ABSTRACT

Possession, Witchcraft, and the Suffocation of the Mother:
Edward Jorden's Effects on Women's Spiritual Agency
in Early Modern England

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This thesis argues that Edward Jorden's 1603 treatise *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* emphasized the physical weakness that resulted from women's unstable reproductive systems and was crucial to the Protestant desacralization of women's bodies and subsequent decrease of women's spiritual agency. The first body chapter examines possession through four case studies that compare treatment of men's and women's bodies in Puritan possessions. The second chapter provides a close analysis of Jorden's text in the context of women's bodies. The third chapter analyzes witchcraft through a case study of the East Anglia trials of 1644-1645. The conclusion reiterates Jorden's role in redefining the relationship between women's bodies and spiritual agency in early modern England.

Possession, Witchcraft, and the Suffocation of the Mother:
Edward Jorden's Effects on Women's Spiritual Agency in Early Modern England by

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For my family, who taught me to love stories

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Story of Mary Glover

In 1602, a young girl named Mary Glover was sitting in her parents' grocers shop, drinking a posset, when an old neighbor woman named Elizabeth Jackson walked in and asked to speak to her mother. When Mary informed her that her mother was not at home, Jackson insisted again on speaking to her, glaring and speaking sharply. As soon as the old woman left the shop, Mary said she felt that her throat constricting to the point of closing up, making her unable to finish the drink she had been sipping. Afraid, she went to a neighbor's house, where her condition worsened to the point of blindness and speechlessness. For the next eighteen days, she had fits of this nature, in which her throat would swell to the point where she could no longer speak, although she could still breathe. She had difficulty swallowing anything and had to be forcibly fed with a spoon in order to retain any nourishment, yet did not seem thinner or weaker than she had before the fits started. Finally, at the end of the eighteen-day period, she could swallow freely, but her stomach began to swell and she had fits of speechlessness, blindness, and further swellings of the throat.[1]

[1] Stephen Bradwell, *Mary Glovers Late Woeful Case, Together with Her Joyfull Deliverance* (London, 1603), reprinted in *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* ed. by Michael MacDonald (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), 1-5. The story of Mary Glover's possession is told in a pamphlet written by Stephen Bradwell, who was one of the physicians who became involved in Mary's case. He argues that Mary was, in fact, possessed and not a victim of hysteria or any other natural disease.

Mary's parents were determined to find the cause of their child's illness and relieve her symptoms. They called in a doctor and a surgeon to diagnose Mary and provide some sort of remedy. The medical men at first supposed that she was hysterical and sought to cure her based on early modern remedies for "the Mother," as hysteria was often termed. However, when these efforts produced no effects, the medical practitioners turned to the next plausible cause: witchcraft.[2] Mary had already had a confrontation with Elizabeth Jackson, in which Mary had called Jackson an importunate beggar and the old woman had become furious. Jackson connected Mary's disparaging remark with her own daughter's need for clothing, and she swore to Mary that "my daughter shall have clothes when thou art dead and rotten."[3] When Mary became ill after meeting Jackson in her parents' store, the old woman told several neighbors that she thanked God for hearing her prayer and stopping the mouth of one of her enemies.[4] In early modern English society, cursing was a powerful weapon, a form of non-physical violence that could wreak actual physical harm on its victim.[5] It was also a recognized sign of malevolent witchcraft.[6]

If Mary's illness was the result of witchcraft, Jackson was the obvious suspect. As her afflictions continued, they became more clearly linked to Jackson, and more and people began to gather to witness these encounters between the supposed witch and her victim.[7]

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[2] Bradwell, 5.

[3] Ibid., 3.

[4] Ibid., 4.

[5] Christina Larner, "Was Witch-Hunting Woman-Hunting?" in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London: Routledge, 2002), 275.

[6] Julian Goodare, "Men and the Witch-Hunt in Scotland," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 158.

[7] Bradwell, 9, 20-23.

Finally, after a number of tests to ensure that Mary was not faking possession, the evidence against Jackson was arraigned and she was brought to trial. She could not accurately say the Lord's Prayer and the creeds, she had witch's marks on her body, and she had a long history of cursing people who then complained of evil befalling them.[8] This evidence, when added to Mary Glover's symptoms of bewitchment and her recent conflicts with Jackson, was enough to convince the judge, Sir Edmund Anderson, that Jackson was guilty. The jury concurred, and Jackson was sentenced to a year in jail and several times of standing at the pillory.[9]

Not long after the trial, Mary Glover was exorcised of her demonic possession by a group of Puritan divines and laymen, who gathered at her house and sought to relieve her symptoms by prayer and fasting.[10] As the devil appeared to leave her body, she concluded her long ordeal by repeating the same words her grandfather, a martyr under Mary Tudor's reign, had uttered at the stake: "The comeforter is come. O Lord thow hast delivered me."[11] To her family and those surrounding her bedside at the moment of her deliverance, these words must have been the final proof that the power of God and the wiles of the Devil had been at war within the fourteen-year-old's body.

Not everyone who witnessed Mary's ongoing symptoms and Elizabeth Jackson's trial was convinced that Mary was demonically possessed, however. Two doctors from London's College of Physicians had appeared at Jackson's trial to testify for the defense. They believed that Mary was actually suffering from hysteria, or suffocation of the Mother,

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[8] Ibid., 24-26.

[9] Michael MacDonald, "Introduction," in *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case*, ed. Michael MacDonald (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), xviii.

[10] Ibid., xix.

[11] Bradwell, 115.

and that Jackson was not guilty of bewitching her young neighbor. One of those physicians was named Edward Jorden, who had performed brilliantly on his examinations for the College of Physicians, became a Fellow of the college two years after receiving his license, and had a practice in London that attracted the attention of King James I.[12] Jorden argued at Jackson's trial that Mary Glover was suffering from hysteria and was sharply critiqued by Judge Anderson. He argued that, since Jorden could not offer a cure for Mary's symptoms and did not want to treat her himself, clearly she was not suffering from a natural disease.[13] Partly in an effort to defend his reputation as a physician, Jorden wrote a pamphlet entitled *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, which outlined his professional opinion of the causes, symptoms, and cures for hysteria, as well as his belief that hysteria and its attendant behaviors were often mistaken for demonic possession, bewitchment, and supernaturally-caused evil.

Thesis

This study argues that Edward Jorden's treatise, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, was a seminal point in the early modern English understanding of women's bodies, witchcraft, and possession. Jorden began to challenge the understanding that women's bodies were uniquely likely to be vessels for supernatural or spiritual power because he regarded women's bodies as purely medical entities that were subject to a host of female-specific illnesses and complaints. His treatise argues against the medieval and, to some extent, early modern concept that women's bodies were especially vulnerable to supernatural or mystical experiences. Women were seen as more likely to be

[12] MacDonald, viii.

[13] Ibid., xvii.

possessed, either by demons or a godly spirit, and they were more likely to be seen as witches as well. This was directly linked to medieval and early modern concepts of women's anatomy and bodily disposition—women's bodies were considered to be more weak, porous, and open than men's, which made them easier targets for possession by good or evil spirits and could increase their power as witches by making it easier for them to spread their malevolent magic. [14]

The idea that women were, by their very nature, more prone to supernatural possession could be beneficial for women's status within their communities. Possessed women could, of course, be vilified for their weak and sinful nature that invited evil spirits, and their femaleness could be conflated with the supernatural evil that possessed them.[15] However, possession could also serve as a means of gaining power and authority for early modern women. In the possession narratives that will be examined in this study, young women who are regarded as possessed deliver exhortations, attract the attention and sympathy of preachers, ministers, and neighbors, and often accuse local women of bewitching them, in many cases achieving their arrest, conviction, and, at times, death. In much the same way, while witchcraft could certainly be detrimental for accused women, having a reputation as a witch could also serve as a means of achieving power and authority within a community. For poor, marginalized women with few economic or social resources, being perceived as a witch could produce fear and respect in one's neighbors and

[14] For further exposition of these beliefs, see Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Sarah Ferber, *Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004); Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); and Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

[15] For a comparison of the treatment of possessed male and female bodies in early modern France, see Sarah Ferber, "Possession and the sexes," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 214-238.

could sometimes lead to charity given in order to prevent supernatural reprisals. It also offered women an opportunity to achieve power without male control—since a witch was generally believed to serve the Devil, who gave her supernatural powers, she operated outside the domain of human male headship.[16]

Edward Jorden's conception of women's bodies, outlined in his treatise, strips away this perception that women could possess spiritual power because of their bodily receptivity to supernatural influences. Instead, he argues, women simply are and have always been subject to a wide range of female-specific illnesses, most of which originate in the reproductive system. The processes of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause mean that women are vulnerable to the vagaries of their uteruses and ovaries, he says. Not only do these processes dictate the stages and conditions of women's lives, Jorden argues—they also create illnesses unique to the reproductive system. Hysteria is one such illness, caused when a woman's uterus begins to wander out of its appropriate place in the body or when the uterus becomes filled with retained menstrual blood or female "seed." Jorden pushes back against the medieval/early modern belief that women's physical frailty and vulnerability went hand in hand with increased spiritual receptiveness and power. He argues that women's bodies are simply weak and prone to illness, both physically and mentally, with no attached corollary of mystical spiritual abilities.

Part of Jorden's motivation for writing this treatise is, as previously noted, a desire to defend his reputation as a physician from those who disagreed with his testimony at Elizabeth Jackson's trial. However, as Michael MacDonald points out in his introduction

[16] See Edward Bever, "Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community," *Journal of Social History* 35, No. 4 (Summer, 2002): 955-988; Robin Briggs, *Witches and neighbours: the social and cultural context of European witchcraft* (Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 257-286; and Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London; New York: Longman, 1995), 13.

to a reprinting of Jorden's treatise, Edward Jorden was also part of the Anglican establishment's efforts to root out possessions and exorcisms, whether they originated with Jesuit priests or Puritan ministers.[17] In the early seventeenth century, the Church of England, along with some of the more ardent Protestant reformers, officially denied that demonic possession was possible in a world where God chose to demonstrate His power through nature rather than dramatic confrontations between His sovereignty and the supernatural powers of the Devil. This came to be known as desacralization of the universe, a process that sought to explain and categorize the mysteries of the universe. Desacralization emphasized God's actions within the natural world, so that the miraculous became easily-debunked fraud and the demonic became either God working through strictly natural means or the Devil tempting Christians with trickery and lies. Truly demonic possessions or truly powerful witches could not exist in a universe where God's sovereignty was absolute and the Devil's power restricted to supernatural light shows intended to dupe the gullible. [18]

Jorden's relegation of women's bodies to the realm of the purely physical and psychological joins in this effort to divorce the spiritual from the tangible, to firmly draw the boundary lines between Heaven and Earth. His treatise deals with three interconnected realms—medicine, religion, and the body, concepts that in the medieval world were fluid, each influencing the other, interwoven through and within the human experience. Jorden's arguments, however, separate the physical/medical realm from that of the religious. His

[17] MacDonald, xix-xx.

[18] For further explanation, see Carlos Eire's *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); and Helen Parish and William G. Naphy, "Introduction," in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, ed. Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 1-24.

importance for this thesis lies in the fact that he does so in the context of women's bodies, imprinting on his readers the difference between spiritual power and physical weakness. This thesis argues that, as a result of Jorden's ideas and the ideological trend they embodied, women were still perceived to be physically and psychologically vulnerable, but that vulnerability now held no double meaning of spiritual influence. Women's bodies were no longer conduits of supernatural power, but were merely subject to the illnesses, both mental and physical, that were part of the very natural curse of being female.

This does not mean, of course, that women no longer had any spiritual agency available to them after Jorden's ideas began to take hold. Protestant women had spiritual roles as wives and mothers, as well as supportive roles within their local parish churches. Female members of dissenting Protestant groups such as the Quakers held spiritual authority and could speak out during Meeting. Women's domestic role as spiritual guide to their children became increasingly important towards the beginning of the modern period. Furthermore, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the cultural perception of woman had shifted from voracious sexual temptress to the chaste "angel in the house."[19] Therefore, Edward Jorden's treatise did not rob early modern women of all spiritual agency. In fact, women learned to use the diagnosis of hysteria and the cultural perception that their bodies were weak and fragile in order to gain agency in unexpected and societally subversive ways. However, the type of agency that possession afforded was different from these other forms of agency in several ways. First, demonic possession afforded women a legitimate form of spiritual authority, recognized by the community as part of an accepted schema of theological realities. Second, it continued the assumption that women were

[19] Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House, Books I and II*, ed. Ian Anstruther (London : Haggerston Press with Boston College, 1998), bk.

particularly likely to experience mystical or supernatural activity, partly because of the nature of their bodies. Finally, possession gave women an opportunity to speak with power and authority that was not their own—to preach, to prophesy, and to accuse. Although later forms of female spiritual authority were powerful in their own right, possession offered women a unique form of authority that allowed their bodies to become vessels for the supernatural and let them speak with the voices of angels, demons, and living saints.

Significance

Edward Jorden has the distinction of being mildly intriguing to historians of one subject and wildly exciting to historians of another. Historians of English witchcraft take note of his treatise, usually as part of the broader movement towards skepticism of witchcraft that begins to emerge in the seventeenth century, but rarely spend much time delving into his ideas. Those who have written broader accounts of English witchcraft tend to give Jorden a few paragraphs to a few pages, at most. For instance, Brian Levack in *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* spends about half a page on Jorden, including him in a list of educated, intellectually sophisticated Europeans who found themselves increasingly skeptical about the role and extent of witchcraft in daily life.[20] Robin Briggs, on the other hand, spends an entire two pages in *Witches and Neighbors* addressing Jorden and argues that Jorden's thesis was relatively unimportant and did not influence many subsequent medical opinions on witchcraft.[21] Cecil L'Estrange Ewen in his classic 1933 work *Witchcraft and Demonianism* gives the Glover case a scant paragraph and mentions

[20] Levack, 244.

[21] Briggs, 185-186.

Jorden and his treatise, although he argues nothing specifically in regard to Jorden's place in the history of witchcraft.[22]

James Sharpe, whose work on English witchcraft is extensive, grants Jorden roughly two pages in *Instruments of Darkness* and simply refers to Jorden's work as a "classic medical tract," without explaining why this is the case.[23] Even historians who specifically address women and women's bodies within the English witchcraft literature are largely silent about Edward Jorden. Barbara Rosen reprints Stephen Bradwell's contemporary response to Jorden's pamphlet in *Witchcraft in England* and locates Jorden within the debate amongst his contemporaries, but does not use him in her larger argument regarding women and witchcraft.[24] Deborah Willis in *Malevolent Nurture* never addresses Jorden by name as she considers the motif of the "cruel mother" within English witchcraft.[25] Even Stuart Clark in his monumental *Thinking with Demons* gives Jorden merely half a paragraph and a footnote, both serving to connect him to Paracelsian ideas within the European medical community.[26] Michael MacDonald's fifty-page introduction to the reprinting of Jorden's treatise and several of the other treatises that resulted from the Mary Glover case is by far the longest and most thorough study of Edward Jorden's treatise, the trial that sparked it, and the political and religious climate in which it was written.

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[22] Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demoniansim* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1933), 133, 196-199.

[23] James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), 191.

[24] Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 313-315.

[25] Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 92.

[26] Clark, 235-236.

There are several reasons for this neglect. First, Jorden's treatise was not very popular in his own period. It was read by some of the notables of the day, but was hardly an earth-shattering document that dramatically changed early modern perceptions of women's involvement in witchcraft and possession. However, it must be kept in mind that even though the treatise was not widely read by the general public, it did represent a version of Jorden's testimony at Elizabeth Jackson's trial. Therefore, the treatise can be considered in some ways as a written version of the testimony that was heard in public by a large crowd of early modern Englishmen and –women. Second, as MacDonald so aptly notices in his introductory essay, Jorden does not stand alone in critiquing witchcraft accusations on theological and medical grounds. Johannes Weyer in the Netherlands had advocated some of the same ideas over half a century earlier in his 1563 treatise *De praestigiis daemonum*.[27] Samuel Harsnett, a prominent Anglican divine who served as the Bishop of Chichester and of Norwich, had written an account of his efforts to reveal fraudulent possessions in 1599 and published a second treatise on the same subject in 1603, arguing that fraudulent exorcisms were not only fakery, but also popery—a clear threat to the established Church.[28] Other, similar examples abound, including Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and Levinus Lemnius's *The secret miracles of nature*.[29] In essence, witchcraft historians have rightly noticed that Jorden's contribution to this ongoing critique of widespread acceptance of witchcraft was useful, but was by no means a

[27] Johannes Weyer, *On Witchcraft: An Abridged Translation of Johann Weyer's* De Praestigiis Daemonum, ed. Benjamin G. Kohl and H.C. Erik Midelfort, trans. John Shea (Asheville, North Carolina: Pegasus Press, 1998), bk.

[28] Samuel Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…* (London, 1603), and *A discouery of the fraudulent practises of Iohn Darrel Bacheler of Artes…* (London, 1599).

[29] Levinus Lemnius, *The secret miracles of nature*, trans. (London, 1658); Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, Rhonda L. Blair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989-2000).

radical departure from what had already been argued and what was currently being debated.

Historians of hysteria, however, tend to find in Jorden a remarkable figure presaging the rationalism of the Enlightenment, a man pushing back against the ignorance and superstition of his time with the tools of medical knowledge. Some historians of medicine have critiqued this trend in more recent literature, pointing out that Jorden is drawing on ancient sources and is part of a long-held tradition regarding the nature and function of women's bodies. They have also noted that Jorden's attack on witchcraft beliefs is mild at best. He does not completely disavow the possibility of witchcraft, possession, or supernatural interference in human events—he simply argues that supernatural interactions are rare and should not be assumed whenever an unusual event occurs.

Nevertheless, historians who work with hysteria and madness see in Jorden a hugely important figure in the early modern English understanding of mental and neurological illnesses. Andrew Scull in his brief but thorough *Hysteria: The Biography* opens his work with the story of the Mary Glover case and sees Jorden as the true originator of the modern world's understanding of hysteria.[30] G.S. Rousseau in his essay "A Strange Pathology" in *Hysteria Beyond Freud* sees Jorden as part of a much broader tradition that includes Johannes Weyer and Robert Burton, but considers Jorden to be important because of his return to a Galenic theory of hysteria as a solely uterine disorder.[31] Ilza Veith in *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* goes so far as to characterize Jorden as a

[30] Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15-21.

[31] G.S. Rousseau, " 'A Strange Pathology': Hysteria in the Early Modern World, 1500-1800," in *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 116-122.

hero in the history of hysteria, one who rescued the disease from its sinful connotations and re-characterized it as an illness to be dealt with as any other medical condition.[32] However, even in the numerous pages historians of hysteria spend on Edward Jorden, they rarely mention his views on witchcraft or the spiritual significance of the results his ideas had on English perceptions of women's bodies.

The significance of this study serves to tie together the previous scholarship on Edward Jorden in the fields of witchcraft, possession, and hysteria in order to analyze the ramifications of Jorden's treatise for women's spirituality in early modern England. Although some historians of hysteria and madness have dealt with the psychological and medical implications of Jorden's treatise for women, there has been little work done on the religious implications of his ideas. This study argues that Jorden's treatise diminished the spiritual authority and agency women gained through possession and witchcraft, and that it instead relegated women to the status of purely physical entities with no remarkable spiritual proclivities. By examining the effects of Jorden's treatise on women's spiritual authority and linking that spiritual authority to cases of possession and witchcraft, this study offers a new lens through which to assess the content and value of Jorden's work and adds to the existing scholarship on Jorden by providing yet another perspective on his overall importance to the studies of witchcraft, possession, and hysteria.

Chapter Divisions

The first chapter of this thesis uses case studies from accounts of possession that occurred during roughly the same time period as Mary Glover's in order to compare how male and female bodies were treated when they were considered to be possessed. It argues

[32] Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 120-128.

that, although more women than men were possessed in early modern England, Puritan cases of possession were fairly gender-neutral when they dealt with the bodies of the possessed. Possessed men and women exhibited the same sorts of behaviors, which included full-body contortions, strange voices and accents, producing animal-like noises, attempts at self-injury, and audible conversations between the possessed person and the demons within them. More importantly, both possessed men and women became figures of local and sometimes regional importance as they fought against their demons, testified to the strength of their own faith in God to rescue them from the Devil, and offered up praise for their ultimate deliverance, all in front of an audience of family, friends, and neighbors. As possessed entities, men's and women's bodies were considered in the same theological ways—as battlegrounds on which the eternal battle of good and evil was being waged. The first chapter uses these case studies in light of Mary Glover's case to demonstrate that demonic possession offered women opportunities to testify publicly about their faith and brought them heightened spiritual prominence in their communities, thus giving women spiritual power and authority that was not available to them through other, more orthodox avenues.

The second chapter offers a close reading and analysis of Edward Jorden's treatise *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* and argues that Jorden saw women's bodies as weak and prone to illness in ways that men's bodies were not. Jorden considers women's bodies as part of the natural world only, not as potential links between the supernatural and the natural. As a physician, he builds upon ideas about the female body that reach back to the ancient Greeks, including Galen and Hippocrates. However, this chapter argues that Jorden was also influenced by three main areas of early modern medicine: humoral theory, Paracelsianism, and medicalization. These influences

come out in his treatise, in which he argues that hysteria should be re-located in the uterus and that the uterine system is the ruling factor of the female body. Moreover, he maintains that the uterus is particularly prone to becoming corrupted by its own humors and can either become infected, which produces negative effects on the rest of the female body, or can begin to wander about the body, producing similarly negative effects. This diagnosis leads to his treatments for hysteria and other uterine disorders, which include traditional remedies such as fumigants, changing body position, and—a classic prescription for nearly all female complaints—regular intercourse with a man. This chapter seeks to prove that Jorden sees women's bodies as physically weak and vulnerable to their reproductive systems and that he views women as physically dependent on men to regulate their bodily cycles.

The last chapter of this thesis turns from possession and hysteria to witchcraft, as it examines the treatment of men's and women's bodies in the East Anglia witchcraft trials of 1644-1645. Although these trials occurred several decades after Jorden published his treatise, they are important for this study in two ways: first, they demonstrate the ways in which early modern Englishmen and –women thought about witchcraft and women's bodies, and second, they offer a perspective into how little had changed in forty-two years. Although there are differences between Elizabeth Jackson's trial in 1602 and the East Anglia trials in 1644-1645, many of the same tenets about women's bodies and witchcraft hold true. This chapter argues that women's bodies were seen as integral to their witchcraft and were regarded as the source of their malevolent power, while men's bodies were relatively insignificant to their supposed witchcraft. Furthermore, it argues that this division in perceptions of the body in witchcraft reflected wider cultural assumptions about the roles and functions of men and women. Men's witchcraft was usually linked to their work or

position within the community, while women's witchcraft was linked to their sexuality and bodily vulnerability to the wiles of the Devil. This was occasioned, at least in part, by the presumption that women were defined by their bodies and their sexuality, while men were not. However, despite the negative consequences that could often result from an accusation of witchcraft, witches still held power and authority within their communities, even if their source of power was vilified as demonic in origin. Even in witchcraft, women's bodies could become sources of communally recognized notoriety and spiritual power.

The conclusion of the thesis will tie together the three body chapters and will synthesize their content in order to express the ways in which Edward Jorden's treatise was part of the early modern shift from considering women's bodies as sources of spiritual power to regarding them as simply physically weak and inherently limited by their reproductive systems. Main arguments will be re-stated and the conclusion of the research explored in the thesis will be explicated in detail. The conclusion will also briefly consider the long-term effects of the medicalization of women's bodies, in which Jorden's treatise plays an important part, and will look at the effects of diagnoses of hysteria and reproductive disorders on women's lives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Possession

Scholarship on possession and gender in early modern Europe offers a good deal of breadth on broader cultural trends as well as close analysis of specific texts, creating a body of work that helps explain the preponderance of women among the possessed, the role of culture and audience participation in shaping acceptable gendered possessions, and the opportunities for spiritual and temporal authority that possession offered women in the early modern world. Early studies of possession, such as T.K. Oesterreich's *Possession: Demoniacal and Other*, offer a broad overview in which gender plays a small part. Oesterreich categorizes possession according to forms of civilization—namely, higher and primitive civilizations. He specifies that the roots of Christian beliefs in demons and demon possession could be found in Jewish beliefs formed during the diaspora created by multiple captivities and argues that it was at this point that Judaism, thrust out of its insular purity and forced into contact with pagan beliefs in demon possession, began to form its own conceptions of the demonic world.[1]

Demonologist Edward Langton builds on this idea nearly two decades after Oesterreich's massive study, focusing on the influences of Babylonian and Assyrian beliefs about the demonic when assessing the origins of Jewish demonological systems. However, Langton understands Jewish demonology as far more complex and related to various other

[1] T.K. Oesterreich, *Possession: Demoniacal and Other* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930), 168-172.

cultures besides those directly experienced in captivity. He looks to Persian and Greek sources when assessing the rich tradition of demonological lore that came out of Jewish apocryphal and apocalyptic literature, culminating in the theology of demon possession described in the New Testament.[2] However, Langton's study does not focus on gender as a factor in possessions, whether Jewish or of other cultures. Even regionally focused studies often relegate gender to the background of analysis of possession and the supernatural. Keith Thomas, arguing that the changing religious structures of early modern England led to the rationalized structures of the Enlightenment, briefly looks at possession as yet another component of the shift in English views of the supernatural during the Reformation, but he does not see gender as a driving factor in these possession cases.[3] These earlier studies emphasize examination of the origins and nature of demonic possession in the Western world, but their broad focuses do not lend themselves to detailed analysis of gender as a component of possession or as a part of cultural perceptions of possession.

