the Lancashire seven had their own version of the first experience during one of their odder activities. John and Anne Starkey, with Ellen Holland and Elinor Hardman, spent seven hours scuttling from chamber to chamber on their hands and knees. They could not be made to rest, but they would 'leape up from the flore to the bed, & downe from the bed to the flore, hopping so up and down, as lightlie, like froggs'.⁷¹ John Starkey, behaving like a mad dog, and biting his own mother, was mentioned above and Thomas Darling had a similarly unpleasant opening strategy in some of his fits: when people would try to restrain him, he would, 'bite strike and spurne them with his feet', 'wherein he was farre stronger than he was wont'.⁷² The greatest claim to bestial action is easily held by William Sommers. After his repossession he performed an act which was so far beyond the sensitivity of John Darrell that we cannot be entirely sure what it was. At one point he alludes to a 'monstrous blasphemy' which he made before a substantial audience, described as 'his strange and unnaturall uncleannes especially in acting the syn of whordome in that manner he did'. This seems to describe 'his filthy and abhomynable carriage of himself with a bitch before divers' and as close as Darrell gets to making it clear what such uncleanness was is to write that Sommers 'acted in most uncleane and vyle manner', the sin of whoredom. He committed 'such uncleannes, first with a dog, then and specially with a bitch, as is not fitt once to be named, he then got the bitch into the bed with him, and there would have committed you may ymagine what abomination'.⁷³ If, as it seems reasonable to suggest, this was an act of bestiality or an attempted act of bestiality with a dog and with a bitch conducted in the sight of a godly company gathered to pray for

⁷⁰ See above, 105, 112.

⁷¹ See above, 100.

⁷² See above, 528, 120.

⁷³ See above, 200-1.

his dispossession, it would be hard to match as a model of non-human, indecorous and, crucially, bestial behaviour.

In addition to, I hope, having identified a means by which to understand how some of the symptoms of demonic possession fitted into broader insecurities about the contingent and conditional nature of early modern perceptions of humanity, I also hope this analysis can cast light on the likelihood of being possessed according to age and gender. It is not a clear cut matter of male or female, young or old, rich or poor, and that is important because, taking in a broad selection of those deemed by themselves or others to be possessed it has become clear that a definition that is in danger of an exclusive reading gives too many exceptions to be ignored or explained away as anomalous. The first advantage of the fear of human corruption is that it is generous in its target, that the frailties of the human condition consequent upon the Fall open all of humanity to such corruption. As Merry Wiesner-Hanks showed, even those properly trained to use their reason and to become fully human were in danger of lapsing and such degeneration was as available to adult men as anyone else.⁷⁴ However, within this universality there were slightly greater vulnerabilities that match the differences within those more likely to be demonically possessed. The first vulnerability noted above was the perception of women being closer to beasts than men, based on Aristotelian ideas within a Christian framework but popularised beyond solely academic misogyny. Within the processual understanding of becoming human, age gave greater periods of risk to some than others. Infants had a level of vulnerability in that the developmental stage of soul was merely vegetative: their desires are for food and warmth, lacking in judgement, reason, self-knowledge and any sense of time. Lacking in language at the level of speech, any assessment of their reasonable nature is a matter of faith, lacking in evidence. However, we should not fall into the trap of assuming that the movement from a vegetative soul, through the acquisition of

⁷⁴ Wiesner-Hanks, 167-8.

a sensitive soul, to a rational soul, is determined, is teleological. In fact the acquisition of a sensitive soul heightens the danger. The sensitive soul brings greater capacity but also brings desires, an openness to earthly temptations, responsibility and greater culpability. Without the restraint of a fully developed rational soul, without a stronger sense of prudence, empowerment brings culpability. The responsibility this placed on the heads of households is clear from what was said, and the way it was said, in the orthodox guide to the godly household by two of the voices of moderate Reformed Protestantism, John Dod and Robert Cleaver. It is 'the dutie of parent, even in the infancie, to beginne to shape and frame the soule unto vertue'. Even the worst of heathen families would provide food and material comfort for their offspring and livestock; what makes good Christian families distinctive is the spiritual care offered, 'so that if they account not their children as beasts without soule, or if they love them with the due love belonging to parents, let them declare their love especially to the soule'. This required with their progeny in particular, for 'children by nature are darknesse, and cannot see, except they be enlightned with Gods word'.⁷⁵ This made plain the proper source of guidance. Where 'carnall policie ruleth, and not the wisdom that which is from above', everything 'tendeth to the ease, pleasure, and profit of this life, wherein it is fitter for brute beast than for men to seeke their felicitie'. The comparison recurs in the section urging proper observation of the Sabbath for servants and children. They ask 'what shall we doe more for them than for the brute beasts and cattell that worke under us?' The answer to this rhetorical question is given in that an opportunity to distinguish those of the household not only from animals but from lesser humans 'if we cause them not to Sanctifie the day of Rest; in which they shall differ from all other, not only Beasts, but Men'.⁷⁶ There are two sections which deserve being given slightly lengthier quotation, the first partly because it links with the neglected among the possessed, the household servants.

⁷⁵ Dod and Cleaver, A Godly Forme of Houshold Government, Q5, Q6, S5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., A2, B4.

And how must it not needs bee a great iniurie to their servants, (who are naturally and for the most part more negligent and carelesse in Gods service, by reason of their corruption, than they can be in the service of men) to bee deprived of that benefit of their Governours ... namely, to bee furthered by them in the service of God: but use them more like beasts than men, even that they might bee serviceable unto them, and then care not whether they serve God or the devill?⁷⁷

The second is particularly noteworthy in that it not only gets across the corruption of infants and also because it provides a statement of the increased vulnerability of the growing child.

For if we well consider of mans nature, that it is evill even from his birth, we shall then find the young child which lyeth in the cradle, to be both way-ward, and full of affections: and though his bodie be but small, yet he hath a great heart, and is altogether inclined to evill: and the more he weyeth in reason by yeares, the more he groweth proud, froward, wilfull, unrulie, and disobedient. If this sparkle be suffered to increase, it will rage over, and burne downe the whole house. For we are changed and become good, not by birth, but by education.⁷⁸

The shift from a dichotomous understanding of gender and a similar contrast of 'adult' and 'child' (or 'adolescent' or 'teenager') to a spectrum of being or becoming human to being or becoming animalistic, containing within it a variable of greater or lesser vulnerability according to age and sex is intended to create a new framework of explanation. This model is drawn from analyses of early modern discourse rather than taking the risk of reading early modern texts solely through twenty-first century spectacles. This framework, I hope, offers a more flexible perception of the threat of demonic possession and a more inclusive one than that offered by the earlier historiography. Within this framework all are open to the assaults of Satan and particularly the assault by means

⁷⁷ Ibid., B7.

⁷⁸ Ibid., S8.

of occupation and so it is an explanatory framework that encounters no stress in accommodating Robert Brigges, Lady Susan Cromwell or Mary Honywood. However, the differing degrees of contingency in the maintenance of one's humanity, with greater vulnerability being perceived in women and in those between infancy and independent adulthood. Within this framework the adults and the elderly who were possessed are no more anomalies to be added as exceptions, becoming merely less likely, but still credible, targets of Satan. It also provides a perspective within which the slightly higher proportion of young people, servants and dependent adults who were among those suffering becomes, within the early modern frame of reference, 'natural' candidates for their symptoms and behaviours to be interpreted as evidence of diabolic bodily intrusions. While I have tried to demonstrate that this set of insecurities and potentials was felt by the wider scale of early modern English culture, a cautious suggestion could be added that where the concentration of young and female energumens was clearest, in the groups possessed in lower gentry households, is a social area where the fears and responsibilities were most likely to be fully appreciated thus making this a more likely context in which such troubles were to occur. I would state it no more strongly than that because these are also the contexts which we are also most likely to hear about, to get the most attention from contemporaries and so leave clearer traces in the archives.

II

One aspect of the behaviour of the possessed seems to run contrary to this complex of fears and vulnerabilities. That is the expression of devout responses by the individual or individuals suffering the intrusion of spirits, both within fits and at their completion. This can be seen as contrary, as complementary and, through time, possibly as a modification of the discourse of possession in a dialectic between theory and practice, as it were. It would

be intemperate to come to too strong conclusions about any rising frequency as, once again, that would be difficult to measure against the relative length of the surviving accounts, so it should be stated as no more than an impression. 'Good divinity' as part of the phenomenon of the culture of demonic possession needs to be addressed for two reasons. The first is simply that it is there and to ignore it would be negligent; the second is that it needs to serve as a marker for the more positive aspects of spirituality to be examined elsewhere.

The first traceable appearance of a resolute response to possession is in the two sufferers associated with the Dutch church in Norwich in 1573. The eighteen-year old woman experienced a year of Satanic vexation and it is simply remarked that she stood strong in her faith. Her successor, a fourteen-year-old son of one of the councillors, had a shorter travail with greater attention. He was 'tormented for some weeks together' and when the bishop, John Parkhurst, declared a fast on the boy's behalf, the possessed proved to be 'well versed in scriptures' and, more importantly, he 'boldly launched forth against the enemy' and proved to be a match for his antagonist. This is the earliest suggestion of an argument between the occupied and the occupier although we have no means of discovering what was said, how much of it could be heard, or what issues were raised.⁷⁹

The account of Mildred Norrington, to which I will return, is similarly short on the details. Upon the spirit's departure, she simply proclaimed, 'He is gone, Lord have mercie upon me, for he would have killed me'. What is noteworthy is that it is the first recorded occasion when the dispossession was marked by thanksgiving from the healed, albeit a succinct thanksgiving.⁸⁰ Eleven years later, the similar conclusion was a better version of godly orthodoxy in the case of Margaret Cooper. For her rather more visionary deliverance, upon the appearance of 'a little child with a very bright shining countenance'

⁷⁹ See above, 44-5.

⁸⁰ See above, 57-8.

the company fell to the ground and praised the Lord for his assistance, whereupon Margaret prayed for forgiveness, citing her own sins as the provocation for the spirit's visitation.⁸¹ By 1596, in the case of Thomas Darling, it quite quickly became customary for his fits to end with the expression of thanksgiving, with the recorded instances having him say, 'the Lordes name be praised' or 'The Lord be praised'.⁸² This was taken furthest by Mary Glover. Shortly before the end of each of her 'ordinary' fits, she would raise her hands prayerfully and regain her voice, 'and with the signes of a devote minde, and fervent spirit, utter these words: O Lord I geve thee thanks, that thou hast delivered me, this tyme, and many more; I beseech thee (good Lord) deliver me for ever'. This served as the preface to the last physical paroxysms and the gradual re-emergence of her voice, coming to a climax with her delivering an ex tempore prayer. She pleaded to be taught the right use of 'this thy affliction', for the pardoning of her sins, for 'the glory of God, and satisfaction of his Church', for the conversion of Elizabeth Jackson, the woman held responsible for bewitching her, making it plain that if she was to be blessed with dispossession, the agency was solely to be attributed to Jesus.⁸³ Mary's finest prayer came, not surprisingly, on the day of her deliverance when, after an exhausting day she was finally dispossessed. She marked the climax with 'a most sweet prayer of thanksgivinge', which she continued until fatigue overcame her. God was thanked for such mercy shown 'towards me a vile creature', and she pleaded that all who heard of her deliverance should 'make true use of it: namely to prayse thee for thy mercies keep in store, and to trust to thy promises, and to depend on thy providence, who doest such thinges for thy poore servants'.⁸⁴

There is much of substance in the lengthy account of Robert Brigges's struggles with Satan. Although there is no mention of him offering gratitude at the resolution of his

⁸¹ See above, 61-2.

⁸² See above, 103, 109.

⁸³ See above, 234, 236.

⁸⁴ John Swan, A True and Breife Report, of Mary Glovers Vexation, and of her deliverance by the meanes of fasting and prayer. Performed by those whose names are set downe, in the next page (London, 1603), 48-9.

trial, there are numerous references to conversations and arguments with Satan during his fits.⁸⁵ Some of these consisted of sophisticated theological debates relating to divine grace and human free will, with the lawyer showing greater familiarity with the sophistries of divinity than his observers felt was available to him under normal circumstances. Adept in theological subtleties, something of a surprise considering that the way Brigges became suitable fodder for Satan was his misapprehension of a sermon, the lawyer also coped well, most of the time, with two other demonic strategies. He was offered the temptation of a beautiful bride and encouraged to stop trusting the intentions and loyalty of his friends. For each of these the company heard only Brigges's side of the conversation, although one account sets out the questions asked and offers made, deduced from the answers given from the possessed.⁸⁶ For the central part of the possession of Thomas Darling, his conversations worked with a similar model to that of Brigges, although he helpfully repeated the questions which only he was privy to. He refused to worship Satan and rejected his offer of three towns in exchange for devotion, concluding with the order, 'Avoyde Satan, it is written, I shall worship the Lord God onely'. After rejecting similar offers the following day, Satan threatened him with greater torments which were dismissed summarily: 'I care not for al that thou canst do unto me: In the Lord is my trust, who wil deliver mee when his good pleasure is'.⁸⁷ There is much common ground with the record of the speeches of Thomas Harrison, all of them delivered during his fits when he had no idea of what he was saying. He explained the demon's efforts, trying to prevent Thomas from being able 'to glorifie God' but that God was restraining the devil, pulling him back 'with a ring in his nose'. His condition and his struggle authorised him to mock the bystanders in their efforts, telling them that if they hoped to rescue him 'they should have come better prepared' and taking a sideswipe at any who doubted the devil's presence.

⁸⁵ He did break out into praise and thanksgiving when John Foxe's prayers for the restoration of the voice of the possessed were answered: see above, 51.

⁸⁶ See above, 49-53.

⁸⁷ See above, 108, 110.