Scholarship on the role of the supernatural in early modern Europe can offer a much more complex analysis of the roles of power and marginalization in demonic possession. Stuart Clark's study of witchcraft and demonic activity in early modern Europe examines possession in terms of power, marginalization, and religious symbolism. He argues that, particularly for English Protestants, possession symbolized the moral decline of the world and the tribulations of the age and offered a way of reading the cosmic battle of good vs. evil into temporal events and situations. However, possession also offered the marginalized—especially women and children—an opportunity to subtly exercise power in

[2] Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development* (London: The Epworth Press, 1949), bk..

[3] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 477-492.

by subverting cultural expectations.[4] D.P. Walker's study of possession and exorcism in early modern France and England echoes these themes, as he argues that possession became a shortcut to fame and sanctity[5] and that possession could make its victim a powerful instrument in his or her community.[6] Alexandra Walsham's article "Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England" primarily examines the sectarian conflicts between Puritans and Catholic priests as each sought to out-exorcize the other, but she too notes that possession had the dangerous capacity to empower the laity and invert social, age, and gender hierarchies.[7] Nicholas P. Spanos and Jack Gottlieb in their study of the relationship between possession, mesmerism and hysteria emphasize that, although possessed victims frequently took submissive roles in relation to their exorcists,[8] possession could also serve as a way for marginalized members of society to gain distinct social advantages, sometimes by employing traditionally antisocial or socially disruptive behaviors.[9]

This emphasis on the potential advantages of possession for the socially marginalized or powerless is also examined in terms of gender in studies that argue that women in particular could benefit from becoming possession victims. These studies often emphasize the importance of the body, especially the female body, in possession, pointing

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[4] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 393-421.

[5] D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 78.

[6] Ibid., 16.

[7] Alexandra Walsham, "Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England," *The Historical Journal* 46, No. 4 (Dec., 2003): 804.

[8] Nicholas P. Spanos and Jack Gottlieb, "Demonic Possession, Mesmerism, and Hysteria: A Social Psychological Perspective on Their Historical Interrelations," in *Possession and Exorcism*, ed. Brian Levack (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 273.

[9] Ibid., 270-271.

out the deeply embodied nature of gender in the early modern world and the effects of this belief on cultural understandings of possession. For instance, Nancy Caciola, in her analysis of possession in medieval England, argues that possessed women presented a theological challenge to medieval Christianity precisely because of the spiritual authority that possession conferred upon them. Women were seen as particularly vulnerable to possession, whether by divine or demonic spirits, because of their fickle and unstable moral natures and their weaker physical makeup. Possession, however, allowed medieval women to subvert this perception of weakness and, at times, use it to create areas of spiritual authority in their communities.[10]

Sarah Ferber, writing on possession and exorcism in early modern France, comes to many of the same conclusions, although her work expands from the study of female bodies in possession to comparison of possessed male and female bodies. Ferber argues that possession could both undermine and reinforce gender stereotypes and that the possessed were more or less on the same supernatural footing as the divinely inspired, since both groups had knowledge not of this world and could therefore satisfy the very natural curiosity of their exorcists. Although male victims of possession seemed to base their possession narratives on those of famous female demoniacs, both male and female demoniacs were treated with varied levels of respect by their exorcists, with the more articulate of the possessed having at least some agency and personal investment in their activities. Ferber emphasizes that female victims of possession could achieve notoriety not only within their local communities, but throughout large portions of France, and that even less famous female demoniacs could, through articulate and carefully crafted possession

[10] Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), bk.

narratives, achieve a measure of authority in their communities and in their relationships with their exorcists.[11]

Although Caciola and Ferber have written two of the most incisive and detailed analyses of the role of gender in early modern possessions, other historians of witchcraft and the supernatural in the early modern world have also noticed the link between gender and possession. Robin Briggs, for instance, notes in *Witches and Neighbors* that possessed women often used their situation to their advantage and tried to make their lives better, which fits in neatly with his larger argument that the rise in witchcraft hunts involved practical considerations of economic well-being and neighborliness as well as more esoteric arguments of theology and politics.[12] James Sharpe, studying witchcraft in early modern England, argues that both possessed young women and women accused as witches were hardly passive participants, but were rather historical actors with some agency of their own.[13] Even scholars writing about possession in areas other than early modern England note the pattern of women's agency resulting from possession across various cultures and time periods. Martin Ebon argues this same point when examining beliefs in demons known as *zar* in Ethiopia and Somalia. In these cases, which occur in societies that tend to be highly restrictive for women, the demons inhabit solely women and can only be pacified with gifts of expensive clothing, dainty foods, and other luxuries.[14] Mary Keller, in

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[11] Sarah Ferber, "Possession and the Sexes," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 214-238.

[12] Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural context of European Witchcraft* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 236.

[13] Jim Sharpe, "Women, Witchcraft, and the Legal Process," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London: Routledge, 2002), 296-300.

[14] Martin Ebon, *The Devil's Bride – Exorcism: Past and Present* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 73.

examining contemporary Malaysian women's possessions, argues that the negative, passive concepts associated with receptivity and femaleness must be re-imagined in the context of possession, for it is precisely through receptiveness—what she terms "instrumental agency"—that true religious power is channeled through women.[15] Finally, Louise Child argues that spirit possession can be considered to be akin to seduction, in that through its apparent passivity and receptivity it subverts existing social and psychological structures and becomes a form of power in and of itself.[16]

Witchcraft

Within historical accounts of witchcraft in early modern Europe, scholarship on the importance of gender and the role of the gendered body can be considered through the useful metaphor of a pendulum that started at one extreme, swung to the other extreme, and has more recently begun to settle near the middle. Despite the fact that women composed the vast majority of those accused, convicted, and executed as witches in early modern England,[17] earlier accounts of early modern English witchcraft tended to downplay or simple not address the importance of gender within the witch hunts. For instance, in Cecil L'Estrange Ewen's groundbreaking work *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, the author discusses various aspects of witchcraft, examines Continental influences, and speculates as to some possible causes for the witch-hunts, but only mentions that "far more women than

[15] Mary Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 9.

[16] Louise Child, "Spirit Possession, Seduction, and Collective Consciousness," in *Spirit Possession and Trance: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Bettina E. Schmidt and Lucy Huskinson (London: Continuum, 2010), 54, 66.

[17] Brian Levack notes that "the percentage of female witches exceeded 75 percent in most regions of Europe, and in a few localities…it was more than 90 per cent." Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1987), 133.

men aided the Devil in his perfidies" and attributes this to early modern beliefs about the weak nature of women.[18] He spends barely three pages discussing the fact that the great majority of those accused in the English witch-hunts were female and takes the statement at face value, with very little exploration as to the reasons for the gender bias.[19]

Alan MacFarlane, writing nearly half a century later, points out that witches in England were usually women, but argues that this fact was not rooted in hostile relations between the sexes and contained no sexualized element.[20] Rather, he claims, the predominance of women in English accusations of witchcraft was rooted in early modern beliefs about women's natures, which were considered "both weak and vicious."[21] Similarly, George L. Kittredge's study *Witchcraft in Old and New England* contains much useful information about specific categories of witchcraft, but makes no effort to explain the preponderance of women among the accused.[22] Wallace Notestein's study of English witchcraft includes only one paragraph dealing directly with the predominance of women among the accused.[23] Earlier studies of witchcraft accepted the fact that English witchcraft was gendered—they simply saw little need to analyze the reasons for this phenomenon.

The feminist historians of the 1970s and 1980s changed this emphasis dramatically. Their studies argued that women were targeted *as women* and systematically accused, tortured, and killed based on their sex rather than on any crimes they were perceived to

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[18] Cecil L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London: Heath Cranton, 1933), 67.

[19] Ibid., 67-69.

[20] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (New York; Evanston: Harper and Row, 1970), 160-162.

[21] Ibid., 161.

[22] George Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1956), bk.

[23] Wallace Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England From 1558 to 1718* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1911), 114.

have committed. For instance, in Deirdre English and Barbara Ehrenreich's study *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, the authors concluded that early modern witch-hunts were spurred on by medical men eager to build their own practices who pushed aside the traditional roles of healing woman and midwife that had long been held by women. The resulting misogyny of the trials, they explained, was the demonization of these roles in order to make it easier for male hegemony to take over all areas of women's lives.[24] Mary Daly argued in what is largely considered her first feminist manifesto, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, that the European witch hunts were "a specifically Western and christian manifestation of the andocratic State of Atrocity,"[25] claiming that women were targeted because they were considered to be sexually impure and therefore threatened the purity and integrity of Christian states.[26] For Daly, women (and only women) suffered from the witch hunts because they were perceived to be socially deviant, both as a result of their behavior and the fact that they were female.[27]

Unfortunately, the evidence from early modern witch trials and other literature surrounding witchcraft simply did not uphold such broad claims. Women were certainly predominant among the accused, and their involvement in witchcraft was often linked to the perception that women were morally weaker and more susceptible to sin than men. However, the role of gender in early modern witchcraft was more complex than a patriarchal war against women. And so the pendulum has swung back towards the middle, with new emphases on male witchcraft and its implications for early modern masculinity,

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[24] Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1973), bk.

[25] Mary Daly, *Gyn/ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 179.

[26] Ibid., 180-183.

[27] Ibid., 185-186.

deeper analyses of the nature of early modern assumptions about women's moral fiber as related to witchcraft, and clearer exposition of the differences between women as female and women as witches.

Christina Larner introduced the idea that the European witch hunts were gendered but not intentionally misogynistic with her famous phrase "the crime of witchcraft, while sex-related, was not sex-specific."[28] Stuart Clark built on this idea in his monumental study *Thinking with Demons*, in which he reverses the logical trend that asks why women were associated with witchcraft and queries instead why early modern Europeans associated witchcraft with women. He argues along with Larner that, although popular conceptions of witchcraft might tend to focus overwhelmingly on women, this was a result less of innate antipathy towards women and more of a thoroughly grounded tendency to see women as easily persuaded and malleable—in this case, by the wiles and powers of the Devil himself.[29]

Brian Levack's study of witchcraft in early modern Europe argues along the same lines, identifying women as the bulk of the accused but examining male witchcraft as well. He also points out that women were perceived as witches partly because they were seen as morally weak and sexually aggressive.[30] Robin Briggs introduces a new theory for the greater number of female accused by arguing that witchcraft fears partially stemmed from the changing economic considerations of the early modern world, which drastically increased the number of landless poor and created a world in which people could no longer

[28] Christina Larner, "Was Witch-Hunting Woman-Hunting?", in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 273-275.

[29] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 106-133.

[30] Levack, 133-141.

count on knowing and being able to trust their neighbors. Women, who suffered disproportionately from these harsher economic conditions, were more likely to be forced to beg, and Briggs argues that those who refused charity to these women converted their feelings of guilt into fears that the beggars could magically curse them for their lack of generosity. He also points out that women's role in the household lent itself to quarrels and accusations among women, which negates Daly's assumption that witchcraft accusations were primarily the tool of powerful men to be used against deviant women.[31]

Despite the lack of evidence that witchcraft accusations were simply the product of vituperative woman-hunting, there are still powerful arguments about the gendered nature of witchcraft in terms of patriarchy, cultural constructs, and men's and women's societal roles. Marianne Hester's article "Patriarchal reconstruction and witch hunting" sees patriarchy as the inescapable structure in which witchcraft was understood and usually gendered female. Male-dominated discourse and the structures of patriarchy contributed to constructions of femaleness that labeled women as "both different and inferior to men" on the basis of their sexuality.[32] Julian Goodare sees an unmistakable link between witchcraft and concepts of the feminine in early modern Scotland, arguing that witch-hunting was an attempt to control and deal with women's sexuality.[33] Deborah Willis argues that witchcraft was related to women's roles as mothers and that early modern beliefs and fears

[31] Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 224-275; Briggs, " 'Many reasons why'," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 62.

[32] Marianne Hester, "Patriarchal reconstruction and witch hunting," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 193.

[33] Julian Goodare, "Women and the Witch-Hunt in Scotland," *Social History* 23 (Oct., 1998): 307.

about witches revolved around a perversion of maternal images and ideology.[34] Michael D. Bailey argues that witchcraft, as opposed to the male-dominated field of necromancy, was considered a female realm because it involved the complete submission of the witch to her overlord, the Devil.[35] Margaret Denike argues that women were, in fact, targeted on the basis of their sexuality and that, in order for large numbers of women to be accused as witches, women's nature had to be characterized as evil.[36]

However, witchcraft could also have its advantages. Hester argues that witchcraft was inherently gendered towards women, particularly in its emphasis on indirect and seemingly undetectable forms of violence and revenge. While men might settle a dispute with a neighbor with a brawl or noisy public altercation, women were expected to follow social mores that constrained their violent behavior and bridled their rage. Witchcraft therefore became a method of vengeance almost perfectly suited to women's uses.[37] Edward Bever, in his examination of female aggression and its link to witchcraft, notes a similar sort of power used by women to accomplish their own ends, not the Devil's, observing that "The village witch, then, appears to have been a different role than the village scold. Both roles, however, could bestow real power."[38] Both scholars see a connection between the uncertainties of the early modern world, in which gender relations were changing along with everything else and women's power seemed to be steadily

[34] Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), bk.

[35] Michael D. Bailey, "The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstition in Early European Witchcraft Literature," *The American Historical Review* 111, No. 2 (April 2006): 127-128.

[36] Margaret Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate," *Hypatia* 18, No. 1, (Winter, 2003): 13.

[37] Hester, 297.

[38] Edward Bever, "Witchcraft, Female Aggression, and Power in the Early Modern Community," *Journal of Social History* 35, No. 4 (Summer, 2002), 959.

decreasing, and women's apparent decisions to gain authority and respect via witchcraft. Witchcraft could become a means for women to gain power within their communities and overcome some of the gendered restrictions placed upon them by a patriarchal society.

In the midst of this discourse of women, conceptions of the female, and women's sexuality in English witchcraft, the small percentage of male victims have gone relatively unnoticed. This gap in the literature has only recently begun to be addressed, notably in three studies: Lara Apps and Andrew Gow's *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*, Elizabeth Kent's article "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England," and Alison Rowlands' collection *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*.[39] All three emphasize the importance of the small percentage of male victims in English witchcraft, not simply because they are male, but because they provide an important lens through which to examine gender in the English witch hunts.

Women's Bodies

Within the arguments surrounding why women were accused as witches, a sub-argument has developed regarding the place of women's bodies in witchcraft and in early modern life. This vein of thought is related as well to women's roles in patriarchal society, women's responsibilities as neighbors and as members of village and town life, and women's place in the philosophical and intellectual considerations of the early modern world. However, theories of the female body in studies of witchcraft tend to be even more abstractly theoretical, if that were possible, than the theories as to why women were

[39] Lara Apps and Andrews Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); E.J. Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593-1680," *History Workshop Journal* 60 (2005): 69-92; Alison Rowlands, ed., *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

accused of witchcraft in the first place. Such studies focus heavily on the language of the body and the psychological implications of the body rather than the actual physical experiences of early modern men and women.

For instance, Deborah Willis's study of the witch as the quintessential "bad mother" in *Malevolent Nurture* emphasizes the maternal body as a symbol of all that was threatening and unnatural about the perceptions of female witches. She identifies her analysis early on as ideological and discursive, which is helpful when analyzing her argument that women who were accused as witches were victims of the anxieties surrounding changing views of the maternal role during the early modern period. Motherhood's new role as a "special vocation," fears of maternal power, and the displacement of fears onto older and socially marginalized women all contributed to the rise of women accused of witchcraft, she argues. However, as she accurately points out, her discussions of women's bodies in terms of motherhood are highly psychoanalytical. Even when discussing overtly physical activities, such as breastfeeding, Willis reduces them to a purely symbolic analysis. Breastfeeding is symbolic of oepidal fantasies of desired mothers and hostile fathers, yet the mother's body becomes symbolic of her open sexual relationship with the father, who then deprives the child of his deep and enduring bond with his mother, fostering rage against the father which is thwarted and then turned against the mother.[40] Such circular language does little to identify what, precisely, is occurring in these texts, if breastfeeding is actually referenced at all.

Other treatments of the female body in witchcraft are equally difficult to decipher. Diane Purkiss, for example, refers to the witch's body as "formless or boundless," a leaky, porous entity that allowed harmful magic to spread throughout her community. She bases

[40] Willis, 93.

her analysis primarily on her reading of Aristotelian humoral medicine, and then applies this analysis to various texts in order to point out the formless nature of witch's ideological "bodies." However, witches' bodies can apparently be hard and impenetrable as well, since she references a tale of a witch who cannot be shot with a carbine despite the best efforts of the soldiers trying to kill her. Purkiss interprets this text, along with others, to assume that the ideological "body" of the witch must be simultaneously porous and impassable, and therefore threatening on two separate levels. The porous qualities of the witch's "body" threaten to engulf society with disorder, while the impenetrable, hard qualities threaten to overcome feminine weakness and assert inappropriate levels of power.[41]

Even Dyan Elliott's original and insightful study of the relationship of the body to medieval clerical misogyny, which she interprets as the underpinnings of early modern witch-hunts, focuses on the body more as metaphor or symbol than as an actual corporeal entity. She does use evidence of physical sexual encounters, but many of the texts she examines look at the body as a desired fantasy, as in priests' wet dreams, rather than as an actuality. This is not a fault in Elliott's work, for her goal is to focus on ideas of the female body as they were addressed by medieval clerics. However, her thesis is built on ideas of the female body based on accounts of the activities of male bodies. She contributes as well to the process of seeing the body as symbol rather than actuality by bringing to prominence the idea that the figure of the witch is based somewhat on the priests' wives who were erased from the narrative of the medieval church and replaced by the sinless (and sexless)

[41] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 119-144.

Virgin. While this is certainly a plausible argument, it does little to explain whether or not witchcraft and demonianism was in any way related to actual women's physical bodies.[42]

Ruth Mazo Karras also uses the body as a means of discourse about the meaning of gender and sexuality in medieval and early modern Europe. While she deals less overtly with witchcraft and demonianism than Elliott, Karras nevertheless briefly addresses witchcraft as part of the perceived threat of women's sexuality. She argues, as have many other historians of gender and witchcraft, that women's sexuality was perceived as particularly threatening by churchmen writing about witchcraft and diabolism because of clerics' vested interest in at least nominally preserving their chastity. She also points out that writings connecting female sexuality to witchcraft and demonic activity demonstrate a deep fear of women's power, especially their sexual power. She interprets this in the context of the witch-hunts as a brick in the wall of misogyny that made hunting witches possible. While female sexuality was not the only reason men targeted women as witches, she argues, it formed part of a preconception of female nature that made it much easier for society to understand women as especially prone to witchcraft.[43]

Perhaps one of the few historians who has refused to see the female body primarily as a discursive trope is Lyndal Roper, whose work on witchcraft in early modern Germany is rife with references to women whose actual bodily functions, whether maternal, sexual, or menopausal, played a crucial role in either their victimization or their accusatory statements of witchcraft. For instance, in her study of lying-in maids accused of witchcraft in Augsburg, Roper references the physical processes of giving birth, lying in,

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[42] Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), bk.

[43] Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 116-118.

breastfeeding, and recovery that accompanied the act of having a child. Roper associates the prevalence of accused women partly to ideological concepts of the body that depend on psychoanalytical tools, but she also returns again and again to the physical realities of these women, who were intimately familiar with their mistresses' food, bodily fluids, and children's bodies. This dogged determination to ground oedipal fantasies in bodily experience is what gives Roper's work its clarity and strength of argument. She is not extrapolating psychological motivations from texts in which no clear evidence for such things exist, nor is she examining women's bodies and witchcraft merely from a discursive angle. Rather, she acknowledges that, for members of the early modern world, sexuality and gender were part of the same seamless reality. As she asks in her introduction to *Oedipus and the Devil*, "How indeed can there be a history of sex which is purely about language and which omits bodies?"[44]

This study, therefore, seeks to answer Roper's question in the negative. There can be no history of sexuality, not even sexuality and witchcraft, that does not address bodies *as bodies*. Even in the realm of a fairly obscure medical text, women's bodies are still present as real entities suffering from actual afflictions. In fact, even Edward Jorden's pamphlet is remarkable in its frank acknowledgement that women are not merely suffering from melancholy or the derangement that was often assumed to accompany menopause. Instead, he attributes the misery women felt to physical symptoms that are the result of both bodily and mental distress. Unlike the priests, exorcists, and witch hunters who wrote and spoke of the female body as symbolically dangerous or metaphorically weakened by women's sinful natures, Jorden addresses the female body as the locus of physical affliction—not supernatural powers. This emphasis on the body as physical entity as well as discursive

[44] Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 17.

trope grounds this study in the realities that early modern men and women experienced as well as the theoretical underpinnings of early modern beliefs about women, possession, and witchcraft.

Early Modern Texts

This study uses a number of early modern texts in order examine women's bodies in the contexts of possession, witchcraft, and medicine. Other scholars have also studied these texts in various ways, and it is imperative to note their observations and analyses in order to incorporate them into the understanding of women's bodies and spiritual authority that this study involves. However, not every study of the early modern texts used here is relevant to the topic of this study, and therefore only those studies that relate to the subjects of the role of gender in possession and witchcraft will be included.

The four primary possession narratives used in this study to compare men's and women's bodies in early modern English Protestantism are *The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapen hill…* (London, 1597), *A booke declaringe the fearfull vexasion, of one Alexander Nyndge, beynge moste horriblye tormented wyth an euyll spirit…* (London, 1573), *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…* (London, 1603), all available through Early English Books Online. The fourth case used is taken from Stephen Bradwell's *Mary Glovers Late Woeful Case, Together with Her Joyfull Deliverance* (London, 1603), reprinted in *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* and edited by Michael MacDonald.

Some of these four pamphlets are better known than others—for instance, MacDonald points out that Bradwell's pamphlet is only available in its original form as a

bound quarto in the British Library.[45] However, there has been at least some scholarship on all four. Kathleen Sands has examined the cases of Thomas Darling, Alexander Nyndge, and Mary Glover, although her work focuses more on summarizing cases than on analysis and does not emphasize the thematic elements of the cases.[46] Phillip C. Almond examines all four cases briefly in his work *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and their Cultural Contexts*. Almond's analyses, however, mostly consist of short introductions to his edited versions of the original pamphlets of the possession cases. Although this context is helpful, it does not offer very deep or detailed insights into the gendered aspects of each case.[47]

Nathan Johnstone's *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* is an excellent examination of the role of demonolatry in English religious practice, literature, politics, and the English Civil War. However, while it offers very valuable context for analysis of the four cases examined in this study, it does not have any detailed analysis of its own to shed light on the gendered dynamics of possession specific to these cases.[48] Hilaire Kallendorf's study of subjectivity in early modern English and Spanish exorcism texts is similar in nature. While it offers excellent background in English literary interpretations of exorcism, the only possession cases it mentions in detail are the possessions and subsequent exorcisms performed at Denham by Father William Weston

[45] MacDonald, "A Note on the Transcription," iii.

[46] Kathleen R. Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004), 41-56, 127-144, 175-190.

[47] Phillip C. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 43-57, 150-191, 287-330, 358-390.

[48] Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), bk.

from 1585-1586.[49] In fact, one of the best studies on early modern English possession cases is D.P. Walker's *Unclean Spirits*, which analyzes cases in early modern France and England with a critical eye towards the transmission of possession rituals and experiences across the Channel. Despite its relative brevity, Walker's study examines Thomas Darling's case specifically and also uses all the English possession cases in his study to trace the patterns of Puritan beliefs about possession, exorcism, and the role of the supernatural in religious life.[50]

Some individual possession cases have been analyzed specifically and at length in scholarship. Andrew Cambers examines the role of literacy and the importance of the Bible in the case of Alexander Nyndge, arguing that English Puritans saw the Bible as a sacred object with special powers and that literacy, witchcraft, and possession were all intimately linked, since both of the latter presumed some learning or literacy.[51] Mary Glover's case has been analyzed in MacDonald's introduction and is mentioned briefly in several studies on witchcraft, including Willis's *Malevolent Nurture*, Briggs's *Witches and Neighbours*, and James Sharpe's article "Women, Witchcraft, and the Legal Process" in *The Witchcraft Reader*.[52] Thomas Darling is mentioned in *Witches and Neighbours* as well, albeit briefly.[53] Fid and Sara Williams usually appear in studies that cover Catholic possessions and exorcisms, but they have little scholarship dedicated to their specific cases within the broader context of the Weston exorcisms. In short, there is very little written

[49] Hilaire Kallendorf, *Exorcism and Its Texts: Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature of England and Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 126-156.

[50] Walker, 43-77.

[51] Andrew Cambers, "Demonic Possession, Literacy, and 'Superstition' in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 202 (February 2009): 3-35.

[52] Willis, 92-93; Briggs, 52; Sharpe, 296.

[53] Briggs, 60.

about several of these possession cases, and there is certainly no in-depth comparison of the ways in which male and female bodies are treated in these four cases. This study takes advantage of this lack of close comparative analysis for these four cases to establish a possible gendered norm for possession in the context of the wider understanding of early modern English beliefs about demonism and the supernatural.

The other early modern texts used in this study are two pamphlets from the East Anglia witchcraft trials of 1644-1645, in which a local gentleman named Matthew Hopkins and his assistant, John Stearne, began to examine suspected witches in Hopkins's home county of Essex. As more and more people were accused, the panic spread from Essex to Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire, extending as far as the Isle of Ely.[54] Several pamphlets were produced from the details of the witch hunt and the trial records accompanying it. Two in particular are used for this study: *A true and exact relation of the severall informations, examinations, and confessions of the late witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex…* (London, 1645) and *A true relation of the araignment of eighteene vvitches. that were tried, convicted, and condemned, at a sessions holden at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke...* (London, 1645). Both of these works are also available through Early English Books Online.