He also took on broader targets, dismissing the hopes of any papist exorcism and warning their sympathisers and any of poor devotion of their end. In particular, there 'is no drunkard that doth drink some one spooneful or drop of drink more than doth suffice nature, but the Devill doth pen it down in his book'. He was even willing to dismiss any pity he was getting from such as he, unlike them, could be sure of his safety, knowing that 'when God comes he will strike home'.⁸⁸

The manifestations of devotion shown by the daughters of Edward Fairfax fitted within these expectations. Like Darling's family, Helen Fairfax refused the assistance of a cunning man, preferring to trust in God, telling the vision of the cunning man, 'God shall mend me when it pleaseth him, and none other'; like Brigges, she distrusted and rejected an offer of marriage, with the devil promising to leave his wife, 'a fair woman, richly attired' for Helen.⁸⁹ Both sisters resisted the spirits' offers, threats and attempted conversions. When one apparently appeared in a more respectable image, describing himself as God, Elizabeth was strong in her exposure of his illusion, stating, 'No! thou art the devil, and hell was made for thee, for thy pride, and thou art the same that came to my sister Hellen'.⁹⁰ Helen had a long argument with one of the visions, on the first day coming close to accepting his divinity but becoming forthright in her rejection the following day, dismissing his claims to be a divine vision: 'No, thou art not he whom I love; I love God but thou art not he. Thou goest to and fro seeking whom thou mayest devour.' Elizabeth went through a similar attempt with a more brief record.⁹¹ One of the most moving sections was when both sisters seemed close to death and to have accepted the possibility, 'taking leave of all the family, and shaking hands with every one', confident of their salvation. Helen grew more confident when the threat of death returned the following day, telling the vision of Margaret Thorp, 'I care not for thy threats, for if you could have prevailed I would have

⁸⁸ See above, 215-7.

⁸⁹ See above, 464, 465; for the earlier rejection of the cunning woman or 'good Witch', see above, 111-2.

⁹⁰ See above, 476, 477, 475 (quoted).

⁹¹ See above, 478.

been in my grave long since, but God doth defend me and you cannot hurt me, but, down upon thy knees and call to God for mercy, if he have any grace for thee, but there is little hope for thee'.⁹² The conversations of the daughters of the Throckmorton family have less appeal to modern readers because they were with the 'really present' accused, but this is to impose a distinction between the presence in vision and the physical presence which would have made less sense to the contemporaries. This is something to which I will return below.⁹³

A further opportunity for godliness, one that could be pretty demanding, was to act as an exemplarily devout member of the household. Elizabeth Throckmorton switched from an inability to do anything other than play cards, and 'began to dislike all bad things, and delighted in reading'. She burnt all the cards she could find, in order to annoy her tormenters and between more physically demanding fits she would go into an extended trance and

she would goe up & downe the house very wel, she would eate and drink, and sometimes be very pleasant in outward gesture with her sisters, she would doo any thing, which by any signe she did understand should be done, she would make a reverence as shee passed by, unto those where she saw it, it was due.

There were similar enactments of godliness among the Lancashire seven although with different emphases. John Starkey, aged 12, displayed 'verie extraordinarie knowledge' in spending three hours calling the company to reform their lives, 'performing the same so excellently ... as they that heard it did admire it, & thought that a good preacher could very hardly have done the like'. John denounced the 'straunge sinnes of this land committed in all estates & degrees of people' and threatening the consequences for their failure to do so, before praying for the church, the monarch, 'for the upholding of the Gospell, and for all the true Ministers of Christe, for those that have Authoritie, for his parents, and all the

⁹² See above, 480.

⁹³ See above, 81-3, 84-5.

people of God'. He concluded by singing most of Psalm 4 'in a most sweete and heavenley tune, as ever might be heard'. He was followed by Margaret Hardman, aged 13, in her own three hour trance, acting out all the temptations of pride, particularly relating to the demands of fashion, coming to a climax by denouncing the dangers of such distractions, saying, 'I defye thee Satan and thy pride, for this is thy illusion and deceite, I will have none of it'. As her trance ended, she asked for the blessing of Jesus. This was followed by a thoroughly Weberian expression of godliness when she joined the maids washing clothes and, 'though they were two lustie women' and she but a child, 'yet she washt more for the space of an hower so quicke and so fine, that they could not come neare her'.⁹⁴

The equivalent enactment of sins from William Sommers was broader and to a larger audience. He began with expressions of 'mockinge, mowinge and flowtinge', before, appropriately for Nottingham, moving on to the deceitful practices of tailors. He mimicked the manners of 'anticke dancers' and the related sin of cuckoldry. It was a short step to the alehouse and the consequent sins of 'quarreling and brawlinge with fighttinge and swearing', along with less effected dancing and gambling. After highway robbery and murder and the dubious practices of cobblers, he condemned 'the abuse of viols and other instrumentes' and the broader 'filthy and horrible sinnes of whordome'. He had his own version of the vanities of fashion, covering the vices of men and women, placed next to the pretended piety of sluggish and sleepy churchgoers. Having covered crimes like burglary, purse-picking and the driving force of covetousness, he enacted the vice of gluttony, leading to more feigned 'spueing and vomyting after it', one of the lesser consequences he had shown to follow from drunkenness.⁹⁵

The denunciation of sin, whether in the general or the particular, can be seen to be attractive, particularly when it was delivered by those whose age, gender or social status

⁹⁴ See above, 81-2, 101-2.

⁹⁵ See above, 146-7.

would, in normal circumstances, have made it inappropriate behaviour, especially when the individuals targeted were their superiors and even more especially when it was done through the virtual parlour game of mimicry. While it still offers an unusual opportunity for some to be the centre of attention, to be heard and to be granted authority, albeit at the expense of normality, the periods of godly behaviour among the possessed fit less easily into the reading of 'licensed misbehaviour.' William Sommers, hardly one to be seen as attracted to the recognition of devotion, had occasions of spiritual exegesis. One of the witnesses on his behalf told that he would 'make rime of the Scriptures' in 'so small a tuneable voice' that the witness judged to be beyond Sommers's capacity. John Darrell mentioned that during a trance the possessed 'uttered some 40. or 50. straunge and almost elegant sentences' which unfortunately he does not detail, claiming simply that other deponents backed him up. The occasion that got the greatest attention was when Sommers, 'divine-like', 'continued his speach in expounding the Creed for an houre together'. Although his tutelage was not without its flaws, Darrell was willing to make the general claim that 'he spake most profoundlie off some mysteries of religion'.⁹⁶

A pious response to, and more visionary experiences within diabolic possession might have been more predictable from Thomas Darling and the environment and company within which he suffered his assaults. His largely successful battles with various demonic animals, his thanksgiving prayers, his own bestial symptoms as well as his rejection of the temptations laid before him during his trials and tribulations have been noted earlier. There are two additions needed to appreciate his behaviour as a Christian soldier, going hand in hand with his visions that would only raise a sceptical eyebrow a little were they to be described as those of a 'mystic.' Once his fits were established, he asked his friends to read Scripture aloud between his attacks and to pray for him. When they struggled to maintain the former during his more frenzied travails, he asked for Jesse

⁹⁶ See above, 206-7.

Bee to be brought, partly to take notes of the activity, almost as a Foxeian chronicler, but also because he would be up to the task of persisting with the reading. Sure enough, at Thomas's request, Jesse started with John 9 and continued when Thomas went into a fit at the fourth verse. Jesse continued with John and moved on to Revelation despite the arrival and departure of various fits. Later on, Jesse encouraged Thomas to maintain his resolution, 'to take unto him the shield of faith, and to offer Sathan the combate'. Granted permission by the demoniac, he resumed reading John and after the consequent fit ended he asked if he should go on. Thomas 'answered cherefully, read on in Gods name'. Similarly, the following morning, after one frantic fit, Jesse asked him, 'Come Thomas, shall we provoke him to battell?' and Thomas answered, 'yes verie willingly'. With this pattern established, when Jesse asked 'Thomas shall we take the Sword with two edges, and bid Sathan the Battayle?', Thomas knew the reference to Psalm 149:6 and responded with, 'if you will read, I will gladly heare'. Their appetite for Scripture dwarfed that of the devil for, while he was not expelled, he was worn into inactivity after three fits during which Jesse read followed by Thomas taking Scripture and returning to Revelation.⁹⁷

Parts of his experience became more visionary after the arrival, examination, discussion and diagnosis by Arthur Hildersham and a company of godly ministers. He embraced the suffering with relish, contrasting his pains to those of Jesus. In the midst of a trance, he prayed for the company. 'O Lord thy apostles were whipt & scourged for thy trueth, & they departed, reioycing that they were accounted woorthy to suffer for thy names sake. And now (O Lorde) I reioyce that thou accountest me woorthy to suffer these cruell torments'. Interspersed with vehement fits, he reported lengthy visions, saying, 'I heare a voyce from heaven, the Lorde speaketh to me', raising his hands and saying, 'Looke where my brethren lob is', followed by, 'heaven openeth, heaven openeth, I must goe thether' and 'I see Christ Jesus my Saviour, his face shineth as the Sunne in his

⁹⁷ See above, 105-6, 110-1.

strength, I will goe salute him'. After a screaming battle with a devilish dog, he called upon Hildersham to preach and then saw Christ wearing purple and embraced him. Still in a trance, he reported, in a positive manner, visions of the sufferings of Judas, of drunkards and of the witch who brought his possession, in the fires of hell. He saw a chariot arriving to take him and Hildersham to heaven, a vision informed, not surprisingly, by Revelation. His visions remained apocalyptic with himself in the role of one of the preachers, an ambition he had voiced earlier, coming to a climax with the advent of Jesus, followed by Judgement Day. 'The trumpets sound, see see, the graves open, the dead arise, and all men are come to iudgment; harke how the Angells cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Saboath.... Looke looke how the wicked flie away like a flocke of doves, yet see a flame of fire overtaketh them'. His final positive vision of the day had him proclaiming, 'I see a milke White dove flying towards me, see where my Savior commeth, his face shineth as the Sunne'. The visions continued in similar manner when Satan renewed his efforts after his initial dispossession. There were temptations offered, threats made, alongside battles between the devil and a milk white dove, either an angel or the Holy Spirit. Naturally, he successfully resisted the temptations and concluded with his last heavenly vision of reassurance.

Looke where the dove commeth, harke what the dove saith, The Lord thy God hath tied thy enemy Sathan fast in a chaine, unles thou fall againe, he shall never tempt thee, hold fast and forget not:.... O Lambe of God that takest away the sinnes of the world, thy name be praised, thy name be magnified and extolled for evermore.

His return to the terrestrial was marked by him resuming his reading of Scripture while he was surrounded by prayers of humility, thanksgiving and praise.⁹⁸

The other appearance of good divinity in response to demonic possession occurred in the most tightly controlled, least open and, as it happened, final recorded session of

⁹⁸ See above, 115-7, 123-4.

fasting and prayer lead by godly clerics with the intentions of proselytisation as well as dispossession, that organised for the benefit of Mary Glover. Her demeanour upon her arrival was, like that of Thomas, wholly appropriate, albeit with gendered differences. She sat, 'with very sober countenance', and diligently read her Bible, keeping to the texts being treated by the clerics around her. She was the centre of attention but initially much more passive than Thomas. After an hour and a half of preaching from Lewes Hughes, calling for the company to lay open their sins to God and to embrace suitable humility, during which she shed tears in silence, her mother and others asked how she was. She admitted she felt pain, and she 'wept and prayed God to be mercifull unto her, and to help her, and saide withall, that shee could and would indure further proceedinge in the begone exercise'.⁹⁹ She became more active through the day, effectively authorised by her sufferings, and the end of each fit followed the same pattern. Her emergence from each fit was marked by the gradual recovery of the power of speech, perhaps showing the transition from the bestial to the human. The first time she was heard to say, 'almost, almost', the second and third time, 'once more, once more', coming to a climax with 'he is come, he is come' and quoting her grandfather, the Marian martyr, 'the comforter is come, O Lord thou hast delivered me'. On each occasion, she delivered a lengthy prayer, setting out the proper humility, pleas for forgiveness, patience for the delayed delivery but security in her 'hope to be delivered when thou shalt see it good'. Despite being the centre of attention she stressed the lessons to be taken for the glory of God and an example to humanity of divine mercy and power. Her ambition was that 'I being strengthened may strengthen others, and being delivered, I may comfort others, with that comforte wherewith thou hast comforted me, so that thou mayst have from many, prayse, & thanksgivinge'. While there is, in a broad sense, some truth that it was scripted, in practical terms it was plainly her own voice, as shown by Swan's need to place marginal corrections when she

⁹⁹ See above, 258-9.

seemed to be making claims to agency for herself which risked lessening the sole agency of divine power.¹⁰⁰ Her lengthy prayer of thanksgiving at the arrival of dispossession has been discussed earlier and while it is easy to give credit to the orthodoxy, even the beauty of the visionary prayers it is still worth being reminded that these were prayers, assiduously recorded word for word by ministers, delivered to a crowd of godly adults by a thirteen-year-old girl, albeit one of respectable stock.

The displays of devotion within demonically-induced trances, in preparation for expected assaults once a pattern of suffering has been established, or as a marker for the conclusion of specific episodes or the hopeful final deliverance from possession are not deviations from godly discourse. They are, however, notable by their absence in the learned accounts of demonic possession and accepted by practice rather than an established expectation of accounts of individual possession performances. The preparation for struggles with Satan and the prayers of thanksgiving and recognition of the solely divine agency in the dispossession constitute a relatively easy application of Reformed theology and spirituality to the particular circumstances of possession and dispossession. The same could be said for the ad hoc nature of the prayers and the targets identified in the prayers. What is less orthodox is the individuals making the prayers. Neither of the young people possessed in Norwich, nor Mildred Norrington, Margaret Cooper, the Throckmortons, John Starkey, Margaret Hardman, William Sommers, Anne Gunter, Thomas Darling, Mary Glover, Thomas Harrison, the Fairfax sisters, not even Robert Brigges fitted easily within early modern expectations of those best qualified to deliver such piety. This is the case to an even greater extent when it is taken to include the admonitions, the arguments with the occupier, the sermons and especially the dumbshows of human vanities. Without suggesting that none of the above would be judged as utterly unsuitable for practical piety, at least at a household level, it is

¹⁰⁰ See above, 261-8, 272.

striking that a disproportionate number of them were less qualified because of age, gender or social position.

What needs explaining is how this adaptation of the discourse of demonic possession, primarily generated from below although accepted from above was needed. While it has been shown that the thesis of possession concentrated on the inhabitants of repressively godly households is questionable, those showing greater degrees of good divinity did come from such backgrounds and it could be argued that some of the later instances can be understood as conforming to what was becoming part of the vocabulary of demonic possession. In any case, expectations of propriety, of relative silence and modesty, of restraint, were not puritan monopolies. When Thomas Darling accepted the potential of death, the only disappointment he expressed was the denial of his ambition to be a godly preacher and his visions have an element of wish-fulfilment about them, particularly on being taken into heaven in a chariot with an A-list godly celebrity like Arthur Hildersham. The resistance to temptations, not always immediately successful, and the enactment of human weaknesses, along with the acerbic denunciation of drunkenness, whoredom, insufficient devotion and such like need more explanation than this. Part of the attraction, even the pleasure of taking on the role of hot blooded preacher can be seen in the pleasure of being the giver rather than the receiver of such condemnation, with the latter being the normal set up. This can be understood even if such standards were more frequently observed in the breach rather than the acceptance in this society. They could be said to hold the same position of 'family values' among modern politicians: an expected part of the social mantra of respectability however frequent the considerable gap between rhetorical acceptance and actual practice. Once the resistance to temptations is understood as a process rather than the determined sense of 'temptation offered/temptation resisted' model the attraction becomes more comprehensible. The crucial time is between the offer and the rejection, the possibility. This becomes a place for

a catharsis responding to the demands of the proper response. It creates a time when the attractions of compromise or even utter rejection of forgetting the moral values of Reformed Protestantism in favour of a glamorous marriage, worldly goods or hedonism can be appreciated even if they are, eventually, turned down in favour of dutiful recognition and acceptance of their rejection. This seems to be the case in the time it took for Robert Brigges to recognise that the bride he was offered was a servant of Satan, that rumours of his friends' untrustworthiness were unfounded, and in the time it took for Helen Fairfax to realise that the attractive offer of allegiance from the attractive young man were really the attractions of an ungodly ally. This time, overnight in the case of Helen, was a period of licensed dreaming ending in credit being given for its refusal.

One of the consequences of being identified as one possessed by devils was to create an event in which one was inherently an abnormal self, indeed, in which one was not one's self. It was an event of re-negotiation of that self, with the intention and hope of those involved to restore the 'normal' self but the process, while looking to reconstitute the established relations, put them on hold. This allowed for the basis of relation of others, present or absent, with the possessed to be transformed, to be renegotiated, potentially with impact that continued after the resolution.¹⁰¹ These conditions created a space of possible worlds, with normal boundaries placed in question and normal behaviours becoming, ironically, unexpected. Within this space the possessed could orient or re-orient him- or herself within it.¹⁰² The ambiguity of this space created a hermeneutical chaos but also a space within which the possessed could comment upon relationships, upon broader fields and could take on abnormal roles, whether those were positive or negative roles. In this sense, the immoral behaviours, the mimicking of sins and vanities, and the piety and the preaching can be seen as alternative ways of doing the same thing. The former can be a way of irresponsible pleasure, the latter as a way of unusual authority; both as an

¹⁰¹ Bruce Kapferer, 'Mind, self and other in demonic illness: the negation and reconstruction of self', *American Ethnologist* 6 (1979), 115-121.

¹⁰² Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning* (Fort Worth, 1976), 88.

empowerment, as gaining a voice which, to differing degrees according to the individual's place in the society, was usually denied or easily silenced or ignored.¹⁰³ The conversation could be as much an internal conversation as one with and through the mediators, clerical or lay, with the witnesses. It was one taking one cultural grammar, a structuring perspective, from one broader field, of godly condemnations and ungodly yearnings, and employing it within the framework of another cultural grammar, that of demonic possession, thereby creating a means for expressing a sense of frustration and aspiration, of enacting the tensions of guilt, temporal and religious desires, and creating a vocabulary of suffering in the safe space of the possessed. By bringing these authorised idioms together the discourse of possession was modified to such an extent that good divinity became part of the expectations, or approved symptoms of the demonically possessed.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Michael Lambek, 'Spirits and spouses: possession as a system of communication among the Malagasy speakers of Mayotte', American Ethnologist 7 (1980), 318-9, 321, 322; Janice Boddy, Wombs and Alien Spirits: women, men, and the Zār cult in northern Sudan (Madison, Wis., 1989), 148, 190

¹⁰⁴ Bruce Kapferer, 'Performance and the structuring of meaning and experience', in V. W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (eds), The Anthropology of Experience (Chicago, Ill., 1986), 190, 192-3; Midelfort, History of Madness, 72-3, 75-6, 78.

The Place of Discerning True Demonic Possession

The next avenue to be taken as a move in the direction of a more successful understanding of possession is theatricality. The contribution of Stephen Greenblatt to the historiography has been more lauded than examined. He has been thought-provoking in making the connection between Harsnet's polemics against Darrell and the Denham exorcists and the sources for King Lear, and the suggestion of the satire of theatricality as part of Harsnet's arsenal is both useful and overstated.¹ To associate Harsnet's accusations of theatricality as part of his attacks on Roman Catholic exorcists and Protestant thaumaturgists, and thereby weakening the theatricality of fasting and prayer to the purpose of dispossession with an exposure of puritan hypocrisy in their dislike of theatre with the theatricality of their social spiritual exercises is weak in two ways. It overestimates the centrality of the trope in Harsnet's work; he had a full arsenal of abuse and theatricality was far from primary among his weapons. Additionally, the vivacity of puritan preaching and spirituality has long been clear to anyone familiar with the hotter sort of Protestant and 'theatre' per se and 'theatricality' are far from synonymous.

'Theatre' as a metaphor has been taken up more profitably in different ways by Almond and MacDonald. Almond accepts the theatricality of efforts at dispossession but makes it clear that it does not follow that this is a revelation of fraud, particularly on Darrell's behalf. Almond suggests that 'the roles of demoniac, exorcist, and spectator are played out, improvised, developed, embellished, and refined in a series of ongoing negotiations and interactions between participants within the format of a loosely constructed cultural script known to all the participants'.² This is a place where reality is fought over and constructed and can, and will, be taken further in drawing attention to different, more active and passive roles and I would also emphasise the shifting contexts

¹ Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations (Oxford, 1990), 94-128.

² Philip C. Almond, Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: contemporary texts and their cultural contexts (Cambridge, 2004), 41-2.

of the home, the open house and, on occasion, the court. The presence of heterogeneity in the audience should also be stressed, with some doubters becoming converts and vice versa. As MacDonald takes this on, while admiring Greenblatt he also runs counter to him. While there was a metaphorical script in the loosely-bound theatre of the possessed the struggle was over 'who wrote the script and directed the action'. The effort was to maintain a godly script, and that included the possessed, the godly and the observers, with conviction held by some or all, being developed or, potentially, lost.³ This sense of authenticity was never to be set in stone and as the stage and critics changed the performance was to be tested again.⁴ The idea of different, competing and negotiable forums, with relative truths contingently established and tested again, in flesh and text, will be central to what follows.

The task that lies ahead is to deliver on a host of promised answers and engagements. Some of these have been implicit in the criticisms or reserved and qualified praises voiced regarding the current historiography. This is equally the case in the introduction to the wider historiography and the ethnographical material in the opening chapter. Some of these have been more explicit in the specific case by case discussions above and in the more thematic discussion in the preceding chapter. At the heart of this is the task of explaining without explaining away, of comprehending the multiple instances of demonic possession whether accepted, contested or both. What could be seen as the easier task of raising reservations about the existing explanatory schemes or suggestions has, I hope, been achieved, although it is worth reiterating the respect in which I have engaged with the questions raised by other efforts to guide our apprehension of the phenomena. What remains in hand is the duty to fulfil my more positive role of giving a set of alternative explanatory devices, modes of interrogation and means of understanding that can encapsulate the broader perspective of an awareness of the details of many more

³ Michael MacDonald (ed and intro.), Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover case (London, 1991), xxxix-xl.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xl-xli.

allegations of demonic possession than the previous space devoted to the material has allowed. In effect, what follows is a justification of the patience required to trawl through the various manifestations of the discourse of diabolic possession that have gone before.

In what has preceded this I have shied away from fully taking the bull by the horns on the question of belief in possession or possessions. I have gone no further than to make it plain that the acceptance of the phenomenon of demonic possession, in the past and in the present, was an accepted part of orthodoxy across different social groups, across professions and religious demeanours. Those who voiced doubt tended to be voicing doubt regarding particular cases rather than the phenomenon tout court. Indeed, to voice doubt tout court was a particularly difficult line to take, as Deacon and Walker found when they tried to take possession as a figure of speech even in Scripture. Even given a context of establishment pleasure in seeing the record of John Darrell receiving published blows did not give authority to a trans-temporal denial of the reality of possession. An easier option was to demand tighter standards of discernment either on a solely pastoral level or on the level of higher (at least earthly) consequences of the judiciary. That much accepted, an absolute division between the credibility of the particular demoniac and the credibility of the hypothetical demoniac should not be allowed. As is familiar from the judicial fortunes of witchcraft in the second half of the seventeenth century and thereafter, sufficient numbers of doubted, disputed or dismissed cases can have a cumulative effect, making doubt a more likely default position among some onlookers or assessors.

While the breadth of this assertion is valuable, not least in countering the attractiveness of a 'sceptics' versus 'zealots' model, it is not enough. The first question to be raised as an aid to the assessment of individual instances is the 'location' of belief. This is a question that will assist the manner in which each case is read, allowing for the limitations of particular accounts but also for the considerable collection of variants across the board. Is the location of belief in a particular possession initially within the possessed

or within the family of the possessed? Is it in the physician, cleric, in the neighbour or neighbours, friends and bystanders? Is it then internalised by the possessed, a partly determinative self-apprehension? In addition, there is the possibility that this is not a one way street. This perception or self-perception has a potential reversal, one can come to be convinced that one is possessed by the devil but, given the right circumstances, one can come, with varieties of encouragement, perhaps coercion, to an equal conviction that one was deluded, that one was feigning, suffering from a natural disease or led astray by some incorrigible individual or group working for their own purposes. (Of course, one can be convinced that one was led astray by such an incorrigible individual or group by an equally incorrigible individual or group for their own purposes.) Greater attention needs to be paid to the development of perception along with the development of according behaviours and symptoms fitting with competing believable narratives of comprehension.

The location of belief can be narrowed and opened. The narrow understanding of the location of belief is the body of the sufferer. This can be the body as a framework within which physical symptoms act, as the swellings, lumps, concavities and spasms seen above. It can also be the site of anomalous physical phenomena, including the writhing, contortions, head turnings, eyes rolling, gurning, the rigidities or stretchings, limbs folding under the body and compression of the body into a ball. The boundaries of the body can be literally the liminal space across which the various emissions, in varying quantities, varying in nature and from varying orifices are carried. This overlaps with the actions of the body or parts of the body, whether it is flailing generally, striking with or without intent (a difficult word to which I will return), striking oneself against objects, throwing or being thrown across spaces, towards people or places, towards fire or towards windows. In its turn, this overlaps with the more sustained actions, whether they be the enactment of vices or virtues, the washing of clothes or the collecting of leaves. Whether these actions are wilful, chosen and decided upon or that the body is merely a conduit for

an other agency, is critical. (Equally critical is how these actions are judged to be by witnesses.) The body as the site of belief extends to noises, the animal noises, the braying, barking, screeching or crying. 'Noises' can be extended to include voices, the speaking in different tones, with higher or lower pitches, sometimes in different languages. These voices may be self-addressed or take part in conversations, either internally, partly internally and partly with concerned (or hostile) onlookers. The point is that the body, whether it is a container, a vessel, a boundary, a mannikin or a ventriloquist's dummy is never the sole source of understanding of these symptoms, occurrences or behaviours; indeed on many occasions it is the least trusted interpreter. What needs to be stressed is that the actions, or the absences, the movements and behaviours, the voices and the testimonies of the internal voices are not transparent signifiers. They, and the perception of them, are instruments and objects of hermeneutics. This is a necessarily interpreted body, interpreted by the occupant of the body and by those observing, each of them seeking a plausible explanation within a power relationship. This is a hermeneutic exercise sometimes fraught with competition, with competing understandings, with convictions and differences of persuadability and with some seen by some with more credence than others. This inherently requires a legible vocabulary of plausibility and, as has been seen repeatedly, there was a variety of legible vocabularies some of them contrary to each other, some of them capable of being combined. To identify a plausible natural disease was not automatically to arrive at a conclusion of fraudulence or misdiagnosis, it could merely mean to shift the contestation to the possible means of Satanic operations or their absence. Moreover, it was a stage by stage interpretive process with the eventual resolution being by no means determined by the opening symptomatic gambits. A suspected possession could become a natural disease or vice versa, a dispossession could provide closure or open a new site for caustic competition of interpretation whether

verbal or written, now only concentrated on representations of the body. This is something to which I will return shortly.

To turn to the more 'opened' location of belief, it is necessary to address the forum of belief. The afflicted can move through different locations, sometimes with different collections of interpreters. In the place of the domicile or the domicile of sympathetic observers, the collective understanding, its pursuit and formation, may take place within a specific set of parameters, directed and capable of direction. When the domicile is opened to less tightly connected onlookers, the parameters can change. This can work in different ways. A patient can be detached from friends and family and their determinative value lessened with either a stronger or weaker diagnosis of possession or otherwise. Some seen as possessed were removed to the dwelling of a more hostile interpreter, inclined to bring like-minded interpreters to provide their own understanding. The most contested physical forum was the courtroom with the drama open to magistrates, members of the jury and the wider public, employing different criteria to evaluate the 'proper' outcome with more weighty consequences for the individual accused of causing the affliction (or at least acting as the devil's tool for its instigation). What needs to be stressed is that this is a difference of degree rather than kind; that each forum is a drama in itself, whether that be a drama that ends in a diagnosis of preternatural activity, an identified guilty party, or a diagnosis of natural disease or fraudulence. None of these understandings is free from the power politics present in any human interaction.