A good deal of the scholarship dealing with the East Anglia trials centers around whether or not these trials contain Continental elements of witchcraft and therefore are not indicative of "genuine" English *maleficae*, with its traditional lack of witches' Sabbats, orgies, and cannibalistic feasts. Barbara Rosen, for instance, argues that the Devil as a lover and a witch's master is an element of the East Anglia trials that was produced by

[54] Jim Sharpe, "The devil in East Anglia," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 237-240.

physically abusing suspects and that is not part of any other English witchcraft trial.[55] Robin Briggs, however, argues that, despite the unusually harsh treatment of suspects, Hopkins and Stearne were still primarily interested in traditional English *maleficium* and did not push suspects to reveal details of witches' Sabbats. He says that even the details of pacts with the Devil and the use of familiars is still tied to traditional English understandings of witchcraft and diabolism.[56] James Sharpe also argues for this point, saying that the unusual features of the trials—inducing physical discomfort during interrogation of suspects, an emphasis on diabolism, and the use of semi-professional witch-hunters—were not merely the atypical product of Matthew Hopkins' Continental notions. Rather, he claims, the East Anglia trials demonstrate a genuine English concept of witchcraft, based on his reading of the cases' singularly English language, imagery, and emphasis on traditional forms of *maleficiae* interwoven throughout the supposedly Continental material.[57]

However, despite the continued historical debate about the "Englishness" of the East Anglia trials, there has been little scholarly analysis of the role of gender within the trial records and the pamphlets produced from the witch hunt and the subsequent trials. As demonstrated above, examples from the East Anglia trials are often considered poor choices for evidence of truly English witchcraft, since many scholars have assumed that Matthew Hopkins's Continental ideas made this series of trials unique. This study, however, finds Sharpe's argument valid and chooses to regard the East Anglia trials as a legitimate product of English witchcraft. It also offers a new perspective on the gendered

[55] Rosen, 28.

[56] Briggs, 46.

[57] Jim Sharpe, "The devil in East Anglia," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 237-240.

aspects of the trials by using the two pamphlets from Essex and Suffolk to illustrate the differences between conceptions of male and female bodies in English witchcraft literature.

The background of these texts and the secondary literature on witchcraft and possession that surrounds them are necessary in order to understand the complexities of witchcraft, possession, and hysteria that informed Edward Jorden's treatise. As early modern England grappled with questions of religious loyalties, new scientific discoveries, changing theories about medicine, and the ever-present question of the role of the divine in human affairs, Jorden's treatise appears as a marker in the slow process of a nation evolving from the medieval world to the Enlightenment. Scholarship on this period and specifically the fields of witchcraft, possession, and women's bodies offers a deeper understanding of the society that informs Jorden's treatise and helps clarify the story that sparked Jorden's interest in the first place—the possession of Mary Glover.

CHAPTER THREE

Demonic Possession and Women's Spiritual Agency

Introduction

During Mary Glover's possession, her symptoms served as proof that the fourteen-year-old girl was in fact possessed by an evil spirit. For the family, friends, and the neighbors who flocked around her sickbed in ever-increasing numbers, the proof of possession was in the physical evidence that played out right before their eyes—Mary's inexplicable writhings, the strange noises she made, her fits of complete insensibility, and, of course, her violent reaction to the presence of Elizabeth Jackson, the suspected witch.[1] Mary's symptoms served as proof of both her possession and her innocence, establishing her suffering and pointing towards an external and deliberately malevolent cause for her torments.

The physical symptoms themselves were consistent with early modern beliefs about possession—in essence, that demonic possession involved suffering that was intense, protracted, and unlike normal physical ailments, such as epilepsy or hysteria.[2] Possession also entailed acknowledgement on the part of the victim that he or she was at least temporarily overcome by demons or evil spirits, and usually involved a spiritual struggle

[1] Stephen Bradwell, *Mary Glovers Late Woeful Case, Together with Her Joyfull Deliverance* (London, 1603), reprinted in *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case*, ed. Michael MacDonald (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), 5-18.

[2] D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 12; Philip C. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20-22.

between the demons and the victim/exorcists for the victim's soul.[3] Both Mary's symptoms and her subsequent successful exorcism served to demonstrate the validity of her possession.

In Mary's case, these critically important symptoms were dramatic, unusual, and at times horrifying violent. Her possession began with a swelling of her neck and throat that made it impossible to speak or eat, as well as "fittes" of so terrible a nature that her parents feared she would die and had the local church bell tolled to signify her imminent passing.[4] Although the swelling in the throat subsided after eighteen days, Mary's fits continued to become increasingly more alarming. In a classic symptom of possession (and later of hysteria), Mary's body would form a hoop-like shape, arching backwards so far that the back of her head was nearly touching her hips. Stephen Bradwell's pamphlet detailing Mary's possession and exorcism says that in this position, "she rolled and tumbled, with such violence, and swiftnes, as that their paynes in keeping her from receaving hurt against the bedsted, and postes, caused two or three women to sweat."[5] In addition to this erratic and violent behavior, Mary also suffered from what Bradwell terms "gapings," during which her mouth would open unusually wide and foul-smelling air would fly out of it. The quality of this air was noxious in and of itself. Mary's mother was hit in the face by one of these "gapings" and subsequently felt her face swell up and smart with pain.[6] The air expelled from Mary's mouth also had a detrimental effect on a neighbor woman named Mistress Lumas who had apparently come to help with Mary's care. She reported that the

[3] Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004), 3; Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 102-103.

[4] Bradwell, 4.

[5] Ibid., 5.

[6] Ibid., 6.

stench of Mary's "gapings" made her nauseated for a long time after she had been exposed to it.[7]

Mary's sufferings were not limited to foul-smelling belches or violent bouts rolling around on her bed. She also experienced a regular, daily fit at three o'clock every afternoon. This fit began quietly, for Mary would become "pale and wan, her eyes deadish, her Chin falling into her bosome, with a stiffnes in all her parts."[8] She also experienced a heaving of the chest and very rapid breathing that presaged the second stage of the fit—violently throwing herself to the foot of the bed. At this point, she appeared "dumbe, blinde, and senceles" to everyone observing her, yet she would mime such activities as playing a virginal (an instrument similar to a harpsichord), shooting a bow and arrow, dancing, and fencing.[9] During this fit, the "gapings" would continue, although sometimes these included a noise that Bradwell describes as sounding like "*tesh* in a long accent on the end."[10] This fit, with all its extraordinary details, would be repeated six times during the course of the afternoon and would finally terminate around six o'clock in the evening.[11]

In addition to these daily fits, two other symptoms in particular served as evidence to Mary's audience that she was truly possessed. First, she demonstrated a classic sign of demonic possession—aversion to holy texts or parts of holy texts.[12] Bradwell recounts that during Mary's quieter moments, those present at her bedside would sometimes begin to

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 7.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 8.

[11] Ibid.

[12] D.P. Walker points out that one of the four main marks of possession was "horror and revulsion at sacred things." Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, 12.

pray, including recitations of the Lord's Prayer. However, when they arrived at the phrase "Deliver us from evil," Mary's body would be thrown from one side of the bed to the other, sometimes so violently that she was in danger of falling off the bed altogether. She would also be "strangely writhen, and crooked, backward, or sideway, and remayne so a good space."[13]

Second, Mary demonstrated one of the most important signs of a "good" possession for an early modern English Puritan—during her sensible periods, she reaffirmed her faith and praised God for delivering her, even for a short while.[14] During her routine three-hour fit, Mary offered up this prayer every day in the midst of her suffering: "O Lord I geve thee thankes, that thow hast delivered me, this tyme, and many moe; I beseech thee (good Lord) deliver me for ever."[15] She would also deliver extempore prayers at various times during her fits, such as this: "Lord teach me a good use of this thy affliction, yet not as I will, but thy will be done."[16] Mary's prayer clearly demonstrates that she understands her suffering as a part of God's sovereign plan and wishes to use suffering as an opportunity to do God's will. She also demonstrates an understanding of Scripture, shown in her quotation of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane from Luke 22:42.[17] This is to be expected, since reforming English Protestants and especially Puritans placed a heavy emphasis on both

[13] Bradwell, 9.

[14] Philip C. Almond notes that Mary was constructed as an "innocent victim of witchcraft…a model of piety and morality." Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England*, 17.

[15] Bradwell, 13.

[16] Ibid., 16.

[17] It is not entirely clear which translation Mary is quoting, but the phrasing and the time period of Mary's possession (1603) suggest that she is drawing from John Wycliffe's translation of 1382-1395.

God's sovereignty and the importance of Scripture.[18] However, it also illustrates the ways in which Mary was speaking through her possession to deliver spiritual testimony.

Mary's dramatic and violent symptoms, as well as her attestations of faith in God and displays of piety, continued throughout Elizabeth Jackson's trial for witchcraft and were an integral part of the older women's conviction.[19] Through her physical sufferings, Mary could provide proof to her awestruck audience that she was truly possessed. However, possession was not enough in and of itself, for to be possessed without being bewitched was to invite speculation that one was sufficiently sinful to allow the Devil easy access to one's soul.[20] In order to have a truly "good" possession, it was necessary to for the victim to demonstrate that he or she was innocent of any wrongdoing by pointing to an external cause for the possession—a local witch. By accusing a witch of causing his or her possession, the victim effectively demonstrated that his or her blameless body was not suffering as a result of sin, but rather was being deliberately tormented by the malevolent body of the witch.[21]

As a guiltless victim, Mary's testimony of faith in God's power to deliver and her prayers to be used in order to achieve God's will had a power they would not have

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[18] Andrew Cambers comments on this facet of Protestantism in his article on the role of Scripture in Alexander Nyndge's possession case. "In the fight with the devil, the Bible, as the holy book, had sacred power, both as a physical object and as a sacred text." Andrew Cambers, "Demonic Possession, Literacy, and 'Superstition' in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 202 (February 2009): 10.

[19] Michael MacDonald, "Introduction," in *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case*, ed. Michael MacDonald (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), xvi.

[20] Cambers writes, "By the end of the sixteenth century, in England at least, the most common way of explaining demonic possession was no longer to do as Edward Nyndge had done and locate it as a form of punishment for the sins of the individual." Cambers, 17.

[21] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early modern and twentieth-century representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 119-144. Purkiss discusses the early modern perception that witches' bodies were porous entities that could pollute the space around them by allowing their malevolence to spread without boundaries.

possessed otherwise.[22] The strength of her faith, as well as the symptoms that served as the physical proof of her possession, gave her at least temporary power and authority within the community. It is important to note that this quasi-mystical spiritual authority was often difficult to achieve by other methods. The majority of possession victims in early modern England were female—in fact, Anglican chaplain Samuel Harsnett, who wrote a number of scathing polemics against possession and exorcism, once complained that exorcists would "beare such a spite to young Lads, but especially to young girles, and maides, that they ordinarily, or not at all vexe any, but such."[23] Women were excluded from official roles in the hierarchy of the Anglican church, and, as a result of the Reformation, they could no longer pursue lives as a nuns or holy women in order to achieve spiritual authority.[24] Possession, however, allowed women to transgress the normally gendered boundaries of religious authority as they preached, prophesied, and verbally fought with demons before a large audience of both men and women. Despite the negative aspects of possession, early modern Protestant beliefs about possession and the role of the possessed gave women

[22] This pattern carries out in other early modern English cases of possession as well. For instance, Margaret Muschamp, whose possession occurred in 1650, experienced violent and disturbing symptoms that were exacerbated by the presence of Dorothy Swinnow and John Hutton, whom she accused as witches. This accusation lent credence to the perception of Margaret as "an innocent bashfull Girle" who, though blameless, suffered at the hands of evildoers.

Margaret also delivered the same sort of testimony as Mary Glover, at one point saying, "Our soules are all the comfort we can expect, what are our bodies? Our bodies are nothing; I blesse God that would have his glory tryed on our weake bodies, which no creature thought could have indured such torment." This view of possession as an opportunity to display God's glory is very similar to Mary Glover's view of her own possession experience.

Mary Moore, *Wonderfull newes from the north. Or, A true relation of the sad and grievous torments, inflicted upon the bodies of three children of Mr. George Muschamp, late of the county of Northumberland, by witch-craft…* (London, 1650), bk.

[23] Samuel Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…* (London, 1603). Philip C. Almond also comments on the gendered nature of early modern English possession cases, pointing out the fact that "In sixty-two cases of possession where the genders of the possessed can be determined, forty-four are females and eighteen males." Almond, 22.

[24] Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2009), 23-38.

increased religious agency and allowed them to openly subvert normal gendered understandings of religious authority.

Gender, Possession, and Jorden's Treatise

Edward Jorden's treatise on the suffocation of the mother had its origins in Mary's Glover's possession, even though the text never mentions Mary by name. However, understanding her case in the context of other early modern possessions reveals a key variable: the gendered nature of demonic possession and its effects on women's agency. Without the context of female agency discovered through possession, Jorden's treatise is merely a well-meant medical discourse on a common and primarily female illness, no different from similar treatises published in England during this period. With it, Jorden's treatise takes his place alongside Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witches*, Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum*, and the writings of Dutch physician Lemnius Levinus in the ranks of works that transformed early modern understandings of witchcraft, possession, and women's bodies.

However, this gendered nature is not readily apparent in Jorden's context. Had he written his treatise in Catholic France, where nuns were becoming possessed by the dozens in convent-wide outbreaks, or even in medieval England, where women formed the bulk of both demoniacs and divine ecstatics, it would be much easier to make the case that both Jorden and his contemporaries understood possession as a fundamentally gendered phenomenon. But Jorden wrote *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* in Protestant England, a period marked by a significant number of possessions that were not limited to just women. Although the majority of those possessed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England were women, both men and women could and did

become possessed and were then exorcized. What must follow, therefore, is an effort to distinguish whether or not men's and women's bodies were considered differently by their exorcists, the audiences surrounding them, and the treatise writers who described their sufferings and ultimate deliverances at great length.

This chapter argues that men's and women's bodies were accorded the same spiritual status and their symptoms conferred the same sort of spiritual authority in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cases of possession among English Protestants. This approach is centered in the fact that both men and women were possessed, as well as in how possessed victims and their bodies were treated along gendered lines. Men's bodies were seen as fundamentally different from women's in nearly all areas of life, including witchcraft. However, early modern English accounts of demonic possession are not divided by gender so much as confessional differences. Possession victims and their exorcists were treated in negatively gendered ways only when their confessional rivals wrote about them. When pamphlet writers and polemicists wrote of victims and exorcists within their own confession, they treated both men's and women's bodily symptoms as legitimate and did not see gender as an important factor in the possession. This lack of emphasis on gendered societal norms within possession cases allowed women greater access to spiritual authority and increased their religious agency, since their physical symptoms, verbal testimony, and displays of courage and faith were accorded equal status with men's.

In this way, the chapter lays the groundwork for Edward Jorden's importance to early modern understandings of women's bodies. Unlike witchcraft, in which women's bodies were at the center of their supernatural activity, possession focused on the battle for women's souls rather than the frailty of their bodies and moral failings of their natures. Jorden's treatise, by denying the spiritual/supernatural component of possession, places the

emphasis back on the weakness of women's bodies, thus decreasing the spiritual agency they had at least temporarily achieved. This chapter also builds on the work done by Sarah Ferber in her study of possession in early modern France, "Possession and the Sexes." Ferber argues that possession could both undermine and reinforce gender stereotypes, thus re-establishing the gendered boundaries of the early modern world or overturning them—and sometimes doing both of these things simultaneously.[25] At the end of her brilliant essay, she notes that this sort of comparative study of male and female bodies in possession cases needs to be done in early modern England. This case study is an attempt to, at least in part, answer that need.

Exorcism as Gendered Theatre

Mary Glover's possession did not, of course, exist in a vacuum. It is therefore necessary to briefly examine the religious climate of early sixteenth-century England in an effort to establish the immediate background of the case and the complex political, religious, and social negotiations involved within and around it. Demonic possession was a fairly frequent phenomenon in the early modern world, one that traced its origin in Christianity back to the teachings and exorcisms of Christ himself. It had a recognizable set of signs and symptoms, shared cultural meanings, and served purposes for both laity and clergy, as well as for the possessed himself/herself.[26]

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[25] Sarah Ferber, "Possession and the Sexes," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 217.

[26] Sarah Ferber, *Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004); Stuart Clarke, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits*: *Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 8-13.

Mary's family, friends, and the audience that gathered around her to observe her fits and pronouncements were all recipients of and participants within this demonically-informed culture. Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out the importance of the role of theatre within accounts of demonic possession, and he has aptly observed that exorcists had to create "ceremonies…that to be successful had to employ the theater's power to transform the ordinary world into a new world, to reveal the human body as a field for warring spiritual forces, to unite a disparate aggregation of individuals into an audience inspired by the same glorious vision."[27] His view of observers and participants in exorcism as audiences who both participated in and were consumers of theatre is a close mirror of Michel Certeau's assertion that "possession is a phenomenon parallel to the creation of theatre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."[28] The important point that modern readers may miss in this analysis, however, is that sixteenth- and seventeenth theatre was constructed by both actors and audiences. The audience responded to theatre, but it also *created* theatre through its cultural assumptions, its expectations, and the ways in which it shaped the actors' understandings of what they were doing and why.

With this understanding of possession and theatre, Nancy Caciola's assertion that medieval saintly exorcisms were communally based carries over into the early modern period. She analyzes early medieval exorcisms as raucous community-wide affairs that often took on aspects of public theatre, in which the community participated in the rites, offered suggestions or criticisms of the proceedings, and helped judge whether or not the

[27] Stephen Greenblatt, "Loudun and London," *Critical Inquiry* 12, No. 2 (Winter 1986): 330.

[28] Michel Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 246.

afflicted member was healed.[29] Although this understanding changed in the Middle Ages when formal rites of exorcism were developed by the Church, this description of an exorcism is remarkably similar to the scene around Mary Glover's bedside. In the tumultuous religious climate of early modern England, exorcism as communal theatre seems to have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity and—at least within the minds of its adherents—in efficacy.

Understanding possession as theatre is important in two ways. First, it establishes the importance of the demonological understanding of the audience, for if the audience helps create and informs the progression of theatre, then its understanding of the meaning of the drama is as important as the understandings of the actors themselves. Second, it identifies the key actors in the drama: the possessed, the exorcist, and the audience. The relationship between the possessed victim and the exorcist or exorcists is paramount in grasping the meaning of possession in the early modern world, both in terms of audience understanding and in terms of its gendered nature. For theatre must as a matter of course involve bodies, visual, corporeal bodies that can change and be changed before the viewer's eyes and ears. It is through bodies—the writhing, contorted bodies of the victims of possession and the rational, ordered bodies of their exorcists—that the theatre of possession acted out the great drama of sin, salvation, and the fate of the world for Christian audiences.

History of Demonic Possession

Early modern European beliefs about demon possession were primarily based on the New Testament, which in its turn was deeply influenced by the beliefs about demons and their powers that both Jesus and his Jewish audience held. Jesus' exorcisms were (and

[29] Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 235.

are) the basis for Christian exorcisms from the early Church onwards. Edward Langton's study *Essentials in Demonology* in particular notes the specificity and purpose of the exorcisms noted in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the teachings regarding demons in the epistles to the early Church.[30] Christ's power over demons and His exorcisms were designed to display to the watching crowds God's power over the forces of evil that sought to control the earth. In much the same way, the exorcisms performed by the apostles demonstrated to the fledgling Church that God's power had not left the world with the ascension of Christ, but rather had been passed on to His closest disciples.[31] As the Church grew and became increasingly formalized through the next thousand years, demonic possession and exorcism remained doctrinally plausible, even if their importance as examples of cosmological moral warfare diminished as spiritual power was formalized in an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Caciola argues that this diminished importance resulted in the Church not developing a formalized rite of exorcism until the twelfth century, when a widespread outbreak of lay religious devotion resulted in the necessity of determining whether divine or demonic possession was occurring. If demonic possession was deemed the diagnosis, the remedy needed to come through the Church, filtered through its doctrine and ecclesiastical structure and shaped by its values and teachings. This led to a development over two centuries from improvised saintly exorcisms, which could incorporate any number of remedies drawn from Scripture or from the saint's personal experience, to the exorcism manuals and the *Rituale Romanum* of the fourteenth century. The movement, Caciola

[30] Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development* (London: The Epworth Press, 1949), 77-81, 115-117.

[31] Langton, 147-204; Kathleen R. Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004), 3.

asserts, was from a fairly "loose" understanding of exorcism as a communal affair to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis to a much more rigid understanding of exorcism as a problem for the Church to be dealt with by qualified religious specialists—in other words, Catholic priests.[32]

This understanding of exorcism and demon possession was the basis for clerical and lay demonology in Catholic Europe until the violent upheaval of the Protestant Reformation. At this point, the theological waters become very quickly muddied. While examining the particularities of all strands of Reformation thought regarding demons is impossible in this sort of study, it is safe to say that three main ideas emerged. First, Catholics retained their belief in the existence of demonic possession and the efficacy of exorcism. They based this, as Sarah Ferber puts it, on "a wide array of other rites and observances, known as 'sacramentals,' through which religious immanence was also experienced."[33] Elsewhere, she examines the idea that Catholics saw the value of the sacramentals as a means of infusing daily life with holiness, as everyday experiences and objects were penetrated with religious significance.[34] This allowed for a worldview that saw the natural and the supernatural as closely intertwined—in fact, as inextricably linked. While this posed problems in the forms of unexpected and perhaps institutionally unwelcome claims to new forms of supernaturally manifested religious authority, it nevertheless allowed for the immediate and direct intervention of God and the Devil into human life.

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[32] Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 225-272; Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England*, 3-5.

[33] Ferber, 9.

[34] Ibid., 10.

Second, a number of Protestants decried the sacramentals, and particularly exorcism, as popish idolatries, efforts to worship the creations of man rather than the supreme glory of God. As Helen Parish and William G. Naphy put it in their introduction to *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, "The Protestant assault on superstition had as its targets some of the most visible and tangible components of late medieval Catholic theology and devotion, sacraments and sacramentals."[35] This, however, created a psychological disconnect, for these non-exorcizing Protestants now had no theological framework for any seemingly supernatural phenomena they might encounter, which leads to Parish and Naphy's conclusion that these Protestants did, in fact, retain elements of superstition, re-formulated to make them more palatable to an evangelical conscience.[36]

Third, those Protestants who retained their belief in demonic possession and exorcism nevertheless repudiated Catholic methods, arguing that these were as full of magic and demonic intent as the fallen angels they sought to expel. Protestant exorcism rites tended to focus around the disciplines of prayer and fasting, based on the passage in Matthew 17:21 in which Jesus teaches his disciples that the particular kind of demon He has just exorcized will only leave via prayer and fasting.[37] They also used the Bible, either in its physical, written form or as a part of verbal exorcism rites.[38] For Protestant families who had a supposedly possessed member within their midst and for communities who suffered from the destructive actions native to possessed persons, these sorts of exorcisms could prove an

[35] Helen Parish and William G. Naphy, "Introduction," in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, ed. Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 2.

[36] Ibid., 18.

[37] Clark, 417.

[38] Andrew Cambers, "Demonic Possession, Literacy, and 'Superstition' in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 202 (February 2009): 10.

effective means of remedying a seemingly impossible situation. Moreover, this served the traditional purpose of exorcism—that is, demonstrating the power of God over the forces of evil in the world.

These Protestants—in England, specifically Puritans—would therefore enact their own exorcisms, often against the wishes of their fellow Protestants who believed that any supernatural penetration into the natural world was impossible. However, this belief that there was no longer supernatural intervention in the natural world violated several basic precepts within the general theological confines of Protestantism. As P.G. Maxwell-Stuart puts it, "the general assertion made by Protestants that the age of miracles was over…tended to argue against the supernatural reality of demonic possession and more in favour of Satanic illusions or human fraud."[39] However, he also points out that even those Protestants who argued against the possibility of demonic possession were merely re-working the objectionable wording of Catholic dogma to validate the superstitions both confessions held in common.

This relinquishment of exorcism by some Protestants left a window of opportunity open for Catholic exorcists, who clearly had a much longer and more formalized tradition of exorcism than those brave few of their Protestant counterparts who tried to call evil spirits out of the demon-possessed. At the same time, it also allowed exorcism to become a battlefield of opposing confessions, instead of merely a battle against the forces of evil, personified in demonic form. Protestant exorcists saw successful exorcisms as proof of the evils and idolatry of Catholicism, while Catholic exorcists saw the exact opposite moral lesson in their successful attempts. Now exorcism was not only proof that God was on the

[39] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, "Rational superstition: the writings of Protestant demonologists," in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, 172.

side of Christians who sought to repudiate the Devil and drive him out from their midst. It was also proof that God was on the side of whomever conducted the successful exorcism, and thus exorcisms became a powerful tool of propaganda and proselytization in early modern Europe.[40]

The Nature, Signs, and Embodiment of Demonic Possession

Demonic possession in early modern Europe was, first and foremost, a contest of faith. Stuart Clark concluded the demonic possession served a number of functions for early modern believers, including that of a text of sin and repentance, a sign of the impending apocalypse, and an understanding of the theological history of the world in terms of binding and loosing demons.[41] But possession and exorcism's fundamental purpose was to, as he puts it, to be "the most vivid possible demonstration of the relative strengths of good and evil in the world."[42] Sarah Ferber, writing about exorcisms in early modern France, notes that "exorcism was a way of displaying God's willingness to grant an individual exorcist…the power of the apostles to cast out demons in Christ's name."[43] For the Christian audiences of early modern Europe, possession and exorcism served as a very personal and yet widely applicable example of the battle between good and evil in the world, with good ultimately triumphing as the exorcist successfully cast the demon or demons out of the body of the possessed individual.

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[40] Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England*, 10; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 417; Ferber, *Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*, 2; D.P. Walker, "Demonic Possession Used as Propaganda in the Later 16th Century," in *Possession and Exorcism*, ed. Brian Levack (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 283.

[41] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 402-403, 411.

[42] Ibid., 413.

[43] Ferber, *Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*, 3.