To put flesh on these bones, I will give six forms of the different forums from the examples covered above, along with some reference to their effects, more as a matter of potential effects rather than determinative. The first is the uncontested forum with, in the vast majority of the instances treated here, a diagnosis, treatment and dispossession signed, sealed and delivered. This was the manner of the first known post-Reformation possession, that of Anne Mylner in Chester and, in a less dramatic fashion, that of

Mistress Kingesfielde in London. The same is true for the 23-year-old Dutchman in Maidstone plus the 18-year-old servant and 14-year-old boy in Norwich, also related to Dutch settlers in the city in 1573. Convinced and undisputed possessions and treatments were common to Alexander Nyndge and Anne Frank although the latter's suicide prevented them sharing the same happy resolution. More positive conclusions were enjoyed by Margaret Cooper of Ditchet, Somerset in the mid-1580s and John Fox around 1611, with the first lacking clerical attention until after her relief, the second enjoying the attentions of Richard Rothwell.⁵ However, an added but unmeasurable possibility of uncontested diagnosis should be added with the example given by John Cotta of a 13-year-old gentlewoman who might have been understood to be possessed. With the avenues of natural medicine being the only ones explored, this case was diagnosed, treated and resolved by this means alone.⁶

Related to this last instance is the second form: a more developmental model of successive forums. Here the initial set of symptoms can be seen as a potential demonic possession and, in the right conditions, becomes one or is moulded into one, whether that is in the eye of the beholder, the troubled individual, the family or some combination of these. One case in which the symptoms gradually became more easily fit into the orthodoxies of possession discourse as the case developed is that of Thomas Darling. In terms of the individual, the context and the nature of the concerned surrounding Thomas, the circumstances were favourable for this to prove to be the case. This was less so with Katherine Wright. The diagnosis took longer to become settled, the symptoms to shift and the resolution was not as neat but as the forums for examination became more dominated by the authorities at the local level and as she attracted more attention, Katherine became more 'properly' possessed. A relatively settled development was followed in the case of

⁵ See above, 40-2, 42-4, 44-5, 45-7, 59, 59-62, 397-401.

⁶ See above, 377-80.

Thomas Harrison in the north-west at the end of the sixteenth-century although we are unfortunately lacking in the final conclusion.⁷

In addition, the third element, the different types of forum must be taken into account. While the hard and fast distinction will become more ragged shortly, it is worth distinguishing between 'open' and 'closed' forums. The more 'open' location can be available to the majority of concerned or curious members of the public. This was the case with Katherine Wright, Anne Mylner, the Lancashire seven, Katheren Malpas junior and the possessed of Norwich.⁸ A more 'closed' environment could consist of the 'pre-converted,' as it were, a sympathetic company and a more controlled forum. In different ways, to different purposes, this was the experience of the dispossession of Mary Glover, the exposure of William Perry and the treatment of Thomas Harrison.⁹ That is not to say that a 'closed' forum necessarily produced immediate and maintained consensus and the fourth variable is internal debate, within limited parameters. For instance when the clerical community descended upon Katherine Wright, there was considerable debate initially as to whether she was being troubled by demons within her or outwith her, whether she was subject to possession or obsession and later on as to whether she had been dispossessed and repossessed or whether the first efforts had been unsuccessful. In a different way, there were negotiations within the treatment of Thomas Darling regarding the means with which to address the problem and the best responses to the temptations of Satan.¹⁰

The waters become duly muddied when these dimensions are combined to produce the fifth form. This is to attempt to take into account a more contingent model which takes account of more openly contested forums within a temporal framework. Some of those claiming to be possessed, judged to be possessed or suspected of being possessed were within predominantly sympathetic environs. This was the case with Anne Gunter at the

⁷ See above, 103-9, 62-7, 211-7.

⁸ See above, 72-3, 40-2, 128-34, 450-6, 44-5.

⁹ See above, 258-76, 441-6, 211-7.

¹⁰ See above, 64-5, 72-3, 108-9.

start of her claim; the same could be said of John Smith, the subject of King James's attention in Leicestershire, for William Perry and Katheren Malpas junior.¹¹ Lest this be taken to be a characteristic solely of those judged to dubious all those listed as having experienced the uncontested forum above also had this condition, as did Robert Briggs and the Lancashire seven as well as Mary Glover.¹² When the environment changed, either in terms of location, personnel or both, the potential and actual outcomes could change. For Anne Gunter, she was taken to the more sympathetic and controlled forum of her brother Harvey, then to the less controlled, more respectable and still sympathetic home of Thomas Holland, although the first suspicions of her credibility were raised at the former. John Smith was moved to gradually more hostile residences, as was William Perry.¹³ For Mary Glover the opening stages all took place in her parents' house, moving on to that of William Glover, more public but still home territory, and then to John Croke's chambers, closed but not wholly sympathetic. For Katheren Malpas junior, the initial experience was low key and apolitical; once the clergy and their supporters became involved it was still sympathetic but the stakes were raised substantially. In the later stages she was shifted to an entirely hostile (and very powerful) audience and location.¹⁴ In the cases where witchcraft accusations emerged and led to trials, the stage shifted to an open environment, less easily controlled and with the consequences being far from set in stone. For Anne Gunter, from the trial onwards she experienced environments which were increasingly inclined to conclude that she was fraudulent, while Mary Glover was successful in court, as were John Smith and the Lancashire seven.¹⁵

The final forum to be taken into account is more detached from 'actuality' in that some of the cases were controlled and clear as they occurred but contested and 'settled' in a contrary manner in later accounts, in later circumstances, or, most importantly in later

Comment [1]:
Tom Webster Jun 28, '10, 3:00 PM

¹¹ See above, 403-6, 429-34, 434-46, 447-57.

¹² See above, 47-53, 128-34, 231-6.

¹³ See above, 409-15, 232-4, 441-5.

¹⁴ See above, 224-32, 237-44, 447-57.

¹⁵ See above, 413-9, 243-6, 430-2, 95-6.

dominant texts. The possession and dispossession of Rachel Pindar and Agnes Briggs was uncontested when it happened. Afterwards, the surviving text operated as an incontestable forum which settled the issue of them being counterfeits. Katherine Wright's possession, once it was identified as demonic possession, was, despite taking place in an open forum, uncontested until later and her credibility suffered from the pen of Samuel Harsnet.¹⁶ This is most clearly expressed in the battle over the representation of Mary Glover. Despite the careful efforts of her supporters to control the publicity surrounding her dispossession and their refusal to allow her to be taken into the wholly hostile arena of unsympathetic physicians, they were never going to be a match for the strength of Bancroft. The preferred resolution through an open debate in person or print was never going to appeal to him and his control of both left not only the official voice as the dominant one but effectively reduced, in fact all but abolished the attractions of the use of dispossession as a means of proselytisation for the godly community.¹⁷

If we return to the inhabitant of the body with which we started, there are a couple of observations worth taking into account. The first is the matter of the 'uncanny'. To have one's behaviours shifted from an unknown cause to an identified, plausible explanation can be of some comfort, primarily in that this offers a potential ending, a light at the end of the tunnel, unavailable when the actions lack an understanding. Ironically, the identification of the cause as demonic possession actually translates the uncanny to the canny, from the unknown to the known. This is potentially a relief (of sorts) for the sufferer. The second is that this will be less the case when the body becomes a contested site and helps to comprehend an admission to flaws, or the ascription of such flaws to the allegedly possessed patient. This too, in a way, offers a way out, albeit a perhaps less glamorous one. The least comfortable situation is where one remains a contested site, an object of interpretations rather than an object which has been interpreted. This returns to the thorny

¹⁶ See above, 53-6, 72-3.

¹⁷ See above, 255-76, 284-5, 293-6.

issue of 'intent'. In its barest terms, this seems to risk granting a level of wilful choice and that risk seems to devalue, if not render meaningless the reality of possession. This risk is lessened if the modern 'individualist' understanding of 'self' is brought into question. Rather than imposing an apprehension of the individual as in the inevitability of the oak in the acorn model, 'intent' becomes more fragile within the application of the 'becoming' human understanding discussed regarding the porous boundary between human and animal to the individual. Taking a narrative, processual and relational sense of self it becomes an understanding of more fluid self-understanding, drawing upon the 'roles' offered by the available discourses and testing which seems the closest fit, based on not only the self-understanding of an 'isolated' individual but also in negotiation with and formed by similar testing of the available models by those around the individual.¹⁸ The conviction of possession or otherwise, whether it is self-conviction, or external conviction is a process and a process conducted within the limits of discourses recognised as appropriate, applicable and most suitable within the particular culture with different emphases according to the implicit negotiation within the company of the particular time and place.

The first change in the epistemological framework of English historians that is required or at least a recognition of what has occasionally been merely implicit in the historiography is the 'reality' of demonic possession. Its reality is plainest in the academic treatments like that by William Perkins and those most obviously with their own political axe to grind like Darrell et al. However, it is also present in those too easily included within the camp of 'sceptics' like Bernard and Cotta and even Harsnet although the latter sailed close to the wind. The shifted political associations may have made Bernard and Cotta careful in the examples they chose and more demanding in the criteria they encouraged particularly, for Bernard, in the circumstances when the perception of possession was

¹⁸ A thought-provoking historical account of the conception of the narrative-self (and its contrast in terms of agency and responsibility) can be found in Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory* (3rd ed., London, 2007), 204-25 and especially 220-1.

joined to, was the ground of, witchcraft accusations, but this made possession no less of a reality, a plausible apprehension of specific sets of symptoms. In fact, against the easier readings of the cases judged by contemporaries and historians as fraudulent, the meanings of feigned possessions actually add weight to this. For a feigned possession to be considered worthwhile to be enacted, it must be done within a social and cultural environment where it was a plausible possibility. For a feigned possession to be worth detection or exposure it must be believable, there must be sufficiently numerous and sufficiently authoritative individuals for whom such phenomena are a reality.

This is why it is worthwhile to complicate the question of the 'medicalisation' of demonic possession. While fraudulence or accusations thereof remain an option for early modern people assessing whether they as alleged possessed or as onlookers judge them to be 'really' possessed, that is far from the end of the story. Similarly, for contemporaries to discern at least a secondary causal 'natural' disease as the explanation for the symptoms manifested in the individual is not to complete the explanation. As has been made clear, Satan can remain as the primary causal element beneath the appearance of natural disease. (And I feel neither properly qualified nor aspirant to the arrogance required to diagnose natural illnesses within the current medical discourse for people unavailable for examination; beyond the inadequacies of evidence, it would run counter to the epistemological model I have been working with to be inclined to impose such understandings from such an alien discourse.) Most importantly, the reality of spirits was available to those making the diagnosis and the abnormal event was a hermeneutic exercise which given sufficient numbers of appropriate behaviours was open to being interpreted as a possession event. The specific event was occurring in a meaningful cultural context which initially defined its abnormality and then turned to explaining that abnormality. While the options included fraudulence and illness, they also included possession; in the context of early modern England this was a valid appraisal. 'If someone

is, is his own cultural milieu, generally considered to be possessed then he (or she) is possessed'.¹⁹ Moreover, this was a process: if one's behaviours led one to believe one was possessed, then one's behaviours had a cultural script to enhance the likelihood of this self-perception and in the right circumstances, in the right company, such convictions could be hardened by the interpretation offered and the process of assessment draw one further into the appropriate forms of diagnosis. 'Behaviour in possession is bound by particular cultural rules; possession itself is a "social fact"'.²⁰

In summary, demonic possession must be understood as a 'social' activity. It is social in its performance: for an isolated individual to conclude that they are or were possessed still means that they are operating within a social discourse, dominant or marginal, that accepts the intrusion of spirits. It is social in its performance in that its assessment, its categorisation is a dialectic process, sometimes with criteria being laid out and either met or failing to be met. It is social in its interpretation, its diagnosis, and its treatment or treatments are contingent and provisional. Examples can be taken from those examined which show shifting assessments, either bolstered or dismissed by changes in assessment or performance. This needs to be taken further. It has been insufficiently noticed that the accounts of cases of possession, however, brief, take the form of a diegesis; it is a stating of the case of the author(s) or of the possessed, sometimes offered to an accepting set of readers or to a predominantly accepting group of readers, sometimes less so and liable to prompt a counter-diegesis. This can appear as a straightforward account that reads the same symptoms, the same narrative with different diagnoses, a different plot. It can also appear as the original diegesis reissued but now framed with the means to make the reader wise to its dubious nature, as with Rachel Pindar and Agnes Briggs or William Perry. A further step takes us back to the account detached from the body of the possessed where the diegesis of Edward Nyndge needed

¹⁹ I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: a study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (3rd ed., London, 2003), 40.

²⁰ Michael Lambek, 'Spirits and spouses: possession as a system of communication among the Malagasy speakers of Mayotte', *American Ethnologist* 7 (1980), 318-9.

to be modified to be plausible in the changed context of discernment, of qualification as a 'proper' possession forty years later. This detached meaning can go in the other direction, of course, with cases becoming canonical cases of unfashionable superstition or fanaticism with a loose connection to their starting points. The under-addressed addition to noting this gradual detachment may seem to run against the emic disposition of this analysis, the effort to discuss meanings in their culturally specific domain, but is worth noting. An etic analysis by a historian in the present day, the representation (and necessarily attached judgement) of early modern demonic possession is operating within the same hermeneutic exercise as near contemporaries. Effectively, this is to say that 'we' have as much socio-cultural baggage influencing our assessments as those in the later part of early modern England did, just different baggage. That is not to say, however, that I have an advantage and thereby an authority in that I have drawn attention to these conditions, merely to suggest that we should be as wary of historians as we are of contemporaries.