Possession and exorcism retained their primary and fundamental meaning of good battling evil throughout the early modern era, but that meaning, as previously noted, was influenced by the inter-confessional wars between Protestants and Catholics, as well as rivalries between various Protestant factions. Despite this, the signs and symptoms of possession remained fairly constant across confessional lines. Clark refers to the symptoms as physical, outward expressions of the Devil's raging fury, a "cluster of images of storming, raving, roaring, and frenzy."[44] The possessed exhibited signs of deeply abnormal and even antisocial behavior; as Caciola puts it, "Physical frenzies, shouting, nudity, subordination of the personality to the invading demon, and superhuman strength often are found in medieval miracle accounts and images of the demonically possessed."[45] In the early modern context, "physical frenzies" could be extrapolated to mean any number of unusual physical symptoms, including but not limited to stiffness, unusual heaviness or lightness, an enlarged and protruding tongue, a lump that was seen to run about the body under the skin, catatonia, swearing and profanity, and revulsion at the sight of and especially the touch of holy objects.

It is clear that at the center this complex contextual web of confessional meanings, symbolism, and competing significances lay the actual bodies of the possessed, those tormented figures recorded in treatises, pamphlets, and trial records. Caciola makes the point, and makes it very convincingly, that possession was at its very core a *bodily* experience, a demonic penetration into the body of the possessed.[46] This was based

[44] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 409.

[45] Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 37.

[46] Caciola, 53; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), bk. Walker Bynum uses similar language in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, arguing that women's food practices prepared them for the divine

primarily on medieval and patristic theologies of the soul as the sole province of God, made in the *imago Dei* and therefore invincible to demonic assaults. Demons, therefore, had to settle for the less satisfying locale of the body, most frequently situating themselves in the bowels or other "open" spaces of the body. And it was through bodily signs—the aforementioned symptoms and behaviors—that possession was seen by the community and family of the possessed, diagnosed by religious authorities, and ultimately healed by the power of Christ channeled through the body and deeds of the exorcist. Exorcism, then, can be seen in early modern sources as a conversation between Christian and demonic intelligence, with the body of the possessed as the battlefield on which this war between good and evil was fought.[47]

Male and Female Bodies in Early Modern English Cases of Demonic Possession

In order to examine the gendered aspects of possession in early modern England, this chapter uses several case studies of possessed men and women from both Protestant and Catholic confessions. The possession cases of Thomas Darling, Alexander Nyndge, and Mary Glover are documented as Protestant cases, one of which (Darling) was exorcised by the well-known Puritan exorcist John Darrel. The case of Sara and Fid Williams is connected to a group of Catholic priests illegally harbored by the Peckham family and combines the girls' initial Protestant beliefs with the Catholic rituals and theology expressed by the priests in their exorcisms. This case is used as a foil to the Protestant cases, and it is included in this chapter in order to demonstrate the change in gendered

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penetrating their souls and that these practices were rooted in the ways in which women saw both their bodies and Christ's body as food.

[47] See Stuart Clark's assertion that possession and exorcism was a microcosm of the greater conflict between good and evil, God and the Devil. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 413.

rhetoric that occurred when a pamphleteer wrote of a possession case that originated from a rival confessional group, rather than one with which he agreed. These cases were chosen for two reasons: first, they represent a roughly equal gender balance, and second, they offer an opportunity to examine gendered beliefs about possessions and exorcisms from sources that are sympathetic and those that are antagonistic towards the confessional views expressed in the case.

One caveat, however, is the fact that nearly all the sources available that document these cases are from the Protestant point of view—specifically, the anti-exorcism point of view espoused by Bishops Bancroft and Harsnett. This, of course, somewhat compromises the integrity of the sources, since it is highly unlikely that any of these ecclesiastically powerful Anglicans would have thought it necessary or even advisable to make a great effort to report these cases in an unbiased manner. (In fact, even the titles of Harsnett's pamphlets are deliberately polemical and inflammatory—for instance, *A discovery of the fraudulent practises of John Darrel Bacheler of Artes* and *Declaration of egregious popish impostures to with-draw the harts of her Maiesties subiects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian religion professed in England, vnder the pretence of casting out deuils*.) Nevertheless, they are the only sources available for understanding what happened in these possession cases, and therefore they will be used with appropriate caution for their clear biases.

Thomas Darling

The case of Thomas Darling presents an intriguing break in the pattern described by Ferber, Caciola, Clark, and other scholars who have studied Continental cases of demonic possession. Certainly there are Continental cases that emphasize the juxtaposition between

the bodies of the possessed and the bodies of those who exorcize. However, often the pattern seen is that previously noted: the relationship between the relative powerlessness of the possessed and the power and authority of the exorcist. Darling's case breaks this mold, for it harks back to early medieval exorcisms, in its emphasis on community involvement and its lack of a formal exorcist or exorcism rites. It also shifts the emphasis of powerlessness from the body of the possessed boy to the bodies of the accused witches. It is not Darling who is stripped, searched, or treated violently in this text. Rather, two witches, older women who already occupied a vulnerable position on the margins of the community, are the figures subjected to the violent treatment and humiliation that Ferber and Caciola describe in their analyses of medieval and early modern Continental female victims of possession.

In Thomas Darling's case, the paradigm of powerless female victim/powerful male exorcist is shifted to powerless female witch pitted against a surprisingly powerful, yet vulnerable, male victim of possession. Paradoxically, Darling's possession (whether valid or not) gives him the power to gain the attention of his family and neighbors, offers him countless opportunities to demonstrate the strength of his faith and his commitment to Christianity, and even allows him to take revenge upon an old woman who might have intimidated him or of whom he may have been afraid. Modern readers of Darling's case can never know how much of Darling's possession was legitimate, how much was faked, and how much was the product of an impressionable adolescent mind combined with a great deal of attention and coddling (although Samuel Harsnett certainly had strong opinions on the subject, arguing that John Darrell, the famed Puritan exorcist, had coached Darling in his role).[48] Despite the lack of clarity involved in Darling's motives, it is clear

[48] Samuel Harsnett, *A discouery of the fraudulent practises of Iohn Darrel Bacheler of*

from the text itself that the success of Darling's possession—and the power that it gave him to accuse two local women as witches—hinged on one thing: his bodily symptoms.

There is little background available for Thomas Darling, but his possession case nevertheless manages to be a riveting, if slightly repetitive, saga. At age thirteen, Thomas became separated from his uncle during a hunting expedition and was wandering about alone in the woods. While thus occupied, he ran into a little old woman, whom he described as wearing "a gray gown with a black fringe about the cape, a broad thrumd hat, and three warts on her face."[49] Crucially, he also noted that he had seen this elderly woman begging at his parents' door, thus upholding the pattern established by Robin Briggs and Brian Levack, both of whom noted that poor, old women who begged from door to door and were refused charity were the group most likely to be targeted as witches in early modern England.[50] As he passed her by, Thomas "let a scape," as he phrased it, which offended the old woman mightily. Turning, she apparently spat, "Gyp with a mischiefe, and fart with a bell: I wil goe to heauen, and thou shalt goe to hell," and stooped to the ground.[51]

After Thomas arrived at home, he found himself afflicted with vomiting, fits, and strange hallucinations. His aunt, much alarmed by these symptoms, took a sample of his urine to a physician twice in order to secure a diagnosis, but the physician's verdict of intestinal worms seemed to be inaccurate, for no prescribed medicine helped the young

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Artes…(London, 1599).

[49] *The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapen hill*… (London, 1597), 4.

[50] Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1995); Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

[51] *The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapen hill*…, 4.

boy. However, despite his afflictions, "his exercises were such as might well have be seemed one of riper yeares; wherein he shewed the frutes of his education, which was religious and godly. With those that were good Christians he tooke great pleasure to conferre; to whom he would siguiste his daily expectation of death, and his resolute readinesse to leaue the World, and to be with Christ."[52] This sort of deeply religious sentiment coupled with extreme bodily affliction was to prove a hallmark of the next two months, as the young demoniac used his sickbed as a makeshift pulpit, stage, and courtroom.

The torments Darling experienced were certainly extensive, if the pamphlet recording his possession and dispossession is to be believed. Darling vomited, hallucinated, lost the use of his lower limbs (except in his fits), and suffered from violent contortions, described as follows:

> Then fell hee sodainly upon his backe, and (lying in such manner) raysed up his leggs one after the other so stiffly…at last he raysed himselfe up on his feete and his head, his belly standing up much aboue hys head or feete, continuing so a little space he fell downe upon his backe groning verie pittifully. Then rising up, he ran round on his hands and his feete, keeping a certaine compasse…[53]

However, despite the severity of these afflictions, Darling could nevertheless recover sufficiently to fall on his knees in prayer after the fits subsided. He was soon diagnosed with bewitchment by a neighbor named Jesse Bee, who came to this conclusion after reading the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John to the boy and watching his reaction. Darling's fits seemed to grow worse when scripture was read and subsided when Bee

[52] Ibid., 2.

[53] Ibid., 3. This "compass" would later come to be described as a primary symptom of hysteria; it was identified as one of the four stages of hysteria by Jean-Martin Charcot, the Parisian doctor who became a self-taught expert on the subject. Charcot termed the symptom "arc-en-cercle," primarily because of the near-circular shape of the patient's body as it arched upwards. Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

"either ceased to speake of anie comfortable matter, or to read the scriptures…"[54] Based on this inappropriately violent revulsion to the reading of God's word, Bee informed the boy's family that he suspected bewitchment.

It is unclear in the pamphlet how Thomas Darling came to believe that he was bewitched or how he settled on the old woman he had met in the wood as his tormentor. The phrasing suggests that Darling overheard his family members talking with Bee and then re-created the bewitching in his mind from events that occurred during his hunting trip with his uncle. Nevertheless, he related the story to those around him, who immediately leapt to the conclusion that this was none other than Elizabeth Wright, the Witch of Stapen Hill, or her equally infamous daughter, Alice Goodridge. Although accusations against Goodridge and her mother were not brought immediately, Goodridge was eventually brought to Thomas's bedside, where he was encouraged to scratch her face and hands, in keeping with old English folk traditions. This seemed to do the boy no good, although suspicion against Goodridge mounted higher than ever when Darling's fits became increasingly worse the next day.[55]

Darling's possession and its link to malevolent witchcraft reached its apex when Goodridge and Wright were brought before the demoniac at a neighbor's house. Darling went into a particularly violent fit, "lying vppon 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 verie fearfully."[56] After the women were forced to kneel and pray for him and the fit continued unabated, the local justice of the peace ordered that they

[54] Ibid., 4.

[55] Ibid., 4-6.

[56] Ibid., 8.

be taken aside by reputable women of the town, stripped, and searched for witches' marks. What they found served as damning proof that the pair were indeed about the Devil's business. As the pamphlet's writer put it, the searchers found behind Elizabeth Wright's right shoulder "a thing much like the udder of an ewe that giveth sucke with two teates, like unto two great wartes, the one behinde under her armeh[...]le, the other a handfull off towardes the top of her shoulder."[57] Her daughter Alice's body yielded even more incriminating evidence, since they "found upon her belly, a hole of the bignesse of two pence, fresh and bloudy, as though some great wart had beene cut off the place."[58] Suddenly, the emphasis of the case had suddenly shifted from Darling's body to the clearly malevolent bodies of the two witches.

There remained one final link to assure onlookers that this was, in fact, a case of bewitchment and that Darling's possession was the result of intentional witchcraft. Alice Goodridge was brought before the boy, and Darling was asked if it was she who had bewitched him. When he replied in the affirmative, the justice of the peace told him to scratch the witch—something he had already done once before, drawing blood from both her cheek and hand. However, this time Darling could not complete the act of violence. His hand was "benummed and pluckt to his side, and he tormented in euery part: foure severall times he assaied to do this, but stil with like succes; he was bidden to lay his hand on the standers by, which he did without difficultie."[59] It was clear to the entire room of onlookers that only the power of diabolical magic could create this sort of incapability to act against the power of evil. As the writer puts it later on in the pamphlet, "Sathan shewed

[57] Ibid., 9.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

himselfe to be a right sathan, euen a sore enemie to the Childe, (enuying the good of his bodie, when he saw himselfe vnable to hurt his soule)…"[60]

But Satan was not acting alone in this scenario. He was aided by the malevolence and demonically-achieved power of his two handmaidens, the accused witches. Darling himself was clearly aware of the witches' status as vessels, so to speak, of Satan's power, for at one point during his fits he cried out to the Devil, "Saiest thou that thy Mistris hath giuen thee a drop of her bloud to thy dinner, and that therefore thou wilt tel no tales of her?"[61] This is a very clear reference to the concept of the witch's pact, in which the potential witch offered the Devil her allegiance and sealed her promise in one of several ways described in both Continental and English witchcraft literature: either she would copulate with the Devil, kiss the Devil's backside, or she would offer the Devil (or a familiar representing the Devil) "suck," the opportunity to suckle nourishing blood from her body.[62] This process supposedly resulted in the witch's teat, for which the two accused witches in this case were searched. Darling's question, addressed to the Devil, is a roundabout way of accusing the two supposed witches of creating this sort of diabolical pact and offering their own bodies as guarantees for it.

Darling's physical symptoms—vomiting, contortions, pain, "fits," stiffness, numbness, and so forth—served as physical proof of the spiritual battle being waged within his soul. His habit of having audible conversations with the demons within him, and, at times, with the Devil himself, certainly helped foster a sense of spiritual as well as physical

[60] Ibid., 18.

[61] Ibid., 15.

[62] See Clark, *Thinking with Demons*; Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*; Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*; Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

warfare. The sheer drama of the situation must have been intense, as Darling monologued his inward struggle at the same time as his physical maladies offered near-incontrovertible proof that he was, in fact, beset by demons intent on destroying his body, even if they could not touch his soul. This was not a drama with an absent protagonist, however. The Devil's emissaries were present, two apparently harmless older women whose relative frailty belied their evil intent. Darling's possession is clearly gendered: the tormented male body of the innocent young demoniac is classified as heroic, his suffering serving as testimony to his living martyrdom; the sexualized, perverted female bodies of the two witches are classified as demonic—open, willing hosts to the Devil himself, vessels of corruption and depravity. The shame and physical pain they experience are merely the rewards of their actions, the author implies. Darling, through his determination to fight for his faith and resist the power of the Devil despite his physical sufferings, has achieved spiritual victory and his martyred body can now enjoy sanctified rest. In Greenblatt's metaphor of possession as gendered theatre, Darling's performance has successfully convinced his audience—he has performed a "good" possession.

Alexander Nyndge

Alexander Nyndge's possession is important because it demonstrates a different type of possession case than Thomas Darling's. Nyndge's possession has many of the same hallmarks—the victim was young and male, and he suddenly began to suffer from inexplicable bodily torments or fits very much akin to those Darling experienced. He also suffered from strange voices emanating from deep inside his body, as well as revulsion to sacred things, particularly to Scripture read aloud. However, Nyndge's possession differs in one crucial point—nowhere in the possession does an accusation of witchcraft surface.

Alexander's brother Edward serves as his exorcist during the possession, and he assumes that Alexander is suffering partly because he needs to repent of sin and return to God, and partly because God has taken this opportunity to test his faith. Instead of the transference of evil from the innocent body of the possessed to the corrupted body of the witch, Alexander Nyndge's possession emphasizes the importance of the individual's fight against sin, temptation, and the Devil for his own soul.

Alexander Nyndge began to suffer from strange symptoms at seven o'clock in the evening on January 20, 1573. With his entire family watching, Alexander's body began to swell up, his eyes stared wildly, and his body bent inwards.[63] The boy's face was "strange, and full of amazement and fear" during this unusual contortion.[64] Immediately Edward Nyndge, who was a Master of Arts from Oxford University, interpreted his brother's fit as a sign that an evil spirit had come into his brother's body and was tormenting him. In order to relieve the patient's symptoms, he began to read Scripture and adjured the spirit by "the death and passion of Jesus Christ" to tell him why it had chosen to torment his brother.[65] When Alexander was finally able to speak, he asked his brother to continue to help him, for, as he said, the devil was very afraid of Edward. Edward responded that if Alexander would ask forgiveness for his sins and repent, God would not let the Devil hurt him.[66]

This pattern continued throughout the possession case. Alexander would experience physical torments as a result of his possession, would ask for help from his

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[63] Edward Nyndge, *A booke declaringe the fearfull vexasion, of one Alexander Nyndge, beynge moste horriblye tormented wyth an euyll spirit. The .xx. daie of Januarie. in the yere of our Lorde, 1573. at Lyeringswell in Suffolke* (London, 1573), 3.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., 4.

brother, and Edward would then attempt to drive out the demons and would exhort Alexander to repent of his sin and remain strong in his faith. Alexander's symptoms were fairly similar to Thomas Darling's, although some differed. For instance, Alexander had "a strange noise, or flapping from within his body," as well as "a certaine swelling or variable lumpe to a great bignesse swiftly running up and downe between the flesh and the skin."[67] Nyndge would also swell up to an abnormal size, would have audible dialogues with his possessing spirit, and would possess abnormal strength, so that "sometimes foure or five men, though they had much advantage against him by binding him to a chaire, yet they could not rule him."[68] Darling and Nyndge shared symptoms, as well as perhaps possible diagnoses, but their cases differed in several aspects—most notably in how their would-be exorcists approached the causes of their possessions.

The first difference in Nyndge's case is the prominence of his brother Edward as a sort of amateur exorcist. The family described in the pamphlet, written by Edward, is clearly Protestant. At one point, when one of the neighbors assembled in the room offers up a prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Edward promptly asserts that he is offending God. The demon's response seems to indicate a preference for prayers addressed to the Virgin, since these are less effective against demonic power and influence. Edward counters that "Thou lyest, for there is no other Name under Heaven whereby wee may challenge Salvation, but the onely Name of Christ Jesus."[69] The Protestant propaganda is quite obvious here: Edward Nyndge is making the point that traditional Catholic methods of exorcism are ineffective against demonic power and, in fact, may encourage demons in

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 5.

their perversity. Only the power of Scripture and of Christ can prove effective against the evil of the supernatural world.

Edward's role as Protestant exorcist is complicated, therefore, by the necessity of enacting a strictly Protestant exorcism. He cannot rely on the standard Catholic methods or rituals, but rather must invent a ritual of his own. Kathleen Sands points out that Edward Nyndge is, in fact, building on the Catholic ritual of exorcism that dated back to the second century. She also notes that Edward's questions for the demon—his name and his origin—result in a group perception that the demon is Catholic, since its name is French and its homeland is Ireland, details that reinforced the theological direction in which Edward was already going.[70] (This observation dovetails nicely with Sarah Ferber's assertion that the possessed were more or less on the same footing as the divinely inspired, since both groups had knowledge not of this world and could therefore satisfy the very natural curiosity of their exorcists.[71]) Edward Nyndge, then, is in the difficult position of serving as exorcist without a formula, faced with a brother who is simultaneously powerless and suffused with supernatural power, and confronted by the intense physical symptoms of Alexander's mysterious possession.

Edward's response to Alexander's abnormal behaviors and bodily phenomena is revealing. While Thomas Darling seems to have exhibited the symptoms of possession without restraint from family members or bystanders, Alexander Nyndge is forcibly restrained by as many as four or five neighbors and is at one point (as previously noted) even tied to a chair. Edward writes in his pamphlet that his brother "would bounse up a good height from the bed, and bead his head and other parts of his body against the ground,

[70] Sands, 47-48.

[71] Ferber, *Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*, 223.

and bed-stead in such earnest manner, that the beholders did feare that he would thereby have spoiled himselfe, if they had not by strong hand restrained him…"[72] Later, he also mentions the importance of restraint in order to prevent the young demoniac from violent self-harm, saying, "And sometimes he was heaved by the ground by force invisible, the said Edward Nyndge, Thomas Nyndge, Thomas Wakefield, Thomas Goldsmith, William Miles, and William Nyndge Junior, hanging upon the same Alexander unto the middest of the house…"[73] Edward's purpose in restraining his brother is clear: he wished to prevent Alexander from injury inflicted by the evil spirit possessing him. Other sources have interpreted this as a power play on Edward's part to curb his brother's unusual and socially unacceptable behaviors.[74] However, it seems clear that Edward still saw Alexander's body as that of his beloved brother, since throughout the process of exorcism, Edward continued to encourage and speak kindly to Alexander himself. Alexander's body, as a vessel of the supernatural, was still important to his family and friends, for it simultaneously housed the evil spirit they were trying to expel and the soul of the young man they wished to save.

Edward's participation in and leadership of Alexander's exorcism differentiates this case from Thomas Darling's, since Darling lacked a strong-willed exorcist who could determine the appropriate means of dispossession. Nevertheless, Alexander's bodily symptoms serve much the same purpose Darling's did—as a means to establish his veracity, measure the depth of the possessing spirit's malignancy, and ultimately verify that

[72] Nyndge, 4.

[73] Ibid., 5.

[74] Sands, 42. Sands, for instance, argues that binding Alexander to a chair constituted "physical violence" and compares this sort of restraint to the whipping, beating, binding, and ducking other sufferers of mental distress endured during the early modern period. Philip C. Almond argues that "Alexander now speaks from the place which Edward has constructed for him and in the role which Edward has determined for him, as a person possessed by the devil." Philip C. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

the demon had indeed left him. Although Edward seems to be the primary determiner of these signs, Alexander is not a purely passive actor in this scenario. On the contrary, he too recognizes the abnormality of his current behavior and earnestly desires to be freed of the demon. For instance, during his second possession, he cries out to his brother, "Help me brother Edward, and all you that be my friends, and pray for mee, for this foule Feind will come into me, whether I will or no. And therewithal the said Alexander made an horrible spitting, his belly being swelled as before hath beene expressed."[75] Here Alexander's swelling stomach and spitting are proof that he has been repossessed and verify the plea for help he makes just before the symptoms manifest themselves.

Perhaps partly because of Edward's strong presence in Alexander's possession and dispossession, Alexander displays neither Darling's tendency to have long and spiritually self-congratulatory conversations with his possessing devils, nor his inclination to send his neighbors on a witch-hunt by accusing elderly local women. Edward's exhortations toward his brother primarily consist of a very Puritan rubric: repent of your sins, accept the mercy and forgiveness of God, and the Devil will not be able to touch your soul, though he may torment your body. One of the more touching phrases uttered throughout the exorcism narrative is Edward's assertion, "Brother, continue in your faith, and if you goe to hell, wee will go with you."[76] Instead of Darling's more or less unsupervised exorcism, in which the young demoniac clearly was in charge of the spectacle he presented, Alexander Nyndge seems to feel the necessity of his brother and neighbors to drive away the demons and genuinely fears and loathes what is happening to him. For Nyndge, demonic possession

[75] Nyndge, 7.

[76] Nyndge, 5.

seems to be a spiritual trial for both body and spirit, one in which he is constantly exhorted to remain spiritually faithful despite his bodily pain and humiliation.

Alexander Nyndge's possession narrative is marked by the thread common to nearly all early modern cases of demonic possession: spiritual warfare visible in the flesh and blood of the sufferer. Unlike many Catholic exorcisms, in which the corrupted body of the possessed was often conflated with the corrupting power of the encroaching spirit, Edward Nyndge's Protestant exorcism makes a clear distinction between the evil of the possessing spirit, Alexander's faithful soul, and the body that is the battleground for the two. For Edward, Alexander Nyndge's body seems to be the means of both his torment and his salvation, for it is in the bodily signs of possession or dispossession that salvation or damnation is expressed.

Nevertheless, the fact that he is possessed is never interpreted as proof that Alexander is already damned to Hell. Rather, Edward assumes that God is testing Alexander and reminding him to return to the first principles of the faith—confession, repentance of sin, and faith in the saving power of the Almighty. Although for the Protestant Edward these are inner decisions made within the individual soul, he too recognizes the importance of bodily signs that demonstrate faith and spiritual strength. When Alexander is dispossessed and no longer displays physical symptoms of any sort of disorder, Edward sees this as the direct intervention of God on behalf of His suffering child. Alexander's body, therefore, becomes the litmus test of his spiritual state, whether striving to resist evil or resting comfortably in the goodness and mercy of God. Although he does not exhort as Darling does, he does fall into the same pattern of Protestant living martyr—a young but spiritually robust Christian who gains notoriety and respect because of his intense physical sufferings at the hand of the Devil, his determined resistance, and his

ultimate deliverance at the hand of God. Just as Darling did, Alexander Nyndge performs a "good" possession in the gendered theatre of his family, his friends, and his neighbors. By demonstrating his faith in God and his desire to cast out the Devil, Nyndge fulfills his assigned role of a devout young Protestant engaged in fighting within his body the cosmological war between good and evil.

Fid and Sara Williams

Thus far, the cases of Mary Glover, Alexander Nyndge, and Thomas Darling have shown that men's and women's bodies were regarded as equally important and the spiritual authority regarded to both sexes was considered equally legitimate. However, this even-handed approach to gender is not apparent in accounts of possession cases when the writer disagrees with the confessional approach to exorcism in the case. In the case of Fid and Sara Williams, gender becomes a tool in the hands of Protestant writers and polemicists who wish to discredit Catholic exorcists by accusing them of inappropriate sexual conduct with possession victims. Fid and Sara's possessions are therefore interpreted as illegitimate, and they are seen as having no spiritual authority because their possession is assumed to be an elaborate hoax on the part of their exorcists.

Sisters Fid and Sara Williams were two young domestic servants who were exorcized in 1585 by priests hiding in the house of a prominent Catholic lord. Their story differs from the two previous cases by virtue of their gender, the situation of their employment, and the difference in Catholic and Protestant methods of exorcism. Yet at the center of the controversy surrounding Fid, Sara, and the others possessed in this case were the ways in which their bodies are perceived by later Protestant commentators who were angered at the ways in which the exorcisms were handled.

The sole surviving pamphlet that chronicles their possession is clearly biased, for it was written by Bishop Bancroft's staunchly Anglican watchdog, Samuel Harsnett. Harsnett would later gain recognition for his public efforts to expose the prominent Puritan exorcist John Darrell, and already by 1585 had established himself as a decided opponent of several things, chief among them exorcism and Catholicism.[77] His skill at writing sharply-worded and, at times, even inflammatory pamphlets was invaluable to the Anglican hierarchy, but it makes suspect the veracity of the story he presents in *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…*, which chronicles the possessions of Fid and Sara, among others. His eagerness to expose Catholic priests and sympathizers as evil, lecherous, fraudulent, and opponents of truth makes it impossible to determine what actually happened to the possessed at the hands of their exorcists and what is merely Anglican propaganda. However, for the purposes of this study, what is at stake is not what *actually* happened, for that simply cannot be known. Instead, the subject at hand is what Harsnett *thought* happened—what he assumed about the behavior of Catholic priests in regards to the bodies of the possessed (particularly when the possessed victims happened to be female) and how he used those assumptions to discredit those involved.

At the time of the exorcisms, Sara and Fid Williams were working as servants for the Peckhams of Buckinghamshire. Noted Catholic sympathizers, the Peckhams harbored priests in their home despite the illegality of the practice during Elizabeth I's reign.[78] Moreover, they were apparently involved to some extent in the Catholic plot to oust Elizabeth from her throne and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots. In the pamphlet,

[77] MacDonald, xxii, xxiv.

[78] Sands, 91-108. Sands summarizes the story presented in Harsnett's pamphlet, but fails to critique the obvious bias present in his work. Her account will be used here more as background information than as a serious examination of the pamphlet itself.

Harsnett notes that Anthony Babington, one of the chief planners in what he terms this "Guisian" plot, brought four or five coaches full of Catholic sympathizers and Jesuit priests to the Peckhams' residence for clearly treasonous purposes.[79] It was in this charged atmosphere of political unrest and staunchly rebellious religious belief that Sara and Fid began their service as maids.

Harsnett introduces Sara as an attractive young woman advanced to the role of her mistress's chambermaid, vulnerable to the wiles and lures of a group of priests bent on seducing her soul and possibly her body. He presents the account of her "possession" as an example of the priests' willingness to seize on the slightest pretext in order to claim that a potential victim was haunted by demons. According to him, Sara was once frightened by a cat leaping out of a bush, and therefore the priests decided that "Loe heere a plaine case, *Saraes* Cat was a deuill, and she must be Cat-hunted, or Priest-hunted for this sight."[80] Fid, on the other hand, was entangled in the Jesuits' snares by means of a perfectly ordinary household task: washing a bucket full of clothes.[81] Harsnett claims that once the priests had determined by some means that the girls were possessed by demons (apparently without any of the usual symptoms of demonic possession evinced by other sufferers), the true torments began. For Harsnett, at least, the cure to possession delivered at the hands of the Catholic priests was greater than the affliction itself.

Harsnett documents in great detail the practicalities of dispossession, and, despite his clear bias, manages to describe fairly accurately the normal apparatus of a Catholic exorcism: the ritual liturgy, the laying on of hands, the naming and questioning of the

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[79] Samuel Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures*... (London, 1603), 6.

[80] Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures*..., 26.

[81] Ibid.

demon or demons, and the use of objects such as crucifixes to identify the devils and endeavor to cast them out.[82] However, for him the entire process is suffused with a sexualized and libidinous subtext—the sublimated desire of young, hot-blooded priests for intimacy with women. Harsnett sees the priests in this case not as shepherds of souls nor as earnest contenders for converts, but rather as corrupted men creating a theology of possession out of their own frustrated sexuality. His theory is somewhat akin to to that of Dyan Elliott, who argues in *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* that priests created the ideas of incubi, succubi, and finally witches in order to explain and excuse their own sexual temptations and vulnerabilities. As Dyan Elliott puts it, "The requirements of clerical celibacy entailed a repression of libidinal instncts, particularly heterosexual ones…[these] broke through into the conscious mind as hideous and predatory fantasy women…"[83] Although Harsnett's argument is not nearly so sophisticated, the links in his pamphlet between female sexuality, priests' sexual repression, and the demonic are clear.

Fid and Sara's exorcisms began with very physical means of casting out the devils that were supposedly inhabiting them. Harsnett says that Friswood (Fid) was placed in a chair garbed in a cloth with a cross upon it, and that the priest then approached in full traditional garb, ready to apply "salt in her mouth, spittle vppon her eares, and eyes, and annoints her lippes and her nose with oyle, and so God and Saint Frauncis saue the young childe."[84] This was part of her rechristening ceremony, in which her Protestant name and

[82] For more information on Catholic exorcism practices among priests hiding in early modern England, see Alexandra Walsham, "Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England," *The Historical Journal* 46, No. 4 (Dec., 2003): 779-815.

[83] Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 8.

[84]Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…*, 33.

therefore identity were transformed into a new Catholic self. Her sister Sara underwent the same sort of transformation and was newly christened Mary. Harsnett also mentions in his account of the re-christening two crucial details that provide background for the insinuations in the rest of his account: first, that the priests would not allow Fid and Sara's parents to see or talk to their daughters, and second, that the priests emphasized again and again to the girls that they "would euer afterwards hold the religion of the Church of Rome, and neuer goe againe to any of the Protestants Churches."[85] This, in Harsnett's view, is a dangerous step that separates both girls from the safety of family and of true religion. Set adrift from the two pillars that made up the foundation of early modern English life, the girls were vulnerable to the desires—both spiritual and sexual—of young and intemperate priests.

Harsnett goes into a good deal of detail in describing the scandalous behavior of the priests. He points out that the exorcisms are tainted from the beginning, since the Williams sisters knew the finer point of exorcism, as well as its gendered implications, before their own possessions began. In terms of the metaphor of gendered theatre, Fid and Sara were actors on the stage of possession, but their lines had already been written for them. Their exorcists were the scriptwriters and directors of their possessions and exorcisms—at least in Protestant eyes. Harsnett quotes Fid as saying that "the priests would be often talking in her hearing, of certaine vvomen that were possessed beyond the seas,"[86] and quotes Sara saying almost exactly the same things, as well as detailing exactly what behaviors possessed persons exhibited:

[85] Ibid., 35.

[86] Ibid., 36.

> how, when reliques were applyed vnto them, the parties would roare: how they could not abide holy water, nor the sight of the sacrament, nor the annointed Priests of the Catholique church, nor any good thing: how they would greatly commend hereticks: how the deuills would complaine, when the Priests touched the parties, that they burnt them, and put them into an extreame heate: how sometimes they could smell the Priests…[87]

These symptoms are consistent with early modern Catholic narratives of possession and exorcism.[88] However, they also emphasize the embodied relationship of possessed victim and exorcizing priest, a relationship, as previously noted, in which power was paramount and the body of the possessed was often seen as inextricably tied to the supernatural evil that had overtaken it. Unlike Thomas Darling and Alexander Nyndge, who fought their possessions with the power of prayer, fasting, and communal vigilance against spiritual evil, Harsnett implies that Sara and Fid Williams retained no bodily integrity—no sense of two spirits warring for control of the same body. In their efforts to save the sisters' souls, he implies, the Catholic priests who exorcized them had to wholly demonize their flesh.

One of the tools the exorcists used was a combination of a strong fumigant and a potion taken orally, both of which were designed to reveal the secrets of the demons lurking within the girls. Harsnett quotes Fid as saying, "It did so intoxicate, and benum her sences, as in one of her fits, where-into they had cast her by their holy potion, and brimstone, there were two needles thrust into her legge, by one of the Priests (whereof in an other place) and she wist it not, till after shee had recouered her sences."[89] This type of physical pain was

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[87] Ibid.

[88] For more detailed accounts of Catholic possessions and exorcisms, see Ferber, "Possession and the Sexes" and *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 392-421; Hilaire Kallendorf, *Exorcism and its Texts: Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature of England and Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Jeffrey R. Watt, *The Scourge of Demons: Possession, Lust, and Witchcraft in a Seventeenth-Century Italian Convent* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2009); Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern* Europe (London: Routledge, 1994).

[89] Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…*, 42.

meant to both agitate the possessing spirits and prove the depth of the victim's insensibility. (This sort of demonstration was by no means common solely to Catholic exorcisms. There are numerous accounts of Puritan exorcists using the same sorts of methods to prove "true" possession, including in the case of Mary Glover.[90]) The priests also used what Harsnett refers to as "brimstone" to try to literally smoke the demons out of their patients; he quotes Sara's testimony, saying, "they would holde her nose, and face perforce, so neere ouer the smoake of brimstone, feathers, and such other stinking geare, that the very paine she felt, caused her to crie, and scritche very lowde, and to struggle as much, as possibly she could, till her strength failed her."[91] It is vital to note that those efforts concentrated on bodily symptoms and therefore bodily cures—specifically, cures meant to make the body of the possessed victim so miserable a refuge for its tormenting demons that they would find it advantageous to depart.

The priests at the Peckhams' house used these methods—binding the victim in a chair, forcing him/her to drink a potion, and then holding his/her face over a fumigant of noxious-smelling substances—on both male and female victims of possession. However, according to Harsnett, gender equality reached its limits when the priests applied the holy touch of their own hands or garments to the afflicted young women. He derides the practice as simply the desire of young, celibate priests to quite literally get their hands on attractive young women who were vulnerable and therefore unable to resist effectively. Harsnett notes that in the "ancient days" it was more common for men to be possessed than women, but that the tables have turned in his own era, with an emphasis on the gendered nature of possession: "another doubt wil arise, what the cause is, why our holy order hauing

[90] Stephen Bradwell, *Mary Glovers Late Woeful Case* (London, 1603), 21-22.

[91] Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…*, 43.

vnder their holy hands, not onely *Fid, Sara,* and *Anne Smith,* women, but *Trayford, Marwood,* and Ma. *Maynie,* that were men, there is no mention at all of common lodging, and couching the deuil in a peculiar part of the body, but onely in the wenches."[92] It is impossible to know to what extent, if any, the priests exorcizing converts at the Peckhams' residence overstepped their boundaries and took advantage of the men and women in their care. However, it is clear that Harsnett, at least, believes that they were motivated primarily by repressed lust, caused by what he considers the unhealthy enforced celibacy imposed by the Catholic Church.

Harsnett's reference to a "peculiar part of the body" has greater resonance when connected with the medieval Catholic tradition that often lodged devils in the bowels or in similarly shameful places.[93] It also connects to his reference to Hieronymous Mengus, a Catholic theologian who wrote a treatise on exorcism sometimes referred to as *The Scourge of Demons*, and whom Harsnett quotes as saying that devils often reside "in the inferiour parts."[94] In this particular reference, Harsnett is speaking of Sara Williams' toes, knees, and legs, body parts that are perhaps inferior because they are not as important as, for instance, the head or the heart.

However, later he makes very clear precisely which "inferior parts" he means when he directly addresses the priests who exorcized her, saying, "you began with your fiery hands at her foot, and so vp all along her leg; so her knee, her thigh, and so along all parts of her body: And that you followed the chase so close, that it could neither double, nor

[92] Ibid., 62.

[93] See Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 191.

[94] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1927), 660; for the title *Scourge of Demons*, see Increase Mather, *Remarkable providences illustrative of the earlier days of American colonization* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1890), 184.

squat, but you were ready to pinch."[95] He continues in the same vein, reproaching the priests with bringing

> the same holy hands piping hote from the Altar to the chayre, where *Sara* sate at Masse, to seize with the same hands vpon her toe, slip them vp along her legge, her knee, her thigh, and so along all parts of her body, till you came neere her neck, and by the way with the same holy hands, to handle, pinch, and gripe, where the deuil in his blacke modesty did forbeare, till you made her crie *oh:* and then you to crie, *O, that* oh *is the deuill*…[96]

The sexual overtones of the scene are blatant and even crude: Harsnett spares no pains to make clear to his audience the extent to which the priests are using the pretext of exorcism to fondle their young victim, insulting her modesty in their "hunting sport," as he puts it. The combination of ostensibly holy purpose with decidedly impure motives is the worst sort of sacrilege, he implies, a deliberate abuse of the physical and spiritual power granted the exorcist over his possessed victim.

Harsnett is clear about the ways in which Sara and Fid's exorcists view their bodies as sexual terrain as well as sites of spiritual warfare and physical torment. However, he has another fascinating observation regarding the bodies of the exorcists themselves. Several times in his treatise, he notes the effect the bodies of the priests had on the victims of possession: the possessed would cry out that the touch of the priests burned them and would sometimes even display burned flesh after an encounter. As he puts it, Sara "was content to play the she-deuil, touching your [the priest's] presence, and approach, and to grace you with an *Oh I burne, oh I cannot abide the presence of a Catholique*"[97]—a statement that, taken in context with his previous accusations regarding sexual misconduct,

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[95] Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures…*, 75.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

could imply a double meaning of burning with lust as well as with the pain induced by demons angered at a holy touch. Harsnett's quotation of Fid's testimony contains similar double-edged implications: "*Fid Williams* doth complaine (looke in their owne confessions) that with your holy hote burning hands, you did hunt the deuil counter in her too: and did toe-burne, shin-burne, knee-burne her, and so forth, till you made her crie *oh*."[98] Perhaps the clearest connection between the bodies of priests and the bodies of the possessed comes in Harsnett's scathing statement that "*the possessed could not endure the presence of a Catholique priest,* which she as an apt scholler obserued for her cue, and acted it as comly, and gracefully, as you haue heard. Thus much of the power of theyr bodily presence."[99]

Harsnett clearly does not believe that the bodies of priests have any sort of special holiness that can provoke or drive out demons, nor does he give any credence to the behavior of the possessed woman, arguing that her possession is feigned, a clever piece of carefully-learned theatre. However, his references to the burning touch of priests illumines a general cultural understanding of what should and did occur during a Catholic exorcism, as well as early modern ideas about the embodiment of spiritual realities. If Sara and Fid Williams were seen by their exorcists as overtaken bodily by demonic forces, their exorcists saw their own bodies as the natural antidote and antithesis for these forces. Whether or not this method of cure was abused is irrelevant. What is important is that the bodies of these possessed young women and their male exorcists are seen as diametric

[98] Ibid., 76.

[99] Ibid., 70.

opposites—holiness, spiritual power, and masculinity on one hand, and evil, spiritual vulnerability, and femininity on the other.[100]

Conclusion: Gender and Mary Glover's Possession

In order to evaluate Mary Glover's possession in comparison to the three examined thus far, it is necessary to return to Greenblatt's useful metaphor of possession as theatre. Two things have emerged from the possession narratives of Thomas Darling, Alexander Nyndge, and Sara and Fid Williams. First, the efficacy of the exorcism rites performed and the veracity of the possession itself was interactive theatre for the removed as well as for the immediate audience, particularly in a culture that had more printed material available than was possible in previous eras. The local neighbors and curious passers-by could observe Thomas Darling's possession and accusation of Alice Gooderidge, for instance, and could presumably evaluate the character, behavior, and bodies of both possessed and accused for themselves, acting simultaneously as audience and unofficial jury. However, transferring the account of the possession and witch-finding to print also transferred the audience from those actually present at the events in question to a much wider range—in fact, to anyone who was literate and could afford to purchase the pamphlet detailing Darling's possession.

These readers could not, of course, observe the bodies of the possessed victim or the accused witch. They imaginatively constructed the scene instead, based on their own knowledge of or experiences with possession, exorcism, and witchcraft. Their subsequent experiences with these phenomena were, in turn, shaped by the pamphlets about such

[100] For further reference on the binary view of men's and women's bodies in the Catholic Church, especially during the late medieval period, see Elliott, *Fallen Bodies*, 82.

subjects that they had read.[101] Through this engagement with print culture, the bodies of possessed victims and their tormentors (in demonic or witch form) became tropes, symbols that represented the entirety of the reader's preconceptions about witchcraft and possession. The physical realities that formed the very warp and woof of possession and witchcraft became fodder for brilliant polemicists like Harsnett, well-intentioned laymen like Jesse Bee (who is often claimed to have authored the account of Darling's possession), and physicians like Stephen Bradwell, who constructed Mary Glover's possession narrative.

Particularly during the confessional wars that riddled English religious life during the Elizabethan and Stuart eras, print culture was a great boon to propagandists who sought to turn a single possession case into a victory for their side and a crushing defeat for their religious and intellectual enemies. Print as a medium allowed these pamphleteers to bypass the complexities surrounding the physical bodies of the possessed and instead gave them license to use the theatrical nature of possession to reach a wider audience, one that would imagine rather than witness the possession and the behavior of the possessed. This effectively transformed the raucous, community-wide exorcisms of the medieval period that Caciola describes with such vigor. Audiences in early modern England could still witness such events, but more importantly, they could read about them—and, in so doing, they transmuted the raw physicality of possession to a much less immediate and much more intellectual abstraction that turned the real into the symbolic. In other words, the gendered theatre of possession was still enacted in the messy and complex world of reality, but now it was also enacted in the mythologized world of the imagination.

[101] For the influence of printed accounts of possession and witchcraft, see James Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Deception, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England* (New York: Routledge, 2000), in which Brian Gunter forces his daughter to simulate possession based on a number of famous cases of possession and bewitchment he has read about in pamphlets and tracts.

The second observation that emerges from the study of these three possession narratives as compared to that of Mary Glover is the paradoxical nature of how men's and women's bodies are treated in English accounts of possession. Two categories seem to emerge, but they are not the categories that one would expect, nor are they the gendered binaries found in Continental studies of demonology. The first category consists of Protestant living martyrs, young men and women who are possessed either by demons acting of their own volition or through the malicious intent of a local witch.[102] These young men and women are considered to have a sort of split personality disorder from the first moment of their possessions. Their exorcists, as well as the audiences that surround them to witness their torments, regard them simultaneously as righteous young Christians bravely fighting the forces of evil and as helpless souls almost completely overtaken by those forces. They have wills to resist, but yet are captive to demonic commands to an extent that allows self-harm and breaches of social protocol. They can shout hymns of praise, deliver extempore sermons, and beg for their neighbors' prayers to aid their recoveries, but they also speak blasphemies, exhibit crazed behavior that seems more bestial than human, and act out in very physical ways the inward torments of their spirits. When, with the aid of ministers, neighbors, family, and friends, they finally triumph over their demons and are freed, the moment is occasion for great rejoicing and is often seen as a message of some sort to the people of God (in these cases, usually observant Puritans).

In keeping with the general tenor of exorcisms in early modern Europe during this period, these possession narratives are heavy with spiritual lessons. The primary one, of

[102] For two other instances of this category of Protestant possession, look at the possession narratives of the Lancashire Seven, *A true discourse concerning the certaine possession and dispossession of 7 persons in one familie in Lancashire…* (London, 1600), and the Witches of Warboys, *The most strange and admirable discouerie of the three witches of Warboys…*(London, 1593).

course, is that although God's sovereign will occasionally allows His faithful to suffer demonic possession on earth, He will ultimately defend and deliver those victims who call upon him and for whom other members of the faithful intercede. Their bodies are delivered from the physical torments they experience as a metaphor for their deliverance from spiritual darkness and torment. Moreover, in those cases in which witches are accused of perpetrating witchcraft, an even clearer distinction is drawn between the suffering yet innocent body of the possessed and the corrupted, polluting body of the witch. The tormented bodies of the possessed as well as the malicious bodies of witches serve as living, breathing proof of the evil present in the world, against which good Christians must vigilantly fight with the power of Scripture and prayer.

However, the bodies of these young Protestant possession victims also serve as reminders of God's power in the world. So does the violence, fatal or otherwise, committed against the bodies of accused or suspected witches. Both sets of bodies are are testimony that, in times of great political and religious change, God remains faithful to those who follow His commands and believe wholeheartedly in His saving grace, and that His justice will fall swiftly and surely on the wicked who dare to use demonic power for their own ends. For this chapter, the crucial point of the Protestant martyr category is that it offered equal opportunities for both men and women to achieve spiritual authority through their physical symptoms, preaching and testifying to their audiences through the intensity of their suffering.

The second category involves possession victims and exorcists whose spiritual authority was considered illegitimate by those from another confessional background. This category contains possession victims who are accused of faking their possessions and exorcists who are reviled for tricking audiences, taking sexual liberties with victims of

possession, and coaching prospective possessed persons in their roles so as to produce "good" possessions that will convince audiences and win converts.[103] In this case study, those accused of such behaviors were Catholic priests in hiding. However, Puritan exorcists and possession victims could also be accused of fraud and inappropriate sexual behavior. Both groups attracted the ire of the Anglican hierarchy because of their firm belief in the existence of demonic possession and the power and efficacy of exorcism. Samuel Harsnett plays a prominent role in this category as the watchdog of the Anglican establishment, hunting out and publicly decrying exorcists as frauds at best and, at worst, evildoers who take advantage of young, naïve men and women and subvert them to spiritually subversive and even politically treacherous ends.

The behavior of possessed victims in this category is always considered suspect. Unlike the victims described in the positive possession narratives, these young men and women admit later that they are charlatans who have learned the art of simulation at the feet of their exorcists and teachers. They display highly sexualized behavior (for instance, William Sommers was rumored to have engaged in bestiality in one of his simulated fits of possession),[104] deliberately subvert recognized spiritual and religious authorities, and are in essence viewed as either selfish or deluded members of society who have pursued their desire for notoriety at the expense of the truth and societal cohesion. Their bodies are paraded as proof of their wickedness, as their methods of faking the bodily symptoms of possession are exposed and their inappropriate behavior during their fits is revealed as part of a calculated plot.

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[103] Protestant examples of this sort of critical possession/exorcism narrative include Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pindar, *The disclosing of a late counterfeyted possession by the deuyl in two maydens within the citie of London* (1574) and William Sommers, *The triall of Maist. Dorrell, or A collection of defences against allegations not yet suffered to receiue convenient answere…*, (1599).

[104] Walker, 62.

Despite the sometimes harsh language used to refer to those who are accused of faking possession, much harsher language is reserved for their exorcists. As seen in the case of Sara and Fid Williams' possession, Anglican authorities were quick to associate perverse sexual motives and the desire for personal power and satisfaction with attempts to exorcize the possessed. This motif is not only seen in attacks against Catholic exorcists, however; John Darrel, a noted Puritan exorcist, was accused of inappropriate behavior in the case of Katherine Wright, when he apparently lay down on top of her in order to drive a demon out of her belly.[105] The bodies of these exorcists, much like the bodies of accused witches, are portrayed as corrupted by greed, lust, and the desire for power, and their corruption spreads to the bodies of those faking possession under their tutelage. In a stark contrast to the uplifting message of God's power and faithfulness that is highlighted in the Protestant martyr possession narratives, the accounts that accuse possession victims and exorcists of fakery are rife with references to the evil that is in the very nature of humankind and the ease with which humans are seduced into sinfulness and wrongdoing. These victims of possession are not fighting with God's help against the demonic forces pervading the world. Instead, they have become the puppets of a very earthly evil, embodied by the lies and charlatanry of their would-be exorcists. Their accusations against others, whether of witchcraft or other sins, are seen as nothing more than the guilty pointing fingers at innocent members of society for corrupt and selfish purposes.

It is clear to even the casual reader that the purpose of the author is the primary factor that decides the way in which a possession narrative is presented, and thereby the

[105] See Samuel Harsnett's accusations in *A detection of that sinnful, shamful, lying, and ridiculous discours, of Samuel Harshnet. entituled: A discouerie of the fravvdulent practises of Iohn Darrell wherein is manifestly and apparantly shewed in the eyes of the world. not only the vnlikelihoode, but the flate impossibilitie of the pretended counterfayting of William Somers, Thomas Darling, Kath. Wright, and Mary Couper, togeather with the other 7. in Lancashire, and the supposed teaching of them by the saide Iohn Darrell* (London, 1600).

ways in which the bodies of the possessed are portrayed. Puritan pamphleteers wrote of Puritan possession cases in glowing terms, couching the bodies of both men and women as sites of spiritual martyrdom. This perspective granted spiritual authority to possession victims, which was especially important for women. In a religious environment in which they had few opportunities for leadership or public roles, possession offered an opportunity to preach and testify openly without social consequences.

On the other hand, Anglican bishops and chaplains who wrote of possession cases, whether Catholic or Protestant, couched both the possessions and victims' bodies in a very different light. Gender here became a weapon for negative propaganda, and so the bodies of priests, Puritan exorcists, and innocent young girls became easy fodder for scurrilous accusations and sly insinuations. These members of the Anglican hierarchy were not at all interested in laymen and especially laywomen achieving spiritual authority outside the boundaries of the Church of England. Using gender to attack these cases of possession was an excellent way to delegitimize the spiritual authority achieved through possession and relegate possession victims to their proper place in the world.

This conclusion alters the perception of Mary Glover's possession, which falls distinctly into the positive, Protestant "living martyr" category. Far from decreasing her agency or reducing her to a sexualized symbol, Mary's possession gave her spiritual authority that she would not have otherwise possessed as a fourteen-year-old young woman in Elizabethan London. The attention she received from neighbors, family members, and local ministers gave her an opportunity to display the depth and intensity of her faith as she embodied a "good" possession, one that demonstrated both the terrible sufferings wrought by demons and the purity of the possessed person's own spirituality. Furthermore, her long-awaited deliverance from demonic possession offered Mary a moment in which to pay

homage to her family's heritage of Puritan martyrdom as well as present herself to the community as one who had been tested by the fires of Hell and who, with God's help, had emerged victorious. Her body was the proof of her spiritual torment as well as her divine deliverance.