The inveterate positioning of all engaged in considering possession is intended to run through the discussion of 'authentic' and 'feigned' possession. Among the cases that have been dealt with above there are instances which are, or are taken to be, clear cut as authentic or feigned. No questions were raised about Anne Mylner or, more famously, Robert Briggess. Similarly there is no record of defenders for Rachel Pindar and Agnes Briggess or, similarly but more famously, Anne Gunter. These conclusions are reiterated, more or less, by more current analyses. These are not the cases upon which our attention should be focussed. I hope I have shown that there is a more complex negotiation, more negotiable meaning to the more 'political' cases than some of the literature tends to assume or encourages readers to assume. All of these cases can be borne in mind in the sample chosen in what follows in applying the developmental model I have outlined above. Some are judged not to be possessed like the medical cases and some that were judged

to be possessed 'became' fraudulent. It is easy to maintain an awareness of the power struggles in the contentious cases, even to give them a central place, in assessment of William Sommers and Mary Cooper or Mary Glover, although there is an occasional temptation to favour particular conclusions in the nomenclature employed to describe the combatants. However, power relations are equally part of the equation in the instances chosen to measure the model. These are cases which would be included in a collection that might be labelled 'non-political', to a degree, although that in itself is better measured as a place on a spectrum rather than an either/or option. I will occupy some space returning to what may initially appear an odd combination of instances but a rationale will emerge. I will give a slightly fuller account of Mildred Norrington, one of the instances chosen by the voice of scepticism, Reginald Scot, and then come back to Margaret Cotton, the acquitted accused of Cambridge and move on to William Perry, the truant from Staffordshire. Finally, I will give a differently informed reading of the more lengthily treated possessed around the Throckmorton and Fairfax families in the 1590s and 1620s respectively.

When Mildred Norrington appears in the historiography, it is usually as a snapshot example of the fraudulent demoniacs recounted by the Kent gentleman, Reginald Scot.²¹ She was employed similarly by Edward Jorden in 1603, placed alongside Agnes Brigges and Rachel Pindar, and Richard Bernard, using the same source, placed her alongside the Boy of Bilson.²² When she appeared above, all that was given was an account of a prayer meeting in October 1574 to assist the seventeen-year-old illegitimate daughter of Alice Norrington, apparently possessed.²³ The meeting was held in the home of her employer, William Sponer and led by the vicar of Westwall, Roger Newman and the vicar of

²¹ For instance, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 575; Kathleen R. Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT, 2004), 82; D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries* (London, 1981), 14.

²² Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603), 12-13; Richard Bernard, *A Guide to Grand-lury Men* (London, 1627), 32-4.

²³ See above, 57-8.

neighbouring Kennington, John Brainford. The spirit roared and Mildred showed remarkable strength. Eventually the spirit spoke in a voice very different to Mildred's, threatening to hurt either Mildred or the witch who sent him, then widening his target to all present. He identified himself as Satan and told that, on behalf of 'Old Alice', he had stolen food and drink and killed three people, including a gentleman and his son. After this, with some reluctance, he was made to depart and Mildred was suitably grateful. This work was recorded in a testimony and signed by the clerics and the rest of the company. What was not added to this account was what Scot called 'the confutation of this bastardlie queanes enterprise'. Mildred was brought before George Darrell and Thomas Wotton, although it is not clear whether this was as part of the preparation for a trial of Old Alice. Indeed it is not clear whether Wotton was a JP, with Scot's enthusiasm being limited to describing him as 'a man of great worship and wisdom, and for deciding and ordering of matters in this commonwealth, of rare and singular dexteritie'. Through their examination, 'the fraud was found, the coosenage confessed, and she received condigne punishment'. The means of reaching the conclusion are not made clear although Scot hastens to stress that it was not according to 'the forme of the Spanish Inquisition', 'through extremitie of tortures'. After due trial 'she shewed her feates, illusions, and trances, with the residue of all miraculous workes, in the presence of the aforesaid M. Wooton'.²⁴ There are many unanswered questions left and without further evidence they will remain unanswerable. We have no way to compare and contrast the nature of Mildred's behaviour in the prayer meeting with the performance of her symptoms before Wotton. Similarly we have little to work with on the details of any judicial proceedings, either with Mildred as the accuser or the accused. From what we know, we can be sure that it would have been difficult to bring a case successfully if it was based solely on spectral evidence and we do not know if Old Alice was approached, indeed, who she was. What we do know is that it is a less clear cut, open

²⁴ Reginald Scot, The discoverie of witchcraft (London, 1584), Book 7, Chap. 1, 126-9, 131.

and shut case than Scot suggests and as appears in the historiography. Mildred's condition was sufficiently convincing for two clergymen and 'foure substantiall yeomen, and three women of good fame & reputation' to be convinced that she was possessed and, after a prayer meeting, successfully dispossessed. We can also make reasonable estimates of the unease which the young illegitimate women, of poor stock, would have felt being examined by Wotton and Darrell. This is insufficient to come to a conclusion even gesturing towards certainty that she was authentically possessed by devils and that she was intimidated into confession. What we have is evidence of a woman exhibiting the symptoms of what was needed for an orthodox discernment of possession according to the criteria employed in the 1570s, and we have a certificate of concerned people, including two clerics, testifying to their conclusion that she was possessed and that God had freed her from her torments in response to their prayers. We also have the account of two other individuals, of reputable sorts, who judged her to be counterfeit. It might be noted that they did not see her in her travails but it would be presumptive to seem to assert that had they been at the prayer meeting they would have thought otherwise; we have nothing upon which to base such a conclusion and, of course, I was not at the prayer meeting either. What we can conclude is that Mildred was, at one point, in one context, judged to be possessed and dispossessed and at another point, in another context, judged to be fraudulent and this new context was such that the gentlemen were able to elicit a confession supporting their judgement. For the present purposes, I will state no more than that it is perhaps presumptive for historians to categorise Mildred Norrington too easily as an instance of fraudulent possession. In the process of evaluation her body was read as being possessed in one forum, and read as pretending to have been possessed in another. The power relations were different although not in a straightforward manner of social status and we have no means to access any difference in religious demeanour on either occasion.

A different set of easily taken conclusions is intended to be questioned by returning to a second case, the exchange of accusations and actions between Margaret Cotton and her allies and Dorcas Swettson and her allies in Cambridgeshire in 1602.²⁵ The dispute arose from a squabble over pew rights and began with slander. After one particularly acerbic confrontation charges of slander were brought against Margaret, leading to a further confrontation with symptoms and several deaths seen as bewitchment by Margaret. After her initial acquittal and further afflictions, new charges of witchcraft were brought resulting in a further acquittal and a complaint by Henry Cotton, Margaret's husband, which brought the dispute into the Star Chamber in 1611. As I read of the Swettsons calling upon their allies and particularly of their friends ransacking Margaret's home on a borderline between vigilantes and bailiffs, along with the exorbitant legal costs and the nature of the allegations, my sympathies were inclined towards Margaret. The evidence available allows, indeed encourages, a contrary reading.

As far as can be drawn out of the Star Chamber record, there was the ingredients for a plausible allegation against Margaret Cotton. The opening manifestation of the conflict, the argument over pew rights, can be read as the start of the appetite for slander. It can equally be read as the cause of Margaret's desire to bewitch the Swettsons and those associated with them. Harsh words which led to charges of slander against Margaret fall within a broader domain of an ill-governed female tongue which includes the threatening and cursing which often appears as the prelude to maleficia. When Margaret went to Dry Drayton to express her disgust she was said to have touched Richard Swettson, their infant child, while stating that she would 'be even with them', an ill defined threat or promise and a frequent component of witchcraft narratives. The symptoms that came after this in the narrative suggests temporal sequence as a reflection of causal sequence. The baby suffered trances, with staring eyes and shrunken cheeks, coming to a

²⁵ NA STAC 8/95/4; STAC 8/105/16; see above, 426-9.

climax with one eye leaping out of his head and death following shortly after. The sufferings spread after the initial acquittal with a variety of lameness, fits, strange physical movements, a black mouse biting one woman on the toe and then a similarly sized lump being seen between her flesh and skin and moving about her body, with three unexplained deaths all being attached to the wishes of Margaret Cotton. If we change the focus of the ransacking from the invasion of privacy to what they found, it should be noted that rabbits and chickens were kept in apparent luxury, clearly candidates for being the witch's familiars. Read in this direction, with established disagreements (a motive), physical contact with the earliest victim (the means), and a veiled threat (as close to a confession as could be hoped for), the question to be answered changes. How did Margaret Cotton get away with it? At the judicial level, it might be judged that the connective tissue between Margaret and the later alleged sufferings was too weak and at a more practical level, allegations of the Swettsons having attempted to bribe witnesses as well as the legally dubious source of the evidence regarding possible familiars are unlikely to have won any favours with Sir Edward Coke, the judge at the assizes. This is as much as to make two points: in the early seventeenth century it was perfectly possible for allegations of instigating possession to merit attention at the assizes. The accusations made by the Swettsons may well have been malicious; that should not be taken to mean that they did not believe them. What else could such accusations be when you saw the agent of the suffering and death of close family and friends?

The third case I have judged to be worth returning to in this different context is that of William Perry, the 'Boy of Bilson', even more prone to be cited by historians as a sign of the rising scepticism and the difficulty in convincing the authorities of demonic possession.²⁶ I trust the earlier account muddled the waters a little in paying closer

²⁶ This is very much the dominant theme in Almond, *Demonic Possession*, 331-3, speaking of '[j]udicial scepticism'; Perry is placed alongside Agnes Brigges and Rachel Pindar as proof that children were 'capable of perpetrating such frauds' in Sands, *Demon Possession*, 89 and appears in a list exemplifying the rising tide of scepticism in Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, 83.

attention to the way the surviving account operates textually and its primary targets being underground priests and popery through Perry rather than Perry himself and being the particular instance of possession rather than possession itself.²⁷ This can be taken further by working through his symptoms and the unquestioned parts of the account, the unaddressed issues which tend to be overwhelmed by the eventual discovery and the duly extracted confession. This will, it is intended, add to an awareness of different forums as well as encourage readers to be more cautious in accepting the triumph of empiricism and reason.

I will begin with the symptoms that were allowed to remain beneath the rhetoric of proven fraudulence. Initially he was low in energy and gradually developed 'extreme fits' in which he showed strength beyond the restraining powers of a number of people.²⁸ The prayers and concerns lessened the intensity of his fits but when the priest, James Wheeler, came to examine him and offer assistance, the reading of Scripture as well as parts of the canonical texts of Roman Catholic exorcism returned William to fits so intense that 'three or four could hardly hold him'. He was struck dumb and his tongue reportedly turned into his throat and his limbs became so 'grievously contracted' that they could not be moved. Along with this he had an eclectic variety of vomited objects, 'pinnes, wooll, knotted thred, thrums, rosemary, walnut leaves, feathers, &c' and upon Wheeler's return, '11. pinnes, and a knitted needle folded up in divers folds' (47-9). His fits continued and he reported a vision of the devil assaulting him in the form of a 'Black bird' (50). There were shriekings and physical paroxysms, sometimes in response to the priest's questions, along with occasional abuse. Without exception, these were symptoms which fitted into the orthodoxy of the discernment of demonic possession and were accordingly, in the context of his early examinations, judged to be satisfactory evidence of such an affliction. It seems

²⁷ See above, 434-45.

²⁸ [Richard Baddeley,] The Boy of Bilson: or, A True Discovery of the Late Notorious Impostures of Certain Romish Priests in their pretended Exorcisme, or expulsion of the Divell out of a young Boy, named William Perry, sonne of Thomas Perry of Bilson, in the County of Stafford, Yeoman (London, 1622), 46. Hereafter references will appear in the text.

a not unreasonable suggestion that were the same symptoms to appear in a less religiously contested context, if there was not the ecclesiastical divide, they might have continued to be judged in that manner, especially if the stage was not moved to the assize court as a result of accusing Jone Coxe of bewitching him.

In fact, many of these symptoms remained after he was taken into the episcopal residence. He continued to have fits, to be struck deaf and dumb. He came out of his fits with a loud groan, a symptom with many precedents. He continued to vomit, although no mention is made of anything more than food, and to fast. During his fits his tongue seems to have performed as earlier and despite his strenuous actions his pulse remained normal. Baddeley saw that Perry's 'senseless stupidity, in enduring those many prickings and violent extremities, without any sign of feeling' was an argument for investigating a natural disease as the cause of his symptoms (61-2, recte 57-58). The two crucial contributions to his exposure as a fraud were his inability to understand Greek and the curious incident when he added ink to his urine in an effort to create a supernatural special effect. While the first one was said to have been an ability that was present in his earlier examinations, although its absence from Wheeler's Relation is noteworthy, the second was a newly acquired, indeed newly invented symptom (58-60).

One option would be to plead that William did not get a fair deal, that the criteria used during his time in Thomas Morton's residence were employed to 'prove' his fraudulence from the start, that the question was answered as soon as it was asked or at least when the efforts at exorcism were known. To that could be added a thesis that William was wholly convinced that he was possessed, a belief he maintained in the face of doubting company, and that his reported efforts with the ink were due to a desire to be taken seriously, adding symptoms in the hope that his 'genuine' symptoms would then be given due attention. While there may be some accuracy in the former and perhaps some plausibility in the latter, that is not the line I wish to pursue. Taking the developmental

model further than before, it seems worthwhile to try to read the records of Perry's experience using the framework Don Handelman termed 'prospective microhistory'. In a reassessment of earlier work of his own on a welfare case, he understood the need for 'closure', for a closed judgement despite contradictions, shifts in stories and interpretation from all sides. However, in his efforts to give a phenomenological account he concluded that such closure was counterproductive.

Moreover, as the events accrued through time, as the shaping of the case emerged, the significance of the conclusions grew. But the events were not strung together as a sequence of additions to a known story line. Instead, the events were given different momentum and direction as they shifted one way and another. Once and again contradiction emerged out of consensus, ambiguity out of certainty.²⁹

With a processual model in operation, a set of conclusions can be reached that takes on the ambiguities, the unaddressed questions and the different judgements made by the different people in different contexts, possibly even an estimated shifting self-appraisal on Perry's part as his circumstances changed. After all, as far as can be ascertained from the multiple representations of him that survive in this multi-layered text, he received a variety of judgements from people with contrasting agendas at different times so it would be entirely plausible to suggest that he internalised such different judgements at different junctures. This sense of processual contingency allows an assertion that he was possessed, and that he was fraudulent, in that he was convinced he was possessed and, it seems convinced that he was fraudulent. What his ultimate conclusion was we have no means to tell and in any case that conclusion would not nullify the reality of his earlier conviction. Ironically, he had a longer, at least textual, after-life in that he will reappear among the Quakers in the 1650s. From the perspective of the historian it may feel like an easy option to refuse to come to a more 'solid' conclusion; I would suggest it is a harder

²⁹ Don Handelman, 'Microhistorical anthropology: toward a prospective perspective', in Don Kalb and Herman Tak (eds), Critical Junctions: anthropology and history beyond the cultural turn (Oxford, 2005), 29-52, quoted 45.

and, more importantly, a more profitable effort to maintain an openness to multiple conclusions than to create an attractive but necessarily imposed singular, closed and closing conclusion.