With this in mind, Edward Jorden's treatise arguing that her possession was in reality a form of pre-pubescent hysteria robs Mary of much of her spiritual agency as a possessed victim. If her body is no longer the site of intense spiritual warfare between good and evil, and if her fierce will to fight the forces of evil is no longer a factor in her symptoms or lack thereof, Mary is simply a victim of a medically-diagnosed disease. To be sure, Jorden's treatise has a much more positive effect on the body of Elizabeth Jackson, rescuing it from its corrupt, polluted status and re-establishing it as a worthy corporeal member of good Christian society. But for Mary Glover, Jorden's contention that she suffered from hysteria rather than demonic possession is a crushing blow against her sense of spiritual selfhood enacted in bodily form. Her body is no longer special, selected by God to serve as a lesson to the community of faithful believers. It becomes instead the body of just another young woman suffering from a typical female disease. She is no longer a martyr, but merely a victim of medical circumstances beyond her control.

CHAPTER FOUR

Women's Bodies in Edward Jorden's
A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother

Introduction: Questioning Possession

Although Mary Glover, her family, and the judge at Elizabeth Jackson's witchcraft trial all agreed that her symptoms signaled demonic possession, not everyone was convinced. Edward Jorden, who had been brought in as one of the physicians asked to diagnose Mary, was positive that demonic possession was a rare phenomenon, not something that lurked around every corner of day-to-day London. He saw in Mary's symptoms—the rigidity, the strange and violent behaviors, and her feeling of being choked or suffocated—an entirely different problem: hysteria. According to Jorden, Mary was not faking her symptoms, for she had endured painful tests that proved conclusively that she was truly experiencing some sort of disease, whether natural or supernatural. Jorden, however, was convinced that this particular case was, in fact, natural—that Mary suffered from a common female disease that plagued a large number of young, unmarried women. Despite the fact that his testimony had little effect at Elizabeth Jackson's trial, he remained convicted that his diagnosis was the correct one. Jorden was not a sympathizer with the witch craze; he would later testify in the case of Anne Gunter, partly in order to save the accused witches in the case.[1] He argued in that trial, as in Mary Glover's case, that the young woman at the center of all the hullabaloo was, in fact, suffering from hysteria.

Partly out of sympathy for Jackson, an old woman caught up in a situation in which she had few options for recourse, partly as a defense of his own diagnosis and beliefs about

[1] James Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 122-123.

the natures of both possession and hysteria, Jorden testified at Jackson's trial that Mary Glover was neither a suffering Puritan saint nor a victim of the Devil's machinations delivered through the malicious curses of her old and shrewish neighbor. Rather, he relegated Mary's symptoms to her reproductive system, arguing that it was her "wandering womb" that caused her afflictions, and therefore that her symptoms were natural and could be treated naturally, just like any other medical condition. Mary, he implied, was no different than the thousands of other young women who were at the mercy of their biological functions; his argument hinged on the assumption that, for early modern women, the vagaries of menarche, menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause disrupted not only daily life, but also the basic constitution of the body.

The only way for Mary Glover to be delivered from her symptoms was not through hours-long sessions of prayer and fasting, during which her spiritual importance was proven by her bodily symptoms and her ultimate recovery was the result of God's direct intervention on behalf of one of His chosen faithful. Rather, Jorden countered, it was through the comparatively pedestrian means of medical treatments and a sort of rude psychological therapy. Hysteria was not only common to impressionable young women, he pointed out, but also curable through non-supernatural means. Mary was not a brave Puritan heroine fighting the forces of Hell for control of her soul, but a fourteen-year-old girl at the mercy of her own unruly uterus.

Jorden's diagnosis of Mary Glover's condition, testimony at Elizabeth Jackson's trial, and subsequent treatise all combined to create a powerful argument that was part and parcel of the Protestant desacralization of women's bodies in early modern England. Rather than viewing possessed women as courageous living martyrs whose voices and bodies testified to the power of God to save His people, Jorden argued that such women

were actually suffering from a medical condition that was one of the many detriments of being born female. Their beliefs about the spiritual causes and remedies of their symptoms were to be interpreted as the delusions of patients who were helpless as a result of their diseased reproductive systems. In other words, possessed women were seen as discredited by the proof texts of their own possessions—their bodies.

Hysteria in Early Modern England

If Mary Glover's possession did not exist in a cultural vacuum, neither did Jorden's diagnosis of her symptoms as hysteria. Even the title of his treatise—*A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* —is indicative of the shared cultural understanding of the symptoms and gendered nature of hysteria that his readers possessed. Along with hypochondria and melancholy, hysteria was a common diagnosis in early modern England, a method of explaining the seemingly inexplicable physical and mental torments that assailed men and women alike. The symptoms were manifold and could mimic the signs of other diseases, a trait that has continued until the modern period.[2] However, some symptoms seem to have been common across time periods, since they appear again and again in accounts of hysteria, from Mary Glover's case in 1602 to Jean-Martin Charcot's patients at the Salpêtriére in the 1860s to Freud and Breuer's treatment of hysteria in the late nineteenth century. Andrew Scull provides a helpful list of these classic symptoms in *Hysteria: The Biography*: "loss of speech and sight, and an inability to swallow; paralyses of hands, arms, legs; mysterious swellings of the abdomen or throat; a

[2] Mark Micale notes in *Approaching Hysteria* that the disease we term "hysteria" is more likely a large range of disorders grouped together under this one umbrella-like term, and that hysteria is extremely subjective to cultural interpretation, as evinced by its wildly varied manifestations over the centuries. Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 111, 285.

sense of suffocation; odd breathing patterns; loss of sensation and of reflex action…"[3] Most, if not all, of these symptoms are applicable in Mary Glover's case. However, as evinced by Mary Glover's assertions and Elizabeth Jackson's trial and conviction of witchcraft, these symptoms were not only considered the property of hysteria. They could be interpreted as evidence of fraud, if Samuel Harsnett's outraged polemic against pseudo-possession victims is to be believed, or as proof of supernatural evil—bewitchment, demonic possession, and the presence of the Devil himself.

In the last chapter, several case studies were used to establish that demonic possession in early modern England was culturally understood as a means through which both men and women could gain spiritual authority, local notoriety, and widespread sympathy for their sufferings. Women especially could benefit from the attention that possession brought, since possession granted them a sort of mystical spiritual authority that was not available to Protestant women through official religious avenues. Hysteria, on the other hand, was a firmly gendered diagnosis that offered early modern women few opportunities for authority or agency. Even the term "hysteria" has itself been construed as a derivation of the ancient Greek word for "womb,"[4] and, by the early modern period, the disease was seen as solely the province of women.

A brief look at the secondary literature on hysteria and women serves to clarify the extent to which scholars of both hysteria and of the early modern period agree as to the disease's gendered nature. G.S. Rousseau in his study of hysteria in the early modern

[3] Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21.

[4] Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 1. It should be noted that this interpretation was later challenged by classical scholar Helen King, who argued that Veith had used translations of ancient Greek writers rather than reading the text in the original language, and that this oversight had led her to identify hysteria where other interpretations were perhaps more valid. Helen King, "Once Upon a Text: Hysteria from Hippocrates," in *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4-8.

world sees hysteria partially as a response to a cultural fear of invasive and irrepressible female sexuality and notes that the unquenchable sexual appetite assumed to be at the root of the disorder was seen as morally dangerous by early modern European communities.[5] Elaine Showalter, examining hysteria through the lenses of gender and feminism, argues that hysteria's identity is perceived as intrinsically feminine and feminine identity is seen as always harboring hysteria.[6] Scull notes that female hysterics were the rule (with male hysterics as the exception) until the mass psychiatric casualties of World War I and identifies Mary Glover as the "prototypical hysterical patient, young and, more especially, female..."[7] Micale points out in *Hysterical Men* that, although hysteria was increasingly medicalized during the early modern period in England, it nevertheless remained the province of women.[8] Wendy Churchill, in her excellent study of women as patients in early modern Britain, identifies hysteria as an exclusively female disease, one that that resulted from the fundamental state of being a woman, not just female physiology.[9] By the early modern period in Western Europe, and more particularly in England, hysteria was firmly established as a disease that not only affected solely women, but that was also an inescapable part of female identity.

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[5] G.S. Rousseau, " 'A Strange Pathology': Hysteria in the Early Modern World, 1500-1800," in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, 93, 105.

[6] Elaine Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender," in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, 286-287.

[7] Scull, 23.

[8] Mark S. Micale, *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 15.

[9] Wendy D. Churchill, *Female Patients in Early Modern Britain: Gender, Diagnosis, and Treatment* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 182, 194.

Jorden in Context: Early Modern English Medicine

Jorden's medical treatise, addressed to "the President and Fellowes of the Colledge of Phisitions in London," is not only meant to instruct unlearned commoners who superstitiously confuse hysteria with possession.[10] It is also a defense of the position Jorden took at Elizabeth Jackson's trial, a position for which he was called sharply into question by the presiding judge, Sir Edmund Anderson. Anderson doubted that Jorden's diagnosis was accurate, since the doctor could not claim to be able to cure Mary Glover but, at the same time, did not think she was counterfeiting her symptoms.[11] Jorden's treatise therefore serves the dual purpose of shoring up the Anglican establishment's position (supported by the theory put forth by Michael MacDonald, who argues that there is strong evidence that Jorden's treatise was commissioned by Bishop Bancroft)[12] and defending his reputation as a physician to his colleagues. The College of Physicians to which he refers was a fairly recent regulatory body, established during the reign of Henry VIII in order to police the activities of all medical practitioners within seven miles of the City of London. The College also served as the standard for educated medicine, its associations with Oxford and Cambridge lending it credence.[13] Although Jorden's treatise was no doubt inspired by personal conviction and possibly the influence of Bancroft, certainly one of his primary motives was to restore his credentials with this powerful medical body—a feat he clearly

[10] Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother, Written upon occasion which hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect possesion of an evill spirit, or some such like supernaturall power. Wherin is declared that divers strange actions and passions of the body of man, which in the common opinion, are imputed to the divell, have their true natural causes, and do accompanie this disease* (London, 1603), 1.

[11] Scull, 17.

[12] Michael MacDonald, *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), xxiii.

[13] Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 67.

managed with some success, if his later service for James I in the case of Anne Gunter is any indication.

The world in which Jorden practiced medicine was experiencing an influx of new ideas about science, the human body, and the role of medicine and medical practitioners, yet still retained ideas about anatomy and physiology that dated back to the ancient Greeks and that, in some cases, had been retained throughout the Middle Ages. In order to understand Jorden's perspective more clearly, it is necessary to highlight three specific areas of early modern medicine in which these patterns of change and continuity are present: humoral theory, Paracelsianism, and medicalization.

Humoral theory, the idea that the body was composed of four humors—black bile, phlegm, yellow bile, and blood—pervaded early modern medicine. Each humor was associated with different qualities of bodily composition, personality, and physical tendencies, and an excess of any humor could lead to physical disease or mental disorder.[14] Humors were also associated with the binary categories hot/cold and moist/dry.[15] Unsurprisingly, humoral theory was gendered, with the male constitution viewed as hot and dry, while the female constitution was cold and moist.[16] Partly because of this cold and moist characterization, women's bodies were seen as more open and porous, a quality that translated in the spiritual realm to greater openness to both divine and demonic possession.[17] Nancy Caciola notes that in medieval medical theory women were associated

[14] "The World of Shakespeare's Humors," U.S. National Library of Medicine: National Institutes of Health, http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/shakespeare/fourhumors.html (accessed March 18, 2013).

[15] Churchill, 95.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 25.

with the grosser elements of water and earth, while men were associated with the nobler elements of fire and air—a dichotomy that created cultural assumptions not only about the bodies of women and men, but about their moral and intellectual makeup as well.[18] This medical assumption led to similarly gendered ideas about closed vs. open spaces, transference, and pollution. As Diane Purkiss argues, because of their moist and cold properties, women's bodies were considered "messier and leakier" than men's bodies, easily transgressing the boundaries of an ordered society and polluting sacred spaces.[19] The gendered nature of humoral theory constructed women as inherently threatening beings who needed men's heat to counteract their cold moistness and who, without a man's seed to maintain a natural balance, could become sexually voracious and even aggressive. Thwarted of the fulfillment of their natural sexual desires, they were vulnerable to demonic possession, hysteria, and even that most fearful activity of early modern women, one that turned women's vulnerability into perverted strength—witchcraft.

Women were not only inferior to men in their biological makeup. They were also considered anatomically inferior, inverted or misshapen men whose reproductive systems were inward, backwards representations of the normative male penis and scrotum. Caciola refers to the medieval philosophy of woman as "male manqué," a sort of gendered deformity produced by male seed that failed to develop correctly in utero.[20] Although medieval scholars were prevented by the creation account in Genesis from regarding woman simply as an unnatural mistake, and they were forced to recognize the necessity of woman for the biological purpose of procreation, they nevertheless borrowed from

[18] Ibid., 143.

[19] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 121.

[20] Caciola, 143.

Aristotle's theories in order to identify the male form as normal, wholesome, and good. Women's bodies, the outward manifestations of uncontrollable female sexuality and exemplars of the moral weakness that occasioned the Fall, were regarded as potential sources of corruption, temptation, and perverted power.[21]

Humoral theory was an undoubtedly an influence on both Jorden and his colleagues in early modern London's medical scene, particularly with the College of Physicians' emphasis on Galen's theories in its curricula.[22] However, newer theories about medical treatment were also in vogue, exemplified in the popularity of Paracelsus and his radical notions about the role of chemical compounds in medication. Born in Switzerland in 1493, Paracelsus (whose true name was Philip Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim) was a physician who had traveled throughout Europe and the Mediterranean developing his knowledge of both medicine and nature.[23] His work, noted for its emphasis on a correspondence between the macrocosm (the outer world) and the microcosm (man), also emphasized the use of chemicals as well as plant-based medicines.[24] These distilled chemical compounds (also referred to as iatrochemical medicine) became wildly popular in Elizabethan London, despite the less than enthusiastic opinion of the College of Physicians, which preferred the more traditional methods of humoral medicine.[25]

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[21] Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

[22] Harkness, 67.

[23] Harkness, 60; Owsei Temkin, *The Double Face of Janus and Other Essays in the History of Medicine* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 225.

[24] Harkness, 60; Temkin, 230.

[25] Harkness, 61.

The influence of Paracelsus on Jorden is not exactly clear. Stuart Clark argues that Jorden was "strongly influenced by Paracelsian and iatrochemical ideas," based on his inclusion in A.G. Debus's 1966 work *The English Paracelsians*.[26] Certainly Jorden's work shows the influence of Paracelsus' emphasis on natural causes and natural remedies for disease. Mark Micale includes both Paracelsus and Jorden in a list of scientific and humanitarian physicians who maintained that hysteria was a medical condition with natural causes, not a synonym for demonic possession.[27] Despite the College of Physicians' reticence about Paracelsian remedies, the ideological connection between Paracelsus and Jorden is easily plausible: both understood the world as a natural realm in which disease was naturally caused and curable by natural, not supernatural means.

The third factor of early modern medicine that had a distinct effect on Jorden is the increase of medicalization throughout the early modern period—briefly defined as the ongoing process of male professionalization and control of medicine.[28] Much has been made of medicalization in scholarship on the history of medicine, with opinions ranging from praise for the increased professionalism and effectiveness of medical practice to outrage at the decreased participation of female healers, particularly midwives.[29] However,

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[26] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 235-236.

[27] Micale, *Approaching Hysteria*, 21.

[28] For information on the prevalence of this practice in early modern England, see Roy Porter, "The patient in England, c.1660-c.1800," in *Medicine and Society*, ed. Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 101.

[29] G.S. Rousseau, for instance, sees the process of medicalization as admirable for its empiricism and humanitarianism, while Lisa Forman Cody points out that a number of feminist historians have seen medicalization as a process in which "obstetricians denigrated midwives, magnetically described their own charms, unnecessarily wielded instruments, cruelly thrust them into women, and often killed mothers and infants." Rousseau, " 'A Strange Pathology,'" 116; Lisa Forman Cody, "The Politics of Reproduction: From Midwives' Alternative Public Sphere to the Public Spectacle of Man-Midwifery," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, No. 4, Sites and Margins of the Public Sphere (Summer, 1999): 478.

the most recent and thorough scholarship on the relationship between female patients and male doctors during the early modern period has argued that medicalization is simply irrelevant to the discussion, since the gap between medical theory and the vagaries of medical practice is too great and male physicians' care of women in fact did not disadvantage women compared to men.[30]

Despite these seemingly conflicting opinions about medicalization, the point remains that the process of male physicians becoming more prominent in the care of women made the diagnosis of hysteria as a natural disease with natural cures much easier to make. Moreover, regulatory bodies such as the College of Physicians and its counterpart for barber-surgeons, the Barber-Surgeons' Company, began to impose rules upon their all-male members, rules that were intended to assure the public that only these practitioners had the approval of the most educated medical bodies in the country. While self-diagnosis and going to local healers or folk healers was still remarkably common in early modern England, the process of medicalization that would be nearly complete by the eighteenth century was already influencing cases where unpopular diagnoses were made and defended—cases such as Mary Glover's.[31]

Jorden's Treatise and His Treatment of Women's Bodies

With these factors of the world of early modern medicine and particularly the history of hysteria in mind, it is crucial to examine Jorden's treatise itself for the language it uses about early modern women's bodies. Jorden's language and ideas are both typical for his time period and unusual in their combination of medicine, theology, and cultural

[30] Churchill, 231.

[31] For self-diagnosis and local healers, see Harkness, 65.

presuppositions. They are also surprisingly reminiscent of Harsnett's scathing indictments of the poseurs who, by faking possession, deceived the credulous and converted the weak-minded. (It should be noted, however, that Jorden's references to persons faking possession or mistaking natural diseases for bewitchment are much gentler than Harsnett's.) After all, he presents his work as an effort "to the end that the unlearned and rash conceits of divers, might be thereby brought to better understanding and moderation; who are apt to make every thing a supernaturall work which they do not understand, proportioning the bounds of nature unto their own capacities…"[32] It is clear from the beginning that the pamphlet, though addressed to the College of Physicians, also serves as a sort of public education manual on the proper application of religious belief to the supernatural and medical diagnoses of disease.

Jorden clarifies his theological position vis–à–vis Catholicism and possession early in the treatise, decrying those who

> [abuse] the name of God, and make us to use holy prayer as ungroundedly as the Papists do their prophane tricks; who are readie to drawe forth their wooden dagger, if they do but see a maid or woman suffering one of these fits of the Mother, conjuring and exorcising them as if they were possessed with evil spirits. And for want of worke, will oftentimes suborne others that are in health, to counterfeit strange motions and behaviours…[33]

His frustration is aimed at three separate groups of people: Papists, those who are like the Papists (i.e., Puritans who believed in possession and exorcism), and charlatans who use the feigned possessions of others to satisfy their own desires for wealth and notoriety. Yet Jorden is careful to not dismiss the possibility of supernatural possession out of hand, either

[32] Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, 3.

[33] Ibid.

from genuine conviction or out of a fear of seeming impious. He points out that he does not deny

> but that God doth in these dayes worke extraordinarily, for the deliverance of his children, and for other endes best knowne unto himself; and that among other, there may be both possessions by the Divell, and obsessions and witchcraft, &c. and dispossession also through the Prayers and supplications of his servants.[34]

However, he argues that since such phenomena are "verie rare now adayes,"[35] he would advise his fellow men to be cautious in pronouncing a case to be possession, since many cases are simply the work of fakers and those that are not could in fact be caused by natural diseases.

Jorden points out the usual signs of hysteria—insensibility, chronic fits that come at regular times, and difficulty eating and drinking because of a choking sensation—and refutes the claim that these are signs of possession. All of these are normal symptoms of a disease that is incomparable "either for varietie, or for strangenesse of accidents. For whatsoever straunge accident may appeare in any of the principall functions of mans bodie, either animall, vitall, or natural, the same is to be seene in this disease…"[36] This is a clear example of hysteria's mimetic ability, a trait that made it easy to diagnose but notoriously difficult to prove. However, Jorden has an ace up his sleeve, so to speak, since he is writing obliquely about his diagnosis of a fourteen-year-old girl. He argues that women are especially prone to illness, and more especially prone to *this* illness, saying, "The passive condition of womankind is subject unto more diseases and of other sortes and natures then men are: and especially in regarde of that part from whence this disease which we speake of

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 6.

doth arise."[37] Jorden's coy language is easily understood in connection with his titular reference of "the Mother," an early modern term for the uterus. This bears out Churchill's assertion that early modern physicians saw women's bodies as not only different from men's, but also as needing different sorts of treatment.[38]

For the early modern period, there is nothing unusual about Jorden's argument that women tend to suffer from hysteria, nor is his assertion that womankind's "passive condition" leads to greater incidence of illness out of the ordinary. However, both opinions seem to indicate that Jorden's view of the female body is shaped, and understandably so, by the less active physical role women occupied in early modern society. His medical opinion of hysteria, therefore, is shaped not only by his medical knowledge, but also by his cultural background and experiences, part of the continuous give and take between medical knowledge and popular understanding.[39]

This cultural understanding of women's bodies extends into Jorden's view of women as theological entities. To clarify, Jorden is not writing a theological treatise, despite his clear desire to correct and edify those who believe in the prevalence of demonic possession. Nevertheless, he does have a sort of theology of the body that informs his work, one that is informed by centuries' worth of cultural perceptions about the physical, intellectual, and moral nature of women. Jorden's sources range from Hippocrates and Galen to prominent physicians of his own time period, and he presents their evidence

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[37] Ibid., 11.

[38] "In respect to treatment, practitioners clearly approached the adult body as a 'sexed' body. The female constitution had to be treated differently than the male constitution because…the consequences for bodily health were different." Churchill, 162.

[39] For greater understanding of this process in the early modern world, see Micale's argument that when a disease enters the domain of public discussion, it is impossible to discover exactly how it originated, what it influences or how it is influenced, and how it evolves, and that visual, dramatic, and medical theories and images intersect with each other in a myriad of complicated ways. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria*, 238.

alongside his own partly as proof of the depth of his own medical knowledge and awareness of both ancient and popular medical theory. Yet even in this diversity of source material, little has changed in the ways in which women's bodies are perceived. From the ancient Greek assertion that woman is composed of different elemental materials than man to the medieval argument that woman is a deformed or defective version of man, Jorden's sources reveal a persistent set of assumptions about the nature of women's bodies. His own conclusions reflect the biases present in his source material and in his own cultural milieu, presented through his ideas about the influence of humoral medicine on women's illnesses, the overwhelming power of the uterus to disrupt the female mind and body, and the impossibility of addressing women's medical and psychological needs outside the framework of uterine malfunction and instability. His treatise is important precisely because it operates within this continuity of ideas that stemmed from the ancient world, were enlarged upon in the medieval period, and are replicated in the early modern cultural assumptions Jorden brings to the text. Jorden works within this diverse yet largely continuous cultural background in order to produce the complex blend of theological and medical understandings of women's bodies presented in *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*.

The first important connection that Jorden creates is a re-location of hysteria in the uterus, thus denying possession as a viable reality in women's daily lives and experiences and reinforcing the purely physical nature of their disorder. He again lists symptoms attributed to demonic possession, but is much more specific about the ways in which they are interpreted as elements of the supernatural. As he puts it, physicians are often deceived when they imagine that "suffocation in the throate, croaking of Frogges, hissing of Snakes, crowing of Cockes, barking of Dogges, garring of Crowes, frenzies, convulsions,

hickcockes [hiccups], laughing, singing, weeping, crying…to proceede from some metaphysicall power…"[40] The bodily symptoms that served as proof of the spiritual suffering of the possessed are relegated in Jorden's thought to a misreading, a religious credulity that denies the reality that these are actually natural symptoms of a curable disease. Jorden even uses humoral medicine to make his case, pointing out that "whereas all other diseases are knowne by their notes and signes which resemble their cause (as *Choller, Flegme, Melancholy, &c.* have their proper markes…) so there must be some Character or note of a supernaturall power in these cases…or else we have no cause but to thinke them natural."[41] In other words, Jorden stresses that the burden of proof lies heavily on the shoulders of those who would argue that their experiences or those of their family or neighbors are proof of supernatural possession. Possession, he maintains, must have its own signs that can be differentiated from the common and curable signs of hysteria. His implication is that behaviors such as the ones that he lists should normally be interpreted as hysteria. Possession is the exception, not the rule.

If hysteria is to be taken as the normative diagnosis for symptoms of this type, the root of hysteria is extremely important to Jorden's argument. His entire case for the centrality of uterine disorder as the primary cause of hysteria hinges on his contention that the uterus is the ruling factor of the female body—that if it is healthy, even other diseases will not attack the entire body, but that if it is unhealthy, a woman's entire body will be affected by its condition. As he points out in his second chapter, hysteria "is an affect of the Mother or wombe wherein the principal parts of the bodie by consent do suffer diversly

[40] Jorden, 6.

[41] Ibid., 7.

according to the diversitie of the causes and diseases wherewith the matrix is offended."[42]

A few paragraphs later, he notes that

> although the wombe many times in this disease doe suffer but secondarily, yet the other parts are not affected in this disease but from the Mother…if either the passage be obstructed, or the humor inobedient or malignant, or the functions of the wombe any way depraved, the offence is communicated from thence unto the rest of the body.[43]

The female reproductive system in Jorden's analysis is the foremost offender in issues of women's health. Not only are women more prone to disease than men, but they are doubly at risk because of the interconnected properties of the uterus in relation to the rest of the body. As the treatise continues, Jorden seeks to prove that this interconnectedness is harmful because of the tendency of the uterus to become corrupted and full of malignant humors.

The offending properties of the infected womb are varied and frighteningly powerful in Jorden's analysis of uterine disorders. As he points out, "there wanteth no corruption of humor, vapour, nor evill qualitie, where this part is ill affected, to infect other partes withal…"[44] Disorders of the womb affect the vital faculties (bodily functions such as respiration and blood flow), the animal faculties (memory and understanding), and the natural faculties (growth and reproduction). Jorden notes in his section on the effects of hysteria on the vital faculties that a disordered womb can temporarily "kill" a woman, slowing her vital functions until she appears dead.[45] When hysteria attacks the animal faculties, women behave in irrational, uncontrollable ways, acting out the turmoil that their

[42] Ibid., 9.

[43] Ibid., 10.

[44] Ibid., 12.

[45] Ibid., 14.

disordered wombs have created within their bodies. As he puts it, "very often there happeneth an alienation of the minde in this disease, whereby sometimes they will waxe furious and raging deprived of their right judgement and of rest."[46] The connection between irrationality and the disordered womb is by no means coincidental here. Jorden is subtly implying that women, who are governed by the vagaries of their reproductive systems, cannot be fully rational while at the mercy of such a capricious organ.

The effects of hysteria on behavior are not limited solely to the "furious and raging" conduct described above. Jorden notes the numbness for which both hysterics and the demonically possessed were well known, as well as the forcible contraction of the muscles and feelings of suffocation that were common symptoms. However, he also points out the ways in which animal functions in particular can become, as he puts it, "depraved"—in other words, perverted versions of normal human behavior. Motion, he argues, is depraved when "the motions are immoderate, perverse, inordinate, or indecent, as when they are unquiet, & cannot abstain from motions and gestures, casting their armes and legges to and fro…"[47] In much the same way, respiration can be depraved "when it is done immoderately or inordinately, whether it be voluntarie, or unvoluntarie, as in shortnesse of breath, sighing, yawning, the hickock, sneesing, coughing, belching, vomiting, making of noyses, blowing, and reaching, &c."[48]

The emphasis of both of these passages is on the disorder caused within society by the diseased body. Jorden argues that women suffering from hysteria disturb the boundaries of ordered society by their loud, unruly, uncontrollable behavior. He does not

[46] Ibid., 18.

[47] Ibid., 19.

[48] Ibid., 20.

blame these women, since their behavior is the result of a medical condition over which they have no control. However, when compared to the treatment of bodily disorder in possession account, women's disorderly behavior loses its spiritual component and possible spiritual resolution. Certainly the violent and uncontrollable behavior of the possessed was cause for great alarm for the victims' family, neighbors, and often the victims themselves. But possession was also an opportunity to overcome such violent behavior by the fortitude of one's faith and one's reliance on God's salvation. Hysteria offered no such opportunities for personal spiritual growth. Instead, the bodily disorder introduced into society by hysterics was the result of the unfortunate condition of being a woman cursed with an unpredictable and uncontrollable reproductive system.

Jorden's analysis focuses in on the specific problems that can cause the womb to become a dangerous and unstable factor in a woman's health. Because, as he argues, women contain more blood than men in order to be able to nourish a child in utero, losing large amounts of blood can upset the balance of the humors and cause the womb to move in search of moisture. He claims that Hippocrates himself found that "the overdrying of those parts through large evacuation of blood, wherby the matrix doth labour by such motion as it hath to supply it selfe with moisture from other parts of the body."[49] However, if having too little blood in the body may incite uterine rebellion, having too much may produce the same effect. Jorden also argues that retained menstrual blood can pollute the uterus and create a poison that, as previously established, will assail other parts of a woman's body. If "the patients do want those monethly evacuations which should discharge their bodies of this superfluitie: as we see in strong and lustie maidens, who…have their vaines filled with plenty of bloud, which wanting sufficient vent distendeth them in bulck and thicknes,"

[49] Ibid., 23.

observers will also see that "the matrix is drawne upwards or sidewards…whereupon followeth a compression of the neighbor parts…"[50] Retained menstrual blood is not merely a question of irregular menstrual periods (a problem still addressed by modern gynecologists). It can also produce "corruption and putrefaction…which breedeth divers strange kinds of distemperatures…"[51] Menstrual blood is a particular sort of blood, Jorden implies, one that is more likely than normal blood to putrefy and create noxious poisons that endanger the patient's entire system.

Jorden does not only analyze the quality and dangerous propensities of menstrual blood, however. He also addresses a familiar medical idea about hysteria and the womb—namely, that women also had a "seed" that remained in the uterus unless it combined with the male seed during the act of intercourse. (The idea of an egg released from the ovaries was yet to be discovered.) If the female seed was retained through the practice of celibacy, it was at risk for the same sort of putrefaction and corruption that could pollute menstrual blood. This corruption, however, was far worse. Jorden warns that, "So being depraved or corrupted, it passeth all the humors of our bodie, in venom and malignity…And therefore it is compared to the venom of a serpent, a Scorpion, a Torpido, a madde dogge, &c., which in a small quantirie is able to destroy or deprave all the faculties of our bodies at once."[52] The idea that female seed could first of all become corrupted on its own implies that the very substance of women's bodies is prone to pollution and putrefaction; adding that this particular sort of putrefaction is more venomous and evil than a rabid dog or a snake's

[50] Ibid., 24.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

venom forces home the point that women's bodies are naturally vulnerable to self-destruction.

If this is indeed the case, then what hope have women of preventing this horrible putrefaction from occurring within their own bodies? Jorden provides another deeply familiar answer to his learned medical audience, who would have known both the medical theory of the ancient Greeks and the teachings of medieval scholars who wrote on the human body. He argues that women need intercourse with men to keep their bodies properly regulated and that, without regular sexual intercourse, women are much more likely to develop this "corruption of nature." He seeks to prove this by pointing out that

> divers women enjoying the benefit of marriage, yet through the suppression of their ordinary evacuation falling into this disease, had their respiration and vitall faculties untouched, although otherwise they were most grievously affected…others also having those ordinarie matters in good sorte, yet being widdowes and taken with this grief have felt decay in those faculties as well as in the rest.[53]

In other words, women who have regular sexual intercourse may retain menstrual blood and yet not suffer from hysteria as violently as women who do not retain menstrual blood and yet are celibate. Women need sexual intercourse to regulate their bodies, Jorden maintains. Their bodies are not innately whole in and of themselves, but rather are in need of men's bodies in order to be complete and healthy. Jorden states his position more clearly later on, saying plainly:

> As in this disease the want of due and monethly evacuation, or the wantof the benefit of marriage in such as have beene accustomed or are apt thereunto, breeds a congestion of humors about that part, which increasing or corrupting in the place, causeth this disease. And therefore we do observe that maidens and widowes are most subject thereunto.[54]

[53] Ibid., 24-25.

[54] Ibid., 27.

Jorden, whose pamphlet was at the very least influenced by Bishop Bancroft's campaign against Puritan and Catholic possessions and exorcisms if not a direct outreach of that effort, was a staunch Protestant, a steadfast believer in a world where God was sovereign but in which the boundaries between heaven and earth were firmly drawn. The things of heaven and hell did not intermingle with the natural diseases found in the daily lives of men and women. Hand in hand with this view of possession and the role of the supernatural was skepticism about the spiritual value of virginity. In a break with his medieval English forebears, who saw virginity as a path to spiritual authority, particularly for women, Jorden sees women as part of potential Protestant families—possible wives and mothers who are responsible not for maintaining their virginity for Christ, but rather for creating a society of God-fearing men, women, and children who seek to live out the kingdom of God here on earth.[55] The "benefits of marriage" are a duty as well as a medical necessity, and unmarried or childless women are not only increasingly societally superfluous in Jorden's early modern England—they are also at risk for their own bodies' betrayal.

Conclusion: The Spiritual Effects of Hysteria

It can be argued that Edward Jorden's treatise was neither particularly groundbreaking nor overwhelmingly influential. *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* did not become a staple of cultural discourse in the same way that Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* or Reginald Scot's *A Discoverie of Witches* did, and it did not advance medical arguments that were new—in fact, much of its

[55] Beth Barr, "Early Modern Women in the Church" (lectures over Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* and Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household*, Baylor University, Waco, TX, February 28 and March 7, 2013).

controversial nature was drawn from the fact that Jorden was resurrecting Galenic theories in order to explain the importance of the womb to the causes of hysteria.[56] Nevertheless, Jorden's short treatise on the causes, symptoms, and treatments of hysteria made a significant difference in the ways in which early modern women's bodies were perceived and was a milestone in the progressive desacralization of women's bodies.

In the medieval period, women's bodies were perceived as open and porous, which contributed to the general perception that they were fickle and easily swayed, but which also gave rise to the idea that they were more vulnerable to persuasion of a demonic or divine nature—in other words, possession.[57] While possession could prove a liability for women, it also offered opportunities for exploring speech, behavior, and spiritual power that were ordinarily inaccessible to women in medieval Western Europe. This concept began to change as England underwent religious reformation during the early modern period. The Anglican establishment's insistence that possession and exorcism were relics of a superstitious past prevented women from accessing this particular channel of subtle spiritual authority, depriving them of the long tradition of female mysticism inherited from their Catholic forebears. Puritan possessions and exorcisms, however, upheld this tradition, albeit in a different format and with radically different theology. Through possession, young Puritan women and men could show their faithfulness via a host of bodily symptoms that ostensibly proved their suffering at the hands of the Devil. Their exorcisms offered the community of believers further proof that God was remaining faithful to the righteous young victim whose faith in Him had not wavered despite the trials induced by the Evil One.

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[56] For Jorden's reliance on Galen, see Rousseau, " 'A Strange Pathology,'" 116-122.

[57] For explanations of the relationship between women's bodily porousness and demonic/divine possession, see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits* and Elliott, *Fallen Bodies.*

Jorden's treatise turns this understanding of the relationship between body, suffering, and spirit on its head. By arguing forcefully that early modern women were not experiencing the symptoms of possession, but rather those of hysteria, Jorden seeks to demolish the spiritual recognition granted these women and instead reminds his audience that they, like all women, are in fact subject to the dictatorial whims of their wombs. Rather than emerging as Puritan saints who have fought the Devil and won with God's help, possessed Puritan women are perceived to be the same as all other women, considered to be less rational and less capable simply by virtue of their own capricious reproductive systems. Although this is most likely not Jorden's primary intention, or even his intention at all, he nevertheless reinforces the physical boundaries of female versus male anatomy at the expense of the spiritual recognition and deference to lived experience granted by their audiences to Puritan women who claimed possession. Their spiritual victories, whether valid or false, feigned or genuine, were no longer of importance. Their identities were based rather on their bodies, those porous, leaky entities so easily polluted by the unstable, wandering womb.

CHAPTER FIVE

Male and Female Bodies in the East Anglia Witchcraft Trials

Introduction: Accusing Evil

As Mary Glover's possession played out before an ever-increasing audience, suspicion began to grow that her symptoms were the result not only of supernatural evil, but also of human malice—in other words, that she had been bewitched. The link between possession and bewitchment was not always immediate in the early modern world Mary and her contemporaries inhabited. Sometimes possession and exorcism occurred without any reference to witchcraft whatsoever, as in the case of Alexander Nyndge.[1] However, many possession cases culminated in the arrest and punishment of a local woman suspected of having caused the victim's torments through malevolent witchcraft.[2] It was certainly not outside the realm of possibility for Mary's friends, family, and physicians to consider witchcraft as a potential cause of her inexplicable physical symptoms and the agonies she continued to experienced.

Elizabeth Jackson's situation, behavior, and demeanor before and during her trial did little to challenge the assumption that it was she who had bewitched Mary Glover. She

[1] Edward Nyndge, *A booke declaringe the fearfull vexasion, of one Alexander Nyndge, beynge moste horriblye tormented wyth an euyll spirit. The .xx. daie of Januarie. in the yere of our Lorde, 1573. at Lyeringswell in Suffolke* (London, 1573), bk.

[2] Such cases include those of Thomas Darling, Margaret Muschamp, Anne Gunter, and the Lancashire Seven (also known as the Starchy Seven). For references, see *The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapen hill…* (London, 1597); *Wonderfull News from the North. Or, a true relation of the sad grivovs torments, Inflicted upon the Bodies of three Children of Mr. George Muschamp, late of the County of Northumberland, by Witch-craft…* (London, 1650); James Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Deception, Witchcraft, and the King of England* (New York: Routledge, 2002); George More, *A true discourse concerning the certaine possession and dispossession of 7 persons in one familie in Lancashire…* (1600).

had already had a confrontation with the girl, and her subsequent behavior—rejoicing at Mary's illness, giving the girl an orange that seemed to worsen her symptoms, and boasting that God had stopped the mouth of one of her enemies—reinforced the suspicion that she had taken her revenge on Mary via supernatural means.[3] It certainly did not help matters that Mary's fits instantly became worse whenever she encountered Jackson, nor did it help that Mary's physicians seemed unable to find a cause for her symptoms or a potential cure.[4]

Suspicion led to outright accusation before the Sherriff of London and the Recorder of London, at which point Jackson was submitted to various tests in order to establish whether or not she was responsible for Mary's condition. These included bringing in an old woman dressed like Jackson in order to see if Mary reacted in the same way she usually did when confronted with Jackson herself, burning Mary Glover during one of her fits to see if she was feigning possession, burning Jackson to see if she felt pain, and commanding Jackson to recite the Lord's Prayer and the Creeds.[5] When all these tests proved positive for witchcraft, Jackson's fate was sealed: she would go to trial before Sir Edmund Anderson, one of the most notorious witch-hanging judges of his age.[6]

In his introduction to two of the texts that arose out of this trial, Edward Jorden's *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* and Stephen Bradwell's *Mary Glovers Late Woeful* Case, Michael MacDonald points out that Elizabeth Jackson's trial for witchcraft was unusual in many aspects, including the ritualized confrontation that

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[3] Stephen Bradwell, *Mary Glovers Late Woeful Case, Together with Her Joyfull Deliverance* (London, 1603), reprinted in *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case*, ed. Michael MacDonald (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), 1-5.

[4] Ibid., 5, 7-9.

[5] Ibid., 20-21.

[6] Introduction, *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case*, ed. Michael MacDonald (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), xvi.

began to develop whenever Mary Glover and Elizabeth Jackson were in the courtroom at the same time.[7] Mary would repeatedly fall into a faint, cry out, and, most frightening of all, would mutter "hang her, hang her" in a deep voice through her nostrils.[8] However, there were more traditional elements to the trial as well. The witnesses against Jackson emphasized her ungodly nature, with one preacher referring to her "lewde tongue" and his experience of her inability to repeat sacred texts while he was ministering to her in prison.[9] Other witnesses spoke of Jackson's fondness for going to fortunetellers, her habit of cursing those who displeased her in some way, and her seeming ability to be able to make her angry maledictions come to pass.[10] Lastly, Jackson was declared to have suspicious marks "in divers places of her body…such as are like the markes which are described to be in Witches bodyes."[11] The evidence damning Jackson as a witch was beginning to amount in alarming quantities.

Sir Edmund Anderson's address to the jury before their deliberation is perhaps the best summary of the mindset that saw Elizabeth Jackson as a witch based on evidence that would never be deemed acceptable in a modern court of law. Anderson informed the jury that England was full of witches, and that he of all people should know this for a fact, since he had hung twenty-five or twenty-six of them himself. He reminded them that witches could be identified by their strange marks, from which the Devil would suck their blood, and that these marks symbolized the depth of perversion to which these creatures had

[7] Ibid.

[8] Bradwell, 22-23.

[9] Ibid., 25.

[10] Ibid., 25-26.

[11] Ibid., 25.

fallen: they had "forsaken god, renounced their baptisme, and vowed their service to the Divill."[12] He also argued that cursing and the ability to wreak harm on others with nothing more than evil words was a traditional sign of witchcraft. Finally, he pointed out to the jury that the fits that had plagued Mary Glover for so long could not possibly be caused by natural means, for they were too regular and too easily influenced by the presence or absence of Elizabeth Jackson. His address was successful. Within a short period of time, the jury returned with their decision: Elizabeth Jackson was found guilty of witchcraft and was sentenced to one year in prison and four times standing on the pillory.[13]

Comparing Male and Female Bodies in English Witchcraft

Historian Lyndal Roper has pointed out the importance of emphasis on the body as a means of understanding the self in the early modern period, particularly in the contexts of witchcraft and demonic possession. In the introduction to *Oedipus and the Devil*, her study of masculinity and femininity in early modern Germany, she says, "Sexual difference is not purely discursive nor merely social. It is also physical…How indeed can there be a history of sex which is purely about language and which omits bodies?"[14] More recent work on the early modern period and specifically the history of witchcraft has in fact tended to emphasize the importance of the body, and yet many studies that have a distinct focus on gender and witchcraft examine language at the expense of the body. While rhetoric concerning gender is deeply important and certainly worthy of study, examining that rhetoric in conjunction with what the sources say about the bodies of those involved

[12] Ibid., 28.

[13] Ibid., 28-29.

[14] Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 17.

provides a more balanced consideration of what early modern people experienced as well as said about their bodies.

With this emphasis on bodies and embodied experience in mind, this chapter will compare and contrast treatment of male and female bodies in several witchcraft pamphlets from the East Anglia trials of 1644-1645 and will argue that men's bodies were perceived differently than women's bodies in the act of witchcraft. In this examination, it is of course necessary to examine not only what was purportedly happening to the bodies of witches, but also what was being said about witches' bodies by the accused themselves, as well as their accusers and neighbors. The body therefore becomes contextualized as both a rhetorical construct and an actual presence within these texts and will be dealt with in both ways.

This chapter contributes to the larger work on witchcraft and the body in two ways. The argument that men's and women's bodies were treated differently in early modern English beliefs about witchcraft is not a new one. However, this chapter comes to this conclusion through a close analysis of specific, related texts from a specific series of trials and, in so doing, presents a fresh, concrete example of the viability of this argument. Second, this chapter answers the need for smaller, regional studies that can shed some light on the ways in which men's and women's bodies were perceived as different in witchcraft literature from specific areas of early modern Europe. While broad conclusions about the nature of early modern beliefs about witchcraft are very useful, small regional studies provide the building blocks that can either buttress these larger arguments or serve as counterexamples that challenge the predominant theories.

Within the broader thesis, this chapter serves three purposes. First, it offers a broader framework with which to understand the witchcraft trial of Elizabeth Jackson in

terms of the importance of the female body. The comparison of male and female bodies in the East Anglia trials gives a basis for looking at the similar features in the accusations levied against Jackson and offers a means of comprehending the relevance of bodily signs and behaviors for early modern English audiences. Second, it serves as a counterpoint to Jorden's treatise, with its emphasis on the irrelevance of witchcraft in the early modern period and its insistence on rational explanations for seemingly inexplicable phenomena. Despite the voices of skeptics such as Jorden and the slow but steady onset of medicalization and rationalism, communities in East Anglia in the 1640s still believed firmly in the existence of the supernatural and in the likelihood of malevolent witchcraft being practiced by their less charitable members. Jorden's treatise may have had a long-lasting effect on students of hysteria and psychology, but a short forty years after its publication, it seems to have held little to no importance for English juries, judges, and pamphlet writers. Beliefs in witchcraft were too long held and deeply rooted to be immediately eradicated with the force of reason and arguments about the medical nature of women's bodies. Finally, this chapter demonstrates that, while women's bodies in witchcraft could be and often were both vilified and victimized, they could also serve as sources of supernatural power and authority. Even though witches' power was seen as malevolent and demonic in nature, it nevertheless could grant an accused witch spiritual power and authority in her community.

Early English Witchcraft and the Role of the Body

In order to comprehend the type of witchcraft referenced in Elizabeth Jackson's trial and the East Anglia trials of 1644-1645, it is necessary to understand the nature of witchcraft in early modern England and the importance of the body within these

conceptions of witchcraft and diabolism. There is a sense of desperate pitched battle between the opposing forces of good and evil that characterizes the primary sources offering glimpses into witchcraft in the early modern period, as well as the secondary literature that builds theory around the particularities of individual cases and treatises. As Robin Briggs points out in *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, the very term "witch" is indicative of a symbolic division within the community, for "The witch is an incarnation of the 'other,' a human being who has betrayed his or her natural allegiances to become an agent of evil."[15] This view was not limited solely to witches; by the early modern period, the supernatural itself was being assimilated into a cosmological understanding of God pitted against the Devil, light waging a war against darkness. This was partly the result of religious tensions produced by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. As Kathryn Edwards puts it in her introduction to *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits*, "The Reformation especially has been described as doing away with the ' "third world"' of the medieval cosmos (that is, the realm of spiritually liminal figures) and stressing the supernatural as part of a binary opposition between divine and demonic forces…"[16]

This sense of restlessness and change was not limited only to matters of the supernatural, however. Several eminent historians who specialize in witchcraft—Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane among them—have argued that the early modern period was notable for this motif of change and upheaval…economic change that left significant portions of the population hovering on the edge of abject poverty, repeated religious change

[15] Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 1.

[16] Kathryn A. Edwards, "Expanding the Analysis of Traditional Belief," in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief and Folklore in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2002), xii.

that left ordinary men and women confused as to whether Catholicism or Protestantism was the true path to God, and social change that began to challenge the authority of the Church, the king, and the power of the local landholder.[17] Although belief in witches and the power of witchcraft had existed in Europe for centuries before the witch-hunts of the early modern era, the period between 1450 and 1750 is unique in the high number of witches accused and executed and the severity with which they were treated. Briggs, for instance, cites the number of trials during this period at 100,000 and suggests that between 40,000 and 50,000 executions took place. Of those executed, 75 to 80 percent were women.[18]

If women were the principal group of persons comprising accused and convicted witches, of what exactly were they accused? What practices identified a woman—or, more rarely, a man—as a witch? The answer varies according to region, and yet several elements hold steady across the entirety of Western Europe for the early modern period. Brian Levack identifies these in his introduction to *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, pointing out that the first sign of a witch in any European society was the "practice of harmful, black, or maleficent magic, the performance of harmful deeds by means of some sort of extraordinary, mysterious, occult, preternatural or supernatural power"[19]—in short, *maleficiae*. He identifies the second sign as the witch's relationship with the Devil, which often involved a pact of some sort or a promise on the witch's part to do the Devil's bidding, sometimes in return for a reward. The combination of these two signs—harmful magic and a pact with the Devil—made witches doubly dangerous to well-ordered society.

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[17] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A regional and comparative study* (New York; Evanston: Harper and Row, 1970); Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); Briggs, " 'Many reasons why'," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[18] Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*, 6.

[19] Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London; New York: Longman, 1995), 4.

Not only were these men and women practitioners of harmful magic that could neither be anticipated nor avoided, but they were also consorting with powerful, evil beings who could presumably give them even greater abilities to destroy their enemies.

Within this general picture of black magic and diabolism, the importance of regional differences should not be understated. As this study focuses on early modern beliefs about witchcraft in England, it is vital to note that English beliefs about witchcraft differed in several respects from those on the Continent. Levack points out that the English conception of witchcraft usually came from ordinary people, not the educated governing classes and ecclesiastical bodies; this translated to a widespread belief in *maleficae* but few popular notions of diabolism, beliefs in which tended to be concentrated among magistrates and scholars.[20] Alan Macfarlane boldly outlines the differences between English and Continental beliefs about witchcraft, arguing "…English witchcraft appears to be very different from that on the Continent and in Scotland…witches in the county of Essex were not believed to fly, did not meet for 'Sabbats' or orgies, dance and feast, indulge in sexual perversions, like some of their Continental counterparts."[21] Elsewhere, he observes dryly that, in comparison to African witch doctors, the Essex witches "lived an austere and blameless life, neither flying, dancing, [nor] feasting on human flesh…"[22]

Barbara Rosen also notes the difference between conceptions of witchcraft in England's bottom-up system, in contrast to what she sees as a top-down system of imposed belief practiced on the Continent. As she puts it, "On the Continent…the Inquisitors had in effect 'chosen' the form by which social fears and tensions should be discharged. Magical

[20] Levack, 10.

[21] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A regional and comparative study* (New York; Evanston: Harper and Row, 1970), 6.

[22] Ibid., 215.

folk-lore and superstition did not naturally develop in the idea of heretical witchcraft…that picture was formulated by theologians and stamped across the fears of Europe."[23] Rosen's penchant for rhetorical flair nevertheless reveals the principal fact that she seeks to convey: English beliefs about and practices concerning witchcraft for the most part developed organically and stemmed from the actual fears and opinions of ordinary people rather than scholars and jurists. Witchcraft accusations and trials reflected commonly held superstitions regarding witches and witchcraft, and thus many of the diabolical perversions that distinguished Continental ideas about witchcraft were simply not present in English conceptions of the supernatural.

The role of the body, particularly the female body, in early modern English beliefs about witchcraft is vitally important to an understanding of their nature and depth. Witchcraft was conceptually very closely tied to the body itself, whether or not suspected witches actually performed those activities of which they were accused. Despite the patent impossibility of some of these feats to modern eyes, in the early modern world the body was a natural outgrowth of whatever infested or enlightened the soul. Witches who had sold themselves to the Devil could easily break the laws of nature in bodily form or could shift to other forms when their own corporeal bodies did not suit their purposes.[24] The primary references to female bodies in English rhetoric concerning witchcraft cover three themes: witches consorting with or having carnal knowledge of the Devil, witches' relationships with their familiars, and women mistaking normal female illnesses (specifically "the mother," or hysteria) for symptoms of bewitchment. Within these themes

[23] Barbara Rosen, ed., *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 21.

[24] For instance, women could send out their supposed magical power in the form of familiars, small demonic creatures in the shape of animals, in order to harm their intended targets. See as an example *The wonderful discouerie of the vvitchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower…* (London, 1619).

threads emerge that are related to the roles of women in the early modern world; women are construed as sex partners, as mothers, and as victims of their own femaleness, trapped in bodies that are weaker than men's and inherently more prone to moral instability and irrational decisions.[25]

However, men could also be witches, despite the fact that women made up the vast majority of those accused of witchcraft in early modern England. Scholars have more recently begun to examine the role of masculinity in early modern English witchcraft, and their findings have produced several ways of interpreting male witchcraft.[26] First, some male witches fit neatly into Robin Briggs' model of economic deprivation and societal marginalization simply because they were poor, desperate, and of low social standing.[27] Second, some male witches fit the model of an aggressive, litigious neighbor, the male version of the scolding goodwife. Third, some male witches seem to occupy a different space within English witchcraft—that of the magician or sorcerer, whose form of magic could be considered a form of higher learning and was therefore less suspect than the petty practitioner of village *maleficiae*.