The two cases that remain to be revisited are ones with more substantial treatment, especially the first, the Throckmortons, with a lengthy published contemporary account that could be described as required reading among the canonical texts of English demonic possession. The second, the Fairfaxes, was not so blessed among contemporaries, with the lengthy relation circulating in manuscript but remaining unpublished until the nineteenth century. They may seem slightly odd choices if my intent was solely to emphasise the breadth of uncertainty on the grounds of inadequate sources and to use that as the sole means by which to discourage closed conclusions. After all, we have almost Proustian details of the sufferings and the judicial outcomes and the Throckmortons brought three witches to the gallows while the accusations of the Fairfaxes were cast out of court. For a suggestion of a developmental model with a ragged, open conclusion to be persuasive, it seems that this suggestion should be shown to be productive as applied to instances which are less blighted by an absence of sources, not least to bely the suspicion that, for such cases, full and complete sources emerging in an as yet unidentified pile of antiquarian papers could expose this proposal as the foolish and unnecessary dressing on an entrée perfectly capable of standing on its own.

A compressed version of the witches of Warboys would tell of the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton suffering multifarious torments and exhibiting curious behaviours over three years, with an elderly friend of the family, Lady Susan Cromwell, suffering similarly and having her decline and death hastened by the possession, along with a not entirely clear number of servants picking up related ailments during their time of service. The perpetrator was identified quite early on as Mother Samuel, a poorer local woman of dubious morals, of good age and bad reputation. In the course of the afflictions her daughter,

Agnes, and eventually her husband, John, were implicated. Through the period of possession the forces of respectable opinion were drawn in, clerical, medical and eventually magisterial. Their appraisal was unanimous and, with a slightly bumpy ride, confessions were given by Alice Samuel and, of a sort, by Agnes and all three suspects were found guilty and hanged.³⁰ Put in those terms, it seems an untroubled account of authentic demonic possession, with the first suspect ticking most of the boxes of the stereotypical witch and taking two of her family members with her. Indeed it served as an example for William Sommers, as backing for John Darrell against Samuel Harsnet and against Deacon and Walker, for Stephen Bradwell against Edward Jorden and as an intended source of comfort turned into a sourcebook for Brian Gunter.³¹ Although the credibility of the text did not have an unspotted history among contemporaries and near contemporaries,³² the case's place in the historiography is largely as accepted as it was upon its initial publication, some few months after the executions.³³

Having examined the symptoms above and interrogated the way the family has been represented earlier, I will give a particular reading of the lengthy tract published in defence of the afflicted family, by and on behalf of the family focussing on the means of

³⁰ The main source is Anon., The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys, arraigned, convicted and executed at the last Assises at Huntingdon, for the bewitching of the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton Esquier, and divers other persons, with sundrie Divelish and grievous torments: And also for the bewitching to death of the Lady Crumwell, the like hath not bene heard of in this age (London, 1593). Hereafter references will be given in the text.

³¹ John Darrell, The Replie of Iohn Darrell, to the Answer of Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker, concerning the doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Demoniackes (n.p., 1602), 54; BL Sloane Ms 831 ff. 91-2; James Sharpe, The Bewitching of Anne Gunter (London, 1999), 7.

³² Samuel Harsnet dismissed it as 'a very ridiculous booke, concerning one M. Throgmortons children, (supposed to be bewitched by a woman of Warbois' in the context of identifying the inspirations for William Sommers's means of learning his tricks: A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practises of Iohn Darrel (London, 1599), 93. John Cotta dismissed reports of clairvoyance among the supposedly possessed, making marginal reference to the Throckmortons: John Cotta, The Triall of Witch-Craft (London, 1616), 76-7.

³³ The veracity of the possessions is not a question addressed in the treatment in Walker, Unclean Spirits, 49-52, or Almond, Demonic Possession, 71-4; Almond's lengthier treatment in The Witches of Warboys: an extraordinary story of sorcery, Sadism and Satanic possession (London, 2008) considers and rejects fraudulence, coming to the unclear conclusion they were more than 'mere fakes' but that if we were to ask how much than 'mere fakes' they were 'we should probably look to the discourse of "mental health" and "mental illness." And we should ask where to situate the girls on the continuum from the one to the other', 174-6; the suggestive discussion in James Sharpe, 'Disruption in the well-ordered household: age, authority, and possessed young people', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), The Experience of Authority on Early Modern England (Houndmills, 1996), 187-212 seeks to open frames of explanation rather than consider 'authenticity' or 'fraudulence'.

discernment and proof that will, at this stage, unsettle the orthodox reading and raise under-addressed questions. As the tract takes the form of a narrative, I will adopt the same form, just drawing attention to ways of reading against the grain. Throughout, it should be borne in mind that the intention here is contrary to that of the tract but I trust the points I draw attention to will not be read as forced.

From the opening of the troubles of the five daughters of the Throckmortons, they routinely named Mother Samuel as the guide for the spirits. When the family were visited by a relative, Gilbert Pickering of Titchmarsh, he was told that some friends had gone to her house in order to 'perswade hir to come to see' as she had earlier promised to whenever the parents should ask her to do so. She had said 'shee would venter [venture] hir life in water up to the chin, and loose some parte of hir best blued to doe them any good'.³⁴ Pickering suspected that the group were taking so long because she was now less willing to visit because the children cried out against her in their fits, 'saying that she had bewitched them, and that she also feared, the common practise of scratching would be used on her', adding quickly that 'nothing lesse at that present was intended'. Becoming impatient, Pickering joined the group and added his voice to those requesting her to visit. She refused but he 'told Mother Samuell that he had authoritie to bring her and if shee would not goe with him willingly and of her owne accord, he would force her, and compell her whether shee would or no, which he then did, togeather with her daughter Agnes Samuell'. Exactly what authority he had, other than social status, is left to be guessed. Despite the dismissal of Samuel's fears of being scratched, when they returned to the Throckmorton home and found Jane in a fit, Pickering conducted an experiment. Jane had been muttering, 'Oh that I had her, Oh that I had her' (B4). Jane's eyes were closed so he asked Samuel to give her hand to Jane in case there was a possibility that this might be an occasion for 'the Spirite in the child to disclose some secret, wherby the

³⁴ These are interesting forms of offering help as both allude to means of proclaiming or at least testing her innocence as a witch.

Witches might be by some meanes or token made manifest and knowen'. He had tried it with his own hand and Jane rejected his hand and returned to scratching the sheet on the bed. He took the older woman's hand and 'thrust it to the childes hand, who no sooner felt the same but presently the childe scratched her, with such vehemencie that her nailes brake into Spylles with the force and earnest desire that she had to revenge'. He tested Jane's ability to identify her target more fully, by holding Samuel's hand under his, but found that, despite her closed eyes, she did not scratch him, merely working her fingers between his in order to cause further pain to the suspect (C).

A similar use of unequal social position appears when Lady Cromwell came and saw the condition of the children in their fits. She sent for Alice, 'who durst not deny to come, because her husband was tennant to sir Henry Cromwell', Lady Cromwell's husband. Upon Alice's arrival, Lady Cromwell took her aside, 'and charged her deeply with witchcraft, using also some hard speeches to her, but she strictly denyed them all, saying, that maister Throckmorton and his wife did her great wrong, so to blame her without cause'. When the concerned relative realised that 'no good speeches' were making any impression on Alice, who was ready to leave, Cromwell 'suddainly pulled of her kercher, & taking a payre of sheeres, clipped of a locke of her haire' and gave it to Elizabeth Throckmorton, 'together with her Hairlace, willing her to burne them'. Alice was affronted, saying, 'Madame who doo use me thus? I never did you any harme as yet'. The last two words were recalled much later and to become central to the case against the Samuels. Lady Cromwell had disturbing dreams about Alice and went on to have not dissimilar symptoms to her younger relatives, symptoms that were seen to be the cause of her death, thus raising the indictments from bewitchment to murder. Thus the phrase 'as yet' was seen as a threat and a promise although, as the narrator notes, they 'were not at that present time taken hold of by any' (E3). Shortly after this there occurred a further public exchange in which the outrage expressed by the relations of the Throckmortons may at

least raise an eyebrow. Henry Pickering, a scholar from Cambridge and two fellow students dropped in. In the evening they decided to address Alice and left the house to find her. After some time they found her on her way home after exchanging some vittles with a neighbour. The three men accosted her in the street, by the pond, and were appalled at her defensiveness when they started quizzing her and particularly her willingness to express her dislike of the Throckmorton children! Henry told her she should repent and do so immediately. If she did not do so in time, 'he hoped one day to see her burned at a stake, and he himselfe would bring fire & wood, & the children should blowe the coales'. Her response was intended to illustrate her malevolent nature: 'I had rather (sayd she) see you dowsed over head and eares in this pond, and so they parted' (E4).

This was one of the last exchanges between Alice and the Throckmortons and their kith and kin to take place on more or less equal grounds, or at least in space that was not governed and pretty much controlled by the latter. Alice was taken into their house and her movement and behaviour increasingly constrained. In fact the concern of Robert Throckmorton and the confidence of his position did not limit the reach of his authority to his own home. On one occasion, when the children were in their fits and, as usual, Alice was kept standing by them, 'the spirites told the children' that if Robert went to the Samuel house he would find Agnes Samuel hiding from him. This was a curious prediction at this stage, as Agnes had not yet been brought into the frame of the accused. He took company to the Samuel abode, demanding to see her, with the company pushing their way into the house. John Samuel was noted as not being especially cooperative, claiming not to know where his daughter was. Throckmorton would not rest, took the candle and looked round the house. When he came to the top of the stairs, 'the trap doore was so fast, that he could not sturre it'. He responded by threatening to 'break open the doore, or breake up the plancher of the chamber', ordering one of the company 'to fetch him a barre of yron or

some such like thing' at which point Agnes made herself heard in the attic, admitting that she had been hiding there since the group's arrival (G2-G3).

From the start of November, the family noted that the fits lessened in the presence of Alice, either when she was in the Throckmorton home or when they were taken to hers. Robert, 'perceiving that by no meanes hee could gette leave of old Iohn Samuell, for the old woman to come to his house', despite offers of money and a servant to take her place, attempted to move the children into the Samuels'. After a period of suffering the unwelcome guests, John decided that the servant was the least worst option and they took Alice home with them. 'This made the parents right glad, and to use the woman as a welcome guest' (F4). Apart from one trip home which, according to the possessed, was to create the opportunity to feed the spirits, Alice was kept and controlled until she was placed in Huntingdon gaol.

Once Alice was held against her will in the Throckmorton home, attention was turned to detailing the specifics of her agency. One evening, for instance, Elizabeth Throckmorton said she was unable to eat for the second night in a row. Robert turned to Alice who stood next to her and said that 'you are disposed to pyne that wench'. She denied this and added that she was sorry to see her that way. Throckmorton persisted. 'Well sayde hee, surely you shall neyther eate nor drinke, untill shee canne doo both, and therefore (sayde Maister Throckmorton) whilst shee fasteth, you shall fast, and when she can eate, you shall eate, but not before, use the matter as you will'. There the matter lay until the table was cleared, at which point the child sighed and said, 'If I had some meate now, I could eate it'. Implicit in this was that Alice had given in to her own hunger and was allowing Elizabeth to eat so that she could do the same (G4-H).

This shifted into a campaign of the children demanding a confession. This was portrayed as a means of relief rather than an aid to prosecution; indeed, it is striking that despite the reader being made aware of the resolution from that start, this was not the

focal point until well into the tract. As Christmas approached, the girls told Alice that if she confessed and thus made them well before Christmas 'they would thinke themselves beholding to her'. Alice responded that she wished them well, 'but for confession of this matter, she would not, for it was a thing she never knew of, nor consented unto'. When their father overheard this, he added his voice to the request for a confession, telling her that it would surely make them better because the spirits had said so 'and you know they have not used to tell lyes in their fits'. Alice repeated her denial whereupon he reminded her of a particularly grievous fit that a spirit had foretold would befall Jane and Alice, remembering the horror Jane had felt at the prospect, hoped that it would not come. 'Why saith M. Throg. charge the spirit in the name of God, y^t she may escape this fit which is threatned'. Alice spoke as she was instructed and Jane announced that her wishes were granted. Robert pushed on, asking Alice to charge all the spirits, 'and speake from your heart', to end their fits. She did so and Jane reported positively again. Robert, with uncurbed delight and hope, pressed Alice to command the spirits to leave and never to return and she, swept along by the success, did so and the three girls who were in their fits recovered and were returned to perfect health. Robert, facing the girls and with Alice behind him, thanked God.

While he was thus speaking (litle knowing or thinking indeed of any such matter) ye old woman fell down behind him on her knees & said, good M. forgive me. He turned about, and seeing her down, said, why mother Samuell what is the matter? O sir said she, I have bene the cause of all this trouble to your children. Have you mother Samuell sayd hee? and why so? what cause did I ever give you thus to use me and my children? None at all sayd she. Then said maister Throgmorton, you have done me the more wrong. Good maister sayd she, forgive me. God forgive you sayd he, and I do:

On one level, this seemed to bring a resolution. Perhaps Alice was convinced by the effectiveness of her pleas that she really was responsible in some way for the possessions. The following day, Christmas Eve, brought ritual closure in the church service. The vicar of Warboys, Francis Dorington, Robert's brother-in-law and constant supporter, devoted the sermon to repentance, 'on set purpose to comfort her', setting out what she had confessed. Alice sat through the service weeping and lamenting at high volume. However, it seems that, for Robert this was not a final closure as, during the service he recalled her 'inconstancie heretofore' and it occurred to him that only he and Dorington had heard the confession and might be considered partial in their testimony. It is not made plain whether his concern was local reputation or prosecution but to serve either or both he brought Alice into the body of the church and asked her, in front of their neighbours, whether the confession given to him and apparently repeated to the vicar, 'was wrested and wroong [i.e. wrung] out of her, or whether it proceeded frankly and freely of and from her self'. She agreed it was the latter and asked her neighbours for their prayers and forgiveness. Accordingly, that night she was allowed to return home to her daughter and John (H2-H3).³⁵

In the different environment of her home, Alice withdrew her confession. In addition to the explanations given to her accusers which will follow, the persuasive powers of John Samuel should be noted. Particular instances of his unadorned masculinity will be recounted below but it can be taken that he was rarely dissuaded of the efficacy of violence as a means of conviction. Robert was disappointed to hear of her new denial and visited her to find why her position was changed. He threatened to take her to the JPs, although it is not clear whether this was to press charges or not. He asked why she had confessed before. 'She answered, For joy. For joy, sayd he, (smiling to himselfe, marvelling what she could make of it) and and [sic] why for joy? Because sayd she, I did

³⁵ There is an insightful discussion of the nature of Alice's first confession in Almond, The Witches of Warboys, 110-11.

see your children so presently well, after your good prayers and mine'. Throckmorton told her to continue her prayers, delivering a thinly veiled threat that he would not let the matter rest; now it was public, 'eyther you or I will beare the shame of it in the end'. He took himself to Dorington's, brought him up to date and repeated his intention to pursue the matter, 'least the worser sort of people should imagine that this was some devise of theirs, to bring the old woman into further danger'. Alice was summoned to the church and found still to be unwilling to repeat her confession, despite threats to take her and Agnes to see William Wickham, the bishop of Lincoln. Throckmorton summoned the constables, and after they had arrived and he was putting on his boots in readiness for the journey, she told him that, if he would come with her to the parlour, 'I will confesse all to you alone'. Having repeated her confession, he asked again why she had denied it. She made plain the pressure of reputation and spouse: 'I would never have denied it but for my husband and my daughter, who sayd I was a foole in confessing of it, and that it had bene better for me to have died in the same estate I was in, then to confesse my selfe a Witch, for now everie bodie will call me old Witch whilst I live'. Perhaps his focus was still primarily on his local repute, for Throckmorton promised all the favour available to him if she maintained her confession. If so, his confidence diminished when Dorington joined them and she was more diffident in responding to his questions. After all, she had said she would confess 'all to you alone', and this was of small comfort as it still left his reputation balanced between his word and hers (Hiiii).

The two men evidently hatched a plot, although the account chooses not to make it clear when they did so. Dorington took her aside and requested pen, ink and paper and Throckmorton left them. While the cleric wrote down the confession, the gentleman sent to the church, as it was prayer time, and having brought the neighbours into the loop, 'placed them hard underneath the Parlor window where maister doctor and this old woman were talking together'. He spoke in a loud voice and feigned deafness, making her speak with

sufficient volume to allow the literally eavesdropping neighbours hear what she was saying. When they had done, Robert brought them into the hall where the neighbours had now congregated. Dorington read the confession, 'but she would faine have denied al againe'. The neighbours told her that they had heard her conversation and 'she perceived herself thus caught in a trap'. At this point John Samuel arrived and was brought up to date. 'Hast thou sayd so? sayd he to his wife (giving hir a foule terme) and with that would have stricken her, had not others stood betwixt them'. Alice, understandably, swooned and Elizabeth, Robert's wife, called for aqua vita. One of her neighbours, 'peradventure better acquainted with her fashions then the rest', said she would be fine and Robert was happy to leave her to them, satisfied that his local reputation was safe. His sights were evidently raised with the prospect of taking her to see Wickham for, once she recovered, Alice and Agnes were taken to the bishop where they were examined on Boxing Day and committed to Huntingdon gaol to await the assizes (Hiiii-I).

The concerns of the Throckmortons were not met by the incarceration of Alice Samuel. They had growing fears that Agnes Samuel was involved, concerns based on remarks made by the girls during their fits. To try to make sure no opportunity was missed to make the case against her as evidentially strong as possible, Robert made a request to the high sheriff and the JPs 'to baile this maid, to see, if it might please God, whether such evidences of guiltinesse would appeare against her, as had appeared in the children against the mother'. They were trying to get Agnes released from gaol so she could be held in the home of her accusers as a means of searching for more incriminating evidence. As the relation notes, this suit was not easily granted, 'for it was a demur amongst the Justices whether the maide was baylable by law in this case or no'. Throckmorton persisted with his request and the bail was granted. (lii).

Once Agnes was taken into the Throckmorton house there were two particular strategies taken to add to evidence of her guilt. Despite the promises attached to Alice's

confession, that the fits would disappear, the sufferings had continued. In itself that was taken implicitly to suggest that her agency was not the sole cause of the symptoms and the first strategy to demonstrate that the agency of Agnes should be added to the causal explanation had a freakshow dimension to it. Robert Throckmorton's brother was visiting and Robert promised to show him something remarkable. One of the children was in a fit and Robert called Agnes to join them. He told her to say to the child, 'I charge thee divell in the name of the God of heaven and earth as I hate thee, and am no Witch, nor guiltie of this matter, that thou depart from this childe, and suffer her to come forth of her fit'. Agnes did so and there was no change in the child's behaviour. Then Robert told Agnes to say, 'I charge thee thou divell, as I love thee, and have authoritie over thee, and am a Witch, and guiltie of this matter, that thou suffer this childe to be well at this present'. She was immediately restored to good health at which point Jane fell into a fit and Agnes was told to repeat the same terms with the same effects. 'And this was verie usuall amongst them, for it had bene proved divers times, and was foretold by the spirit to one of them being in her fit, (a fortnight before this time:) that whensoever Agnes Samuell should say these words, they should be presently well' (Kii). This was an effort to grant the spirits an epistemological trustworthiness that runs counter to the framework of judicial 'proof' that has been encountered on many occasions.

The second strategy employed was a more intense form of the scratching suffered by Alice. It first appears as a possibility when one of the spirits, Smack, told Joan that she should scratch Agnes, an idea to which Joan, after some expression of unwillingness, agreed (Kiiii). It was first acted upon by Mary, the second youngest of the possessed, on 1 March. Henry Pickering and Edward Pickering were visiting and they brought Agnes into the chamber where three of the girls were in fits, confident that Agnes would not be able to keep herself from being scratched 'if three such as the child was should be set upon her at once'. When Agnes entered the room, Mary turned to her and said, 'Art thou come thou

yoong Witch, who hast done all this mischiefe?’ Agnes was surprised at this aggression from a usually recalcitrant child. She was told to carry the child down the stairs but as she did so, Mary ‘fell on scratching of her so eagerly and so fiercely, as that it was a wonder to all that saw it’. The drama was made more captivating as Mary kept saying, ‘I will scratch you, you yoong witch, and pay you home for thus punishing of me and my sisters: the thing telleth me, that I had bene well, and should never have had my fits any more but for you’.³⁶ Agnes stood with her head bowed, crying but making no resistance. Mary told her that she knew she was crying but claimed that the spirit prevented her from hearing to lessen the danger of her feeling pity and desisting from her actions. ‘So the child scratched her face untill the skinne came of, the breadth of a shilling, but there came no blood at all but water’. When they arrived in the parlour, Mary recovered and ‘seemd to be woonderfull sorie for that she had done’, telling those present that, ‘I would not have scratched Nan Samuell, but the thing told mee that I should doe it, and forced me thereunto, stretching forth mine armes, and straying my fingers whether I would or not, and made me to scratch her’. The scratching was thereby a source of relief and relief free of any blame to be attached to the possessed and only an indirect means of proof in that the relief would not have been attained if the individual being scratched was lacking any agency in the fit (Lii).

The next version took the same pattern. Agnes was holding Grace, the youngest daughter, and sat next to Elizabeth. The latter, in a trance, suddenly spoke angrily to Agnes, saying, ‘now I can see the yong Witch which I could never do before since she came to the house in my fit’. The tone surprised the company because it ran so contrary to Elizabeth’s usual demeanour. She continued: ‘my sister loanes divel told me even now as I sate at supper, that I must scratch the yong Witch’. She fell to her knees and took one of Agnes’s hands in her own, scratching it ‘most fiercely’, while explaining that Agnes had

³⁶ By ‘the thing’, we can presume she meant the spirit within her.

bewitched them all, crying, 'O thou yong Wit[c]h, O thou yong Witch, fie upon thee, fie upon thee, who ever heard of a yong Witch before?' She stuck to her task 'with such vehemencie of speech, and eagernesse of scratching, as that both her breath and strength fayled her'. After a brief rest she scratched again, passing the responsibility on to Joan's devil and promising more to come. 'I would not have scratched you, and it was full evil against my will to do it, but the divel made me to scratch you, stretching forth mine armes, & bending my fingers, otherwise I would not do it, but I must do it, and so must all my sisters scratch you, though they be never so unwilling to do it, as my selfe now am'. Once again, Agnes sat still, holding the younger child, crying and 'desiring the Lord to thinke uppon her' (Liili-M).

There were attempts to extend both strategies to John Samuel upon his next visit. Upon his arrival one of the daughters moved towards him, announcing her intention to scratch him but, probably seeing his response to the threat, the spirit very sensibly advised her that now was not the time (M2). The company told him to use the commands as Agnes had done but he refused. He was told that he would not be allowed to leave until he had done so, so he acquiesced. He declared that, 'as I am a Witch, and consenting to the death of the Lady Crumwell, so I charge the spirite to depart from Mistres Elizabeth Throckmorton at this present, and to suffer her to be well'. Elizabeth duly recovered, having no memory of any of her behaviour and upset at being told of her actions. The company parted and she retired to bed in good shape (M3).

Attention returned to Agnes a couple of days later. Once again, she was holding Grace, while the child was in a fit. Suddenly, she 'fell on scratching of the maides hand'. She worked hard, 'yet she did grone and weepe greatly as if she had bene doing of some thing against her will'. Fortunately for Agnes, due to 'the childe short nayles and want of strength', her skin remained unbroken (N). After this, Joan, in a fit, made Agnes make another confession to bring the fit to an end. After emerging, she went back into another

fit, and demanded and was given a confession to having bewitched each of the possessed one by one. On this occasion, her spirit was especially chatty and having discerned that it was willing to give answers she required Agnes to ask a series of questions. Agnes was told to ask which part of her body Joan would scratch when she was told to. The spirit answered, 'you shall scratch her on her face, the right cheeke for your self, and the left for your Aunt Pickering of Ellington'. Joan agreed that she was willing to do so if it might give help to her aunt and the spirit encouraged her, adding that, 'the young witch were as good to take it patiently at the first, for you shall have your pennyworth of her before you have done' (N-N2).

The premonition was fulfilled on 2 April. Joan had been in a fit through supper but stood by the table when thanksgiving was said at the end of the meal and remained standing with her sisters until grace was finished. At this point she fell upon Agnes 'and tooke her head under her armes and first scratched the right side of her cheeke, and when she had done that now saide she, I must scratch the left side for mine Aunte Pickering, and scratch that also until bloud came forth of both sides very abundantantly [sic]'. Throughout, Agnes stood still, unresistant, 'yet cried very pittifully, desiring the Lord to be mercyfull unto her'. Still in a trance, Joan 'called for a paire of sheeres, to paire her nayles' but was trembling too much to do so. Mary Dorington came to her aid and cut her nails for her. Joan took the parings and threw them into the fire, calling for water to wash her hands and having cleaned off the blood, threw the water into the fire too, a sort of cleansing ritual. Then she fell into prayer (N4). She wept, telling the company that she would not have scratched Agnes but the spirit forced her to do so. In the midst of Mary's complaint, Elizabeth fell into a fit and took one of Agnes's hands, 'saying that the spirit saith, that she must also scratch her'. Unusually, the company told Agnes to keep her hand from Elizabeth, and she struggled to get at her, asking if anybody would help her. Joan, still in her fit, offered aid which Elizabeth accepted. 'So mistres Joane came, and tooke one of

the maides hands, and held it to her sister, Elizabeth, and shee scratched it untill blood came, and seemed to be merveilous ioyfull that she had gotten bloud, she pared her nayles also, and washed her hands and threw all into the fire' (O).

Jane, the first to be stricken, had said that she would not scratch Agnes. However, she was finally won round by the persuasions of the spirits and announced that she would scratch her right hand after grace. Anticipating the drama and presumably being willing to recruit more witnesses the family sent for neighbours and friends to join them (O2). When the time came, Jane tried her best but with little success. For the first time, Agnes tried to move away but Jane pursued her on her knees as her legs were not functioning properly during her fit, as was often the case. She told Agnes that 'she were as good to take it now, as at an other time, for she must fetch bloud on her, & she must have her pennyworthes of her'. Much as Mary before her, Jane stated that she knew Agnes was crying but that the spirit had made her deaf to prevent the danger of pity and she persisted until she was tired, '& wiped that little bloud and water togeather, which came from the maides hand upon her owne hands'. Francis Dorington provided an exegesis, explaining that 'God would surely not suffer to be thus cryed out upon by these wicked spirites, and afflicted in this sorte by these innocent children contrary to their willes, if shee were not consenting, or at the least concealing, and of some knowledge of these wicked practises, which her mother had confessed'. Agnes protested her innocence and asked God for a token to display her innocence or guilt. Shortly after, her nose began to bleed profusely, which might be read as a psychosomatic response to all the stress and violence. The narrator's assessment is guarded but sure, concluding that 'whether it were a signe of Gods sending at that time, in token of her giltinesse or not, that he knoweth onely: and man (I thinke) may without offence greatly suspecte'. Jane ended the session with a plea for them to fetch John Samuel to come and get her out of her fit by admitting that he was a witch but he, understandably, refused to come (O3).

On 4 April Joan Throckmorton was taken to Huntingdon in anticipation of the assizes. At the inn where she was staying she went into fits and was visited by many, and those who were not sure before were now convinced of the authenticity of her possession. Edward Fenner, the judge of the case, came to see for himself and joined in prayer with many others, hoping to relieve her of her troubles. Robert took the chance to add to the evidence, telling Fenner of the usual cure. Agnes was brought in and Fenner made her try different prayers to see if it was the specific combination that worked, all to no avail. Then she was commanded to say 'the right charge, which was as I am a witch, & a worse witch than my mother, and did consent to the death of the La. Crumwell, so I charge the divel to let Mistres Ioan Throckmorton come out of her fit at this present'. Joan recovered immediately and bowed to the judge. Fifteen minutes later she was taken in another fit to the consternation of those present and Fenner led prayers with no success. Then he made Agnes 'repeat another charme, vz, As I am a Witch & would have bewitched to death Mistres Ioan Throckmorton in her last weeke of her great sickness, so I charge the Divel to let Mistres Ioan come out of her fit at the present'. Joan emerged from her fit and Fenner asked her where she had been; Joan responded in the established pattern, stating that she had been asleep. Soon after, she fell into her final fit, 'with a most strange & terrible kinde of neeing, and other passions, the which was so vehement & pittifull to be heard, that it moved all the companie at one instant, to pray to God to save her, fearing that her head would have burst in sunder, or her eies start out of the same'. Fenner turned to the task, making Agnes speak 'the other charme, which was, As I am a Witch, and did bewitch Mistres Piker of Ellington, since my mothers confession: so I charge the Divel, to let Mistres Ioan come out of her fit at this present'. With this, Joan's fits ended, she was well, '& so hath continued without any grife or fittes till this day' (P).

Having set the scene so effectively, the impression given by the tract is that the trial itself was a relatively smooth affair. With the witnesses dominated by the Throckmortons,

the Pickerings and their friends from equally respectable backgrounds, the grand jury came to a guilty verdict with ease. Before the lesser jury Edward Fenner brought a final drama. In a fit a year earlier, Jane Throckmorton had said that she would not be eased of her maladies until John Samuel spoken the mantra. Fenner asked him to do so. John refused but Fenner persisted; to set an example he spoke the words, as did Dorington 'and others then present' at Fenner's behest, but John remained unpersuaded.

Then the Judge said, y^t if he would not speake the words of the charme, the court would hold him guiltie of the crimes whereof he was accused: & so at the length, with much ado, the saide Samuell (with a loude voyce) said in the hearing of al that were present: As I am a Witch, and did consent to the death of Lady Cromwell, so I charge the devil to suffer Mistres lane to come out of her fit at this present.

Which words, being no sooner spoken by the old Witch, but the said Mistres lane, as her accustomed order was, wiped her eyes, and came out of her fitt: (P2)

Watching Jane turn to her father, confused about where she was and what had happened, Fenner said, 'you see all, she is now well: but not with the musike of Davids harpe, alluding to the place of Scripture, where King Saule being vexed by an evell spirit received comfort and helpe when David played on his harpe before him'. Alice's confessions before William Wickham and shortly after in front of Wickham and two JPs, one of them being Francis Cromwell, the brother-in-law of Susan Cromwell, were read. Further subsidiary evidence relating to her reputation was added by another Robert Throckmorton, the father's cousin from Brampton, and by the vicar of Brampton, Robert Poulter. The jury found the three guilty on all charges and sentenced them to death for the murder of Lady Cromwell. John and Agnes maintained their innocence and, despite the earlier confessions and one produced by further questions asked when she was on the ladder at the gallows, when John Dorington, another Huntingdonshire JP and the brother

of Francis, asked her earlier in the day whether she had bewitched Lady Cromwell she said, 'no forsooth, I did not' (P3). With the sentence passed, all three were duly executed.

I will return to assessing the Throckmorton judgement and the related but separate particular phenomenon of demonic possession below. Before that appraisal is to be delivered, I will return to the Fairfax case set out in an earlier chapter. This can be a more concise reading, partly because much of what I want to draw the reader's attention to was implicit in the narrative above and partly because this account is fresher in the reader's mind. The Fairfax daughters have received a less sympathetic press than the Throckmortons. For Walker they are aligned with Katherine Malpas and William Perry as instances of judges under James, who, 'not wishing to be "discountenanced" by hanging innocent women, carefully investigated the demoniacs, found them fraudulent, and acquitted the supposed witches'.³⁷

Considered alongside the Throckmorton case, the initial impression is of the similarities. Helen and Elizabeth Fairfax and Maud Jeffrey suffered, as far as can be told, wholly orthodox symptoms, with conversations with the suspected witches and with the spirits, generally maintaining a fairly pious stance in the face of temptation. Edmund Fairfax resisted the appeal of appealing to cunning folk and in fact adds to his educated distance from the Jeffrays when they succumb to the less godly treatment. Like the Throckmortons, his attention is concentrated on identifying the perpetrators and seeking relief through the assizes. Similarly, he explores the route of natural disease and, once that proves unsuccessful, he works to recruit allies among the respectable, whether they be clergy, justices or potential jurymen. Where the cases diverge is his failure in this effort. While Robert Throckmorton was making a case against his social inferiors and had familial or patronal loyalty from the relevant clergy, JPs and witnesses, loyalty that remained even when it was stretched during his plea to take Agnes from gaol into his home, Edward

³⁷ Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, 83.

Fairfax found that he was reaching beyond his means. While, of course, the ultimate instigator was Satan, the penultimate instigator seems to have been not the suspected witches but a member of the gentry, Henry Graver, slightly higher in the social order than he was. Hence the power relations expressed in the assize worked against Fairfax's interests. Maud Jeffray and her father received the worse treatment although at least one of Edward's daughters was secluded and tested in isolation. It would not be too cynical a conclusion to suggest that this differing level of mistreatment was due to differing social status.

When read within a teleology of rising scepticism, such as Walker's, an attractive conclusion is that the difference outcomes of 1593 and 1623 were consequent upon a rising difficulty in convincing judges and juries of the credibility of demonic possession. It is worth noting some differences in the evidence brought before the court. Alice Samuel's confession should not be discounted but the doubters in the first case were won by spectral evidence and testimony to spectral evidence and, had the trial been between social equals, the means of acquiring the confession and the evidence against John and Agnes would have been an easy target for any critic. In the trial of the Samuels there were useful witnesses to the established reputation or poor reputation of the suspects while the evidence of John Jeffray and his supporters was not heard and, it is implied, Graver had gathered support for the suspects which was accepted in the court. Read as individual cases, separate from such a teleology, the distinction seems to be less one of a developing sceptical judicial mindset than different power relations with consequently different outcomes.

In the assessment of these two particular cases, the foremost question to ask is where this takes us in terms of the judgement of fraudulence or authenticity. One choice is to judge the 1593 case as a success in a kangaroo court and the 1623 case as a failure due to a kangaroo court. Having taken that choice, one could go on to judge the sufferers

in the Throckmorton circle as fraudulent: if Alice Samuel was entrapped, Agnes Samuel placed under house arrest and physically and psychologically bullied, and John Samuel tacked on through guilt by association, one could conclude that the whole experience was a charade, either on the part of the children, perhaps in collusion with their parents, maybe even including parts of the wider family. Similarly one could conclude that the Fairfaxes and Maud Jeffray were authentically possessed by devils: if Henry Graver went to such efforts to prevent what we would regard as a fair trial being allowed then surely he had something to hide and that must have been that he was the malicious mastermind behind all the misery. The first point is that this conclusion, certainly arrived at with such conviction as I have chosen to portray it, is to make two category errors. The first, and lesser, error is to forget that a failure to get a conviction in an accusation covers a broader set of possibilities than fraudulence. Judicial proceedings may be flawed but the evidence could be inadequate, of the wrong sort, or, for that matter, it could be the wrong person being accused. An individual can be demonically possessed but the wrong instigator be identified; that was part of the reason why spectral evidence was problematic, given that Satan is not the most trustworthy witness. Such mistakes do not inherently devalue the possession per se. Similarly, the questionable behaviours of the Throckmortons or the ones suspected of Graver do not automatically contribute to necessary conclusions about the possessions. The Throckmortons would be duly concerned about the sufferings of their children and relations so for them to accept the understanding that they were possessed and to address that by any means necessary, valuing the well-being of their family over legalistic niceties, seems reasonable. For Graver, to be associated with accusations of bewitchment was in itself an attack on his honour. To try to nip the affair in the bud, as he tried when Fairfax first spoke about his daughters' suffering, was the preferred conclusion. When Fairfax persevered and collected legally worthless, but socially damaging evidence, evidence that, assuming Graver's innocence, could be slanderous, it made sense to work

in the interests of the accused, to speak with the JPs in order to construct a gentlemen's agreement in a similar genre to the backstage negotiations in other possession cases trying to win a compliant justice.

The second, and greater, category error is to neglect, in a way that historians would castigate in dealing with contemporary disputes, the location and empowerment involved in the location of judgement. To make such an evaluation is to put the historian in the seat of judgement and such an assessment would, I suspect, be based upon a presumably shared inclination to back the underdog. For an individual to receive a guilty verdict by means judged to be dubious does not necessarily mean that that individual is innocent. To grant oneself or other historians the right to come to a clearcut conclusion is effectively the same as to grant preference to the sort of valorised 'sceptic' or, for that matter, the zealous divine. It would be to play the same power games with a greater distance and merely different consequences for the afflicted. While I have been most forthright in trying to encourage a critical attitude in reading the former this has been an emphasis caused by the historiographical hegemony. To grant similar trust to the accuser in the Fairfax case would be to substitute like for like and that would be of no greater profit.

If this is accepted then the immediate question to follow, I suspect, is what other options are available. Perhaps one that offers some hope in the sense of empowering the powerless would be to allow the 'possessed' to have complete powers of evaluation. That would be no more than an illusion, not just in the sense that the voice of the possessed is no less of a social construct than the other contemporary assessors but because even the 'possessed' is assessing (in a manner that is available to contemporaries and historians alike) from a position outside the possessed. For the possessed to speak, even as a form of 'self-assessment' is to offer a text to be interpreted by others. To speak during a time outside a fit or after a dispossession has no greater claim to veracity in absolute terms than that of anyone else. Any such effort to control the representation and truth of their

experiences is as much an effort to identify a place within the institutional framework, the social, intellectual and religious order or a textual place outside the time of possession.³⁸ Each of these is separate from the 'actual' phenomenon of the experience itself. To state a truism that happens to be true: there is no 'power-free' assessment available. A further option (that once again is not power-free) is more profitable. This option takes each case as a process, as context-dependent on a large scale (where the diagnosis of demonic possession is acceptable) and on a small scale (in terms of the shifting power relations in the specific situation). This allows a more contingent judgement, temporally and spatially placed and shifting. This means that, on the ground level, as it were, the truth can be seen developing and being negotiated as far as can be ascertained from the remaining narratives. For instance the traces of earlier experiences, such as the green cats in Thomas Darling's earlier visions or the unorthodox battles between the spirits in the Throckmorton visions, the possible references to fairies and the footless child seen by Katherine Wright or the ill-defined 'whyte thing' enveloping Anne Mylner at the start of her troubles can all be understood as former truths.³⁹ Similarly, the contest and negotiation of a 'valid' case of possession, accepted or rejected, or accepted by some and rejected by others in a succession of different trials, whether social or judicial, becoming temporary or more lasting truths can be placed with a profitably open-ended ontology. At the next, textual, level, truths can be 'thoroughly' established in cases that remained uncontested at the time or fields of possibility drawn out where they were, sometimes concluding in established assessments. In themselves, these truths are not fundamentally static through time as they are recalled, reassessed or recycled by near-contemporaries or the next generation, a process added to, in a similarly positioned manner, by historians.

This proposal can be summed up as a proposal to shift genres. It is to move past the genre of detective novels with an answer. This is an attractive genre and one to which

³⁸ Cf. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. by Tom Conley (New York, 1998), 254.

³⁹ See above, 103-6, 83-4, 63-4, 40.

I have contributed in some of the work above. I am suggesting we move through that to one that is a measurement of possibility, opening multiple readings and a yes-no conclusion, which is sensitive to (self)perceptions and an understanding of multiple readings, some of which are, and are recognised as, at a distance from the possessed individual, from the corpus of the possessed, that are not all equal but serving different purposes. On one level this is a plea for students of the demonically possessed to embrace the murkiness. This may seem frustrating in that it sacrifices the pleasures of a straightforward 'discovery' or 'exposure' but it seems an advance to perform such a sacrifice in order to enable a more polyphonic apprehension of the phenomenon of demonic possession in early modern England. While I understand that frustration, the consequences of that embrace change the questions in mind as well as the nature of the answers sought as readers engage with the narratives of possession. It is to echo the commendation of the aesthetics of jazz used by Elsa Barkley Brown in her effort to encourage an appreciation of heterogeneity in gender studies: to accept 'nonlinear ways of thinking about the world, of hearing multiple rhythms and thinking music not chaos, ways that challenge the notion that sufficient attention to diversity leads to intellectual chaos, to political vacuum, or to intellectual and political void'.⁴⁰ This is a plea to return to the approaches identified by Bruce Kapferer in the introduction.⁴¹ The context is, of course, different for an ethnographer but the questions are, with different emphases, equally salient. To move from the perhaps disconcerting rhetoric of 'truth' to the less disturbing one of 'meaning', reading is modified if we ask where the meaning happens. Is it in the body of the individual under examination? Is it in the event, the social experience? Is it in the text consequent upon the above? Is it in the record or the reception of the record? Is that reception to be given value by its temporal relation to the event, or by its greater or

⁴⁰ Elsa Barkley Brown "What Has Happened Here": the politics of difference in women's history and feminist politics', *Feminist Studies* 18 (1992), 296-7.

⁴¹ Bruce Kapferer, 'Mind, self and other in demonic illness: the negation and reconstruction of self', *American Ethnologist* 6 (1979), 115-121; *idem*, 'Performance and the structuring of meaning and performance', in V. W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (eds), *The Anthropology of Experience* (Chicago, 1986).

lesser distance from the event? If the former, where does that place the epistemological authority of the historian? Given the ingrained (and valuable) inclination to give higher value to the more immediate accounts, how does that change our appraisal when we include historians in the equation? It can be argued that we are missing a trick when we limit our appraisal of later accounts to the benefit of increasing our distrust proportionately to the temporal distance. Once meaning is accepted as mutable, the meanings of a particular case may change or solidify according to the establishment of an orthodoxy by re-countings that accrue authoritative gnosis by repetition. To put it slightly less cryptically, it would be of value to extend the hermeneutics of suspicion both across contemporaries of these events and temporally to include historians, including me.