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[25] For further exposition of the role of women's bodies in studies of early modern witchcraft, see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 106-133; Levack, 133-140; Christina Larner, "Was Witch-Hunting Woman-Hunting?", in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge, (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 273-275; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 116-118; Julian Goodare, "Women and the Witch-Hunt in Scotland," *Social History* 23 (Oct., 1998): 137.

[26] For further examination of male witchcraft and the role of masculinity, see Lara Apps and Andrews Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); E.J. Kent, "Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England, 1593-1680," *History Workshop Journal* 60 (2005): 69-92; Alison Rowlands, ed., *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Karin Amundsen, "The Duke's Devil and Doctor Lambe's Darling: A Case Study of the Male Witch in Early Modern England," *Psi Sigma Siren* 2, No. 1 (July 3, 2012): 29-60.

[27] See Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*.

Within these categories, of course, there are always male witches who refuse to fit any sort of mold and who simply have to be taken on their own terms. Moreover, there is a somewhat heated debate concerning whether or not male witches are to be considered effeminate, or bad men/patriarchs; there is also debate on the subject of whether or not men tended to be accused as witches through their relationships with women who already had reputations for witchcraft. Despite the tensions in current scholarship about how exactly male witchcraft should be addressed, it is safe to say that male witches were, to put it very simply, *different* from female witches. Male and female witches at times carried out similar sorts of *maleficiae* and were treated with similar severity by the courts when they went to trial. However, the ways in which they are discussed in trial records and witchcraft literature of the period show a distinct difference in how they were perceived as witches—notably, in discussions of their bodies.

Male and Female Bodies in Witchcraft Trial Records

The witchcraft trials examined in this study all come from a series of accusations, examinations, and formal trials known collectively as the East Anglia trials. They began with petty gentleman turned witch hunter Matthew Hopkins, who in 1644-1645 began to voice concerns about witches in his home county of Essex. As more and more people were accused, the panic spread from Essex to Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire, extending as far as the Isle of Ely. Historian James Sharpe has found references to about 240 alleged witches during the episode, which gives scholars the ability to term the trials a major witch panic.[28]

[28] Jim Sharpe, "The devil in East Anglia," in *Witchcraft in early modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 237-238.

Two of the pamphlets produced from the East Anglia trials—*A true and perfect relation of the Witches…at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke* and *A true and exact relation of the severall informations, examinations, and confessions of the late witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex*—are useful for the purposes of the study at hand, primarily because they feature both men and women as accused witches. Among the list of those executed are sixteen women and two men, one of whom is listed in conjunction with his wife.[29] This affords an excellent opportunity for examining discussions of male and female bodies within a single series of trials and negates the circumstantial difficulties inherent in comparing and contrasting records from two completely different trials. The accused witches in the Essex and Suffolk trials, both male and female, were all well-known by their neighbors and played actives roles in village life. The evidence produced against them, therefore, has a homogeneous quality that lends itself to analysis.

Women as Witches: The Body and Female Sexuality

The women examined in the East Anglia trials demonstrate the importance of the body in early modern English concepts of female witchcraft. Unlike the few men examined in the trials, whose bodies are of minimal importance to the witchcraft of which they are accused, women's bodies are central to the ways in which they are accused of performing and participating in witchcraft. This bodily involvement primarily occurs in two ways: through witch's marks, the physical evidence of an intimate relationship with supernatural evil, and carnal relations with the Devil. Through examining these two types of embodied witchcraft, this section looks at how early modern women's experiences with witchcraft were categorized and also examines their own accounts of interacting with the supernatural.

[29] *A true and perfect relation of the Witches…at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke* (London, 1645).

The role of witch's marks in witchfinding and as legal proof in witchcraft trials is central to the evidence about women's witchcraft in the East Anglia trials. The Suffolk pamphlet gives a multiplicity of options as to the locations of witches' teats: they could be found "under their armes, some under their tongue, some in the roofe of their mouth, some on the crown of the head some amongst their toes, some in their fundament, and divers other places…"[30] The method for discovering teats was both humiliating and revealing: the searchers (in this case, most likely Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne) would "take the partie or parties so suspected into a Roome & strip him, her, or them, starke naked, and on whom the searchers find any teats or dugs, that partie or parties, the said searchers set upon a stoole or stooles, in the midst of the Roome…"[31] The physical degradation involved in being nude and exposed must have been acute, particularly when teats were found in the area of the genitals.

Female witches, it seems, were far more likely than their two male counterparts to have teats located on their genitals—or, at the very least, the locations of those teats were more likely to be mentioned. Anne Leech of Misley, whose confession is recorded in the pamphlet, said that her imps "did usually suck those teats which were found about the private parts of her body," and that their intervention was needed to preserve her bodily health.[32] Her confession is echoed in *A true and exact relation of the severall informations, examinations, and confessions of the late witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex*, which was published in London in the same year as the Suffolk cases and deals with many of the same accused witches. The Essex pamphlet, which overlaps with the Suffolk

[30] Ibid., 4.

[31] Ibid., 6.

[32] Ibid., 7.

cases and is tied to them by virtue of Matthew Hopkins' involvement in both trials, also emphasizes the prevalence of teats in women's "privy parts." Mary Greenleife, for instance, was searched by Elizabeth Hunt and Priscilla Brigs, who reported that

> the said *Mary* had bigges or teates in her secret parts, not like Emerods [hemorrhoids], nor in those places where women use to be troubled with them; and that they verily beleeve, these teates are sucked by her Impes; for that these Informants have been formerly imployed to search other women suspected for Witchcraft, who have had the like bigges, and have afterwards confessed themselves to be Witches.[33]

Two things are notable in Hunt and Brigs's statement: first, they were clearly familiar with alternate explanations for witches' marks and were nevertheless convinced that Mary's marks were a sign of witchcraft, and second, they had previous experience searching other *women* for witches' marks and therefore claimed that they could diagnose them accurately. Since it would have been highly irregular for a woman to search a naked man, Hunt and Brigs's experience is limited solely to women and is therefore, by necessity, gendered towards the female body.

Another instance of the closed information loop of women searching women for marks occurs later in the Essex pamphlet, when Francis Milles gives her testimony after searching accused witch Margaret Moone for marks. Milles testifies that "she found three long teats or bigges in her [Margaret's] secret parts, which seemed to have been lately sucked; and that they were not like Pyles, for this Informant knows well what they are, having been troubled with them her self."[34] This reference to the searcher's personal experience of the female body could serve to either bind the two women together in a shared knowledge of bodily pains and maladies, or, conversely, it could serve to alienate

[33] *A true and exact relation of the severall informations, examinations, and confessions of the late witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex…* (London, 1645), 16.

[34] Ibid., 24.

the accused woman if the appearance of her marks did not coincide with the searcher's own experience.

This is not to say, of course, that a male searcher could not have made the same observations or come to the same conclusion. In fact, seventeenth-century skeptics often observed with horror that almost anyone with a suspicious wart was subject to accusations of witchcraft. Nearly twenty years after the East Anglia trials, pamphlet writer Thomas Ady protested strenuously that

> very few people in the World are without privie Marks upon their bodies, as Moles or stains, even such as Witchmongers call *The Devils privie Marks*…many an honest man or woman have such excrescences growing upon their bodies…There is a Disease often found in men or women in the seat of people, called Hemorrhoids, or Piles…and for this Disease many have been accused by ignorant people, and put to death for Witches…[35]

Clearly his target audience, those who searched for witches' marks, had been well aware of this possibility for some time. Why they chose to ignore the medical explanation in favor of the supernatural may have something to do with the insistence of the witch-hunters or their own beliefs about the guilt or innocence of the accused, or could have in part been a result of the gendered nature of both the searchers and the accused. In either case, women were certainly not the only suspects to be accused of having witches' teats, nor were searchers looking for teats simply because the accused was a woman. The location of the teats, however, was often gendered as a result of the shared understanding of the female body between searcher and accused, as well as a deep-seated mental link between dishonor, the private parts of the body, and the sexualized nature of female witchcraft.

The final point to be made about female bodies and their role in witchcraft as depicted in the Suffolk and Essex pamphlets is the gendered nature of demonic copulation. Despite the fact that sexual intercourse with the Devil was a staple of Continental

[35] Thomas Ady, *A perfect discovery of witches*... (London, 1661).

witchcraft and at least some conceptions of English witchcraft, it was almost always a strictly female activity. In the Suffolk and Essex pamphlets, it is abundantly clear that none of the accused men is in any way suggested to have copulated with the Devil, unless suckling imps could in some way be interpreted as a form of sexual intercourse. The language concerning female witches having sex with the Devil is, however, very clear. Matthew Honkins (a misspelling of Hopkins) gave testimony that the accused witch Elizabeth Clarke

> confessed shee had had carnall copulation with the Devill six or seven yeares; and that he would appeare to her three or foure times in a weeke at her bed side, and goe to bed to her, and lye with her halfe a night together in the shape of a proper Gentleman, with a laced band, having the whole proportion of a man, and would say to her, *Besse I must lye with you,* and shee did never deny him…[36]

John Sterne, Hopkins' fellow witch-finder, gave almost exactly the same testimony. Edward Parsley, another deponent, phrased Clarke's amorous activities in a slightly more sinister fashion, saying that the Devil "had had possession of her six or seven yeares."[37] The implication is not that Clarke is possessed and therefore no longer morally culpable for her actions. Rather, it argues for her subordinate status in a relationship where the Devil seems to take the place of a rather importunate human lover.

Some of the same language—less that of the Devil as a figure of consummate evil and more of the Devil as a human consort—appears in the testimony of Rebecca West, who told the court clerk the following:

> shee began to have familiaritie with the Devill, by the instigation of her mother *Anne Weste;* who hath appeared unto the said *Rebecca* at severall times, in diverse shapes: At one time in the likenesse of a proper young man, who desired of her, that he might have the same familiaritie with her, that others that appeared unto her

[36] *A true and exact relation of the severall informations, examinations, and confessions of the late witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex…* (London, 1645), 2.

[37] Ibid., 6.

> before had had: Promising that if shee would, he would then doe for the said *Rebecca* what she desired, and avenge her on her enemies; but required further; that shee would deny God, and relie upon him.[38]

This sort of phrasing portrays the Devil as a remarkably useful sort of lover, who, in return for the witch's favors, promises to do her bidding, wreak vengeance on her enemies, and let her rely on him. In fact, this language evokes the picture of an idealized early modern husband—a man who could protect his spouse and his home and who would serve as a strong provider on whom a woman could depend. Clearly the concepts of patriarchy (not to the mention the private desires and fantasies of the accused) crept into these accounts of demonic copulation.

The language of marriage becomes even more clearly marked in Hopkins' account of his interview with Rebecca West, in which West said, "that within halfe a yeare after the Devill appeared to her the said *Rebecca,* as shee was going to bed, and told her, he would marry her, and that shee could not deny him…"[39] Not only is the Devil acting like an idealized husband—now he has actually proposed marriage in order to regularize the union. However, all was not well, for West reported that the Devil was "cold as clay," and that her marriage ceremony was simply that the Devil "tooke her by the hand and lead her about the Chamber, and promised to be her loving husband till death, and to avenge her of her enemies; And that then shee promised him to be his obedient wife till death, and to deny God and Christ Jesus…"[40] The marriage was apparently sealed in her mind when she sent the Devil to kill the son of a neighbor, and the deed was accomplished within a fortnight. From that point on, she averred, "shee tooke him for her God, and thought he could doe as

[38] Ibid., 11.

[39] Ibid., 14.

[40] Ibid., 15.

God."[41] The conflation of the Devil with both God and husband suggests the structures of early modern patriarchy, although neither Catholics nor Protestants would have encouraged wives to consider their husbands on the same level as God. However, the supernatural character of her new husband seems to have impressed Rebecca deeply, despite the physical discomfort of his cold body. His promises and fulfillment thereof apparently won her over completely to the idea of a powerful and amorous, if ultimately evil, overlord.

If the Devil could, it seemed, serve as a lover and a husband, he could play the rôle of father as well. The author of the Suffolk pamphlet claims that "of those Witches some have confessed that they have had carnall copulation with the Devill, one of which said that she had (before her husband dyed) conceived twice by him, but as soone as she was delivered of them they run away in most horrid long and ugly shapes."[42] This result is very much in keeping with both early modern understandings of pacts with the Devil and of humoral medicine. In essence, the Devil is too cold to be a viable, potent male capable of fathering children; such a male would have to be human, with the hot and dry humours ascribed to masculinity. Thomas Cooper, the Church of England clergyman who wrote the widely-read pamphlet *The mystery of witch-craft*, argues that the Devil would have to steal the seed of some other living thing and assume the body of a newly dead person in order to sleep with a witch: "I dare not simply deny but that Satan may have this dealing with her, as being able to assume a dead bodie that is not yet corrupted, and so by his spirituall qualitie so farre to enlive the same, as that, though not by any seed therein… yet by some other seed, stollen from a living body (to which I rather agree, because it is confessed that

[41] Ibid.

[42] *A true and perfect relation of the Witches…at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke* (London, 1645), 5.

such seed is usually very cold)…"[43] Cooper here upholds the view of most elites who believed in *malefic* witchcraft—namely, that the Devil was a cruel master who promised that which he could not deliver. Most of all, for older, infertile witches, he could produce a phantom pregnancy that tantalized the witch with that which she could no longer have: a child.

This view of the Devil is somewhat at variance with the picture presented by the testimony of the women involved. For them, the Devil seems to be more of a companion, protector, lover, and, in one case, pet. Rebecca West informed Hopkins that in one meeting of the accused witches, "the Devill appeared to them in the shape of a dogge; afterwards in the shape of two Kitlyns; then in the shape of two dogges; and that the said familiars did doe homage in the first place to the said *Elizabeth Clarke,* and skipped up into her lap, and kissed her…"[44] Although there are certainly other accounts of familiars and the Devil that emphasize their frightening or horrific aspects, those in the Suffolk and Essex pamphlets seem overall to present a Devil that is less the horned demon of clerics and demonologists and more a supernatural being with whom humans can bargain and, occasionally, from whom they can benefit. In this way, the accused villagers seem to have taken any "Continental" notions of Hopkins and Stearne and shaped them to their own understanding of witchcraft—a process that, at its root, involved befriending evil beings in order to gain power and material benefits at the expense of the community.

Modern readers have no way of knowing Rebecca West's state of mind when she concocted her elaborate fantasies of a demon lover who looked like a "proper young man." Nor do we know what prompted Elizabeth Clarke's story of a "proper Gentleman" who

[43] Thomas Cooper, *The mystery of witch-craft…* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1617).

[44] *A true and perfect relation of the Witches…at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke* (London, 1645), 14.

insisted on sleeping with her three or four times a week. It is possible that many of these stories were shaped and crafted by the questioners themselves, particularly since many of the accused were subjected to sleep deprivation or physical exhaustion during questioning. In such a state, the emergence of exotic fantasies with a decidedly prurient element does not strain credulity. However, this study chooses to assume that something of the original speaker's intent remains in the adulterated form in which it has survived. If so, some of these women seem to have had deep, unfulfilled desires for companionship, sexual intimacy, and a protector.

Most of the women who speak of sexual intercourse with the Devil are not listed along with husbands, which leads to the assumption that they were widowed or singlewomen. Robin Briggs' theory of social marginalization leading to accusations of witchcraft seems applicable here. If these women were without husbands or other male protectors, they were automatically more vulnerable to accusation and less integrated into village life. Their stories of the Devil and what he supposedly promises to provide for them indicate that they were all too aware of their marginalized status and were willing to make a bargain with evil in order to gain some increased standing within the community, even if that bargain was merely being known and feared as a potential witch.

Male Witches and Masculine Witchcraft

Male witches, unlike their female counterparts, were defined less by their bodies and more by the roles they played in the community and their perceived levels of masculinity. The three models of male witchcraft described earlier provide a framework for analyzing the few accounts of male witchcraft that surface in the East Anglia trials. On the rare occasions that men were accused of witchcraft, they tended to be regarded as either

powerful and erudite necromancers, men who associated themselves with traditionally feminine activities, or men who because of circumstance or choice proved themselves less than masculine and unfit for the demands of early modern patriarchy. The three men examined in this section demonstrate each of these three categories. The role of the body is emphasized within all three categories as well, as each man's case is examined in order to establish the importance or lack of importance that the body played in his conviction for witchcraft.

The first of the two men accused in the Suffolk trial records is John Lowes, listed as the parson of Branson. He was accused of several crimes, foremost among them the bewitching of a ship off the coast of Harwidge, which consequently sank and resulted in the drowning of many passengers. He was also accused of other "hanous, wicked, and accursed acts," which he apparently performed with the aid of six imps who visited him daily.[45] James Sharpe, drawing from surviving note found in a Suffolk parish register, notes that Lowes was known as "a contentious man," one who pursued vexatious litigation against his neighbors and who was at least suspected of having popish views. He also notes that Lowes caused unusual sorts of harm as well as the more ordinary *maleficiae*, such as killing a child after a quarrel with its father and killing livestock. [46]

The other man referenced in the Suffolk account is Thomas Cooper, a brewer accused of collaborating with his wife Mary to poison the beer of the brewhouse in which they were employed. According to the pamphlet, "the odiousnesse of the infectious stinke of it was such & so intollerable that by the noysomnesse of the smel or tast many people dyed,"[47] an

[45] *A true and perfect relation of the Witches…at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke* (London, 1645), 3.

[46] Sharpe, "The devil in East Anglia," 241.

[47] *A true and perfect relation of the Witches…at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke* (London, 1645), 3.

intriguing accusation if for no other reason than that it involved a man and a woman jointly involved in a trade that was in a stage of gender-related flux. Brewing had been women's work in the medieval period, though it was in the process of shifting to the male sphere during the early modern period. Nevertheless, it was certainly a task that involved preparing drink for communal consumption, and therefore still had some associations with the female sphere of food preparation. Poison was also primarily seen as a weapon of women, and particularly witches, partly because it was so easy for women to utilize poison as they prepared food and worked in the kitchen. It seems likely that Thomas Cooper would at least somewhat fit into the model of the male witch who was accused based on an association with femininity—in this case, his partnership with his wife and his participation in a profession that still retained some vestiges of implicit femininity.

A third account of male witchcraft can be found in John Davenport's pamphlet *The Witches of Huntingdon*, published in 1646.[48] One of the accused witches in Davenport's account is named John Winnicke and is described as a servant to a local husbandman, as well as a bachelor at age 29. This situates him in a poorly paid, menial job with little hope of financial gain or advancement. It also identifies him as a man who lacked the patriarchal status of the head of his own household and family, thus placing his masculinity in question. His introduction to demonic pacts occurs when he loses a purse containing money he had saved and in his rage and despair begins to curse and swear about the theft of his property. At this point, he says that "there appeared unto him a Spirit, blacke and

[48] John Davenport, *The Witches of Huntingdon, their examinations and confessions; exactly taken by his Majesties justices of peace for that county...*(London, 1646), bk. Malcolm Gaskill identifies Davenport as an assistant to the justices in the Huntingdon witch trials, which were also part of the East Anglia trials and were instigated by Hopkins and Stearne. Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 216-225.

shaggy, and having pawes like a Beare, but in bulk not fully so big as a Coney."[49] The spirit offers to return his purse and money to him on the morrow, and does so, whereupon Winnicke falls to his knees and thanks God.

The spirit is then joined by two other spirits, and the leader informs him that he must now worship the spirits and take them for his gods, as well as allow them to suck blood from his body. In return for this and for his soul when he dies, they promise that he "should never want victualls," that they will "hurt cattel when he would desire it," and that they will also hurt men if he so desires.[50] When Winnicke is asked by the examiners what sorts of mischief he commanded the spirits to do, he answers that the only crime he committed was to "provoke the Maid-servant of Mr. Say of Molmesworth to steale victualls for him out of her Masters house, which she did…"[51] This rather pathetic response concludes the account.

The ways in which male witches' bodies are treated in the pamphlet are worthy of some note. Both Lowes and Cooper were accused, along with the female witches, of having teats upon their bodies from which imps sucked blood. (The teat is implied rather than directly stated in Thomas Cooper's case; however, the phrase "they [Cooper and his wife] also had their Impes to whom they gave suck"[52] does seem to indicate strongly the existence of witches' teats on both Cooper and his wife.) While the text is non-specific as to the location of the Coopers' teats, it is very clear about the location of John Lowes' marks. As the author states, Lowes "had a teat on the crowne of his head, and two under

[49] Ibid., 3.

[50] Ibid., 4.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., 4.

his tongue: and there is none that maketh a Covenant with the Devill but hath from him a private marke."[53] While witches could presumably have teats anywhere on their bodies (and with six imps to feed, one might reasonably assume that Lowes would have a multiplicity of marks), the language here is tantalizingly ambiguous. The teat of the crown of the head is difficult to see as sexualized, although the presence of teats in the mouth is indicative of a more private and intimate space. However, the phrase "private marke" is often used in witchcraft literature to discuss teats or "biggs" found in what early modern authors frequently deem "the privy parts" or "the shameful parts." Its use here, in reference to teats found in much less private places, seems to indicate that at least some of the shame attached to teats in the privy parts has been transferred to Lowes' seemingly de-sexualized witches' marks.

Furthermore, the location of the teats may have some relation to Lowes' profession as a minister and authoritative figure in the community. Without reading too much into the text, the reader can grasp a possible connection in the placement of a teat on the minister's head, the seat of learning and knowledge, and his mouth, by which he delivered the Word of God and fulfilled his calling as a cleric. These parts of the body not only allowed him to practice his trade, but also served to bring honor to the practitioner within the community. The presence of witches' marks on these areas of the body could signify the depth of shame into which Lowes had fallen and the dishonor accorded to him as a result of his abuse of ministerial power and authority. Although this method of dealing with witches' marks clearly cannot be read into every profession, it seems plausible that the committees examining Lowes might have drawn a subconscious parallel between the minister's current dishonor and the parts of the body that had enabled his previous honor, just as a female

[53] Ibid., 3.

witch's marks in her "privy places" could signal the sexualized shame and dishonor which she had brought upon herself.

The role of masculinity in defining male witchcraft is also a prominent theme within these three narratives. As a clergyman, John Lowes occupied a position of power and authority in the community and had a degree of security that a servant or a singlewoman could not possess. The economically-driven fears and despairs of someone living on the margins of society were foreign to him. However, Lowes does share an important component of the standard characterizations of female witches—a tendency to quarrels and irritating litigation, otherwise known as barratry. In 1642, three years before the East Anglian outbreaks began, he was included in an anonymous publication entitled *A magazine of scandal*, which attacked two ministers it deemed unfit for office: Thomas Fowkes and John Lowes.[54]

In the pamphlet's title, Lowes was cited as having been "arraigned for witchcraft, and convicted by law for a common barrettor," and had the distinction of being one of the "most notorious of the scandalous ministers within the county of Suffolke, and well may be said of all England."[55] According to the author, there had been several attempts to remove Lowes from office, all of which had failed. Although the events of his story are difficult to understand in chronological order, it seems that petitions to the Archbishop of Canterbury to have Lowes stripped of office were ignored, leading to an allegation of the Archbishop's "wilfull perseverance in retayning such wicked and prophane persons in the Church."[56] In

[54] *A magazine of scandall. Or, a heape of wickednesse of two infamous ministers, consorts, one named Thomas Fowkes of Earle Soham in Suffolk, convicted by law for killing a man, and the other named Iohn Lowes of Brandeston, who hath beene arraigned for witchcraft, and convicted by law for a common barrettor…* (London, 1642), bk.

[55] *A magazine of scandall* (London, 1642), 1.

[56] Ibid., 6.

the affidavit against Lowes attached to the pamphlet, he is cited as a "common Barrettor" and is said to have been twice arraigned for witchcraft. Clearly Lowes had a reputation for contentiousness and *maleficiae* years before he was formally charged and executed in the Suffolk trials.

On the other hand, Winnicke's case is much closer to those of the singlewomen described in the Suffolk and Essex pamphlets. Poor, bereft of his savings, and desperate for a means of recovering his stolen property, Winnicke was apparently willing to take any means possible to achieve his desires, even if such means were spiritually forbidden. It is important to note here that although Winnicke probably did not *actually* see three spirits appear to him and then offer them his soul, his narrative is constructed along familiar lines: a despairing and angry human looks for a way out of an impossible situation, is offered a demonic bargain that exchanges his soul and the use of his body for a solution, and chooses to accept the offer for the temporary benefits it brings. For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that Winnicke includes in his narrative (or was prompted to include) the imps' insistence that they suck his blood to seal the pact between them. Witchcraft was considered a bodily activity for both men and women, one that involved not only the devil's possession of the soul, but also his use of the body. The crucial difference in this case is the location of the imps' sucking: in Winnicke's story, unlike those of many of the women in the Suffolk and Essex cases, the imps suck from his head and from other unidentified places on his body. There is no direct reference to "privy places," nor does there seem to be an overtly sexualized component to Winnicke's relationship to the imps.

The bodily signs of witchcraft and the ways in which these three men fulfilled or did not fulfill early modern standards for patriarchy help group them into the three categories of male witch used for this section. In the account in the Suffolk pamphlet of Lowes'

witchcraft, he seems to share more with the necromancer/magician figure of medieval magic and occult lore than with the petty magic of village witches. However, he also seems to be perceived as practicing traditional *maleficiae*, albeit on a somewhat grander scale than his contemporaries. He demonstrates the elite area of male society that could fall prey to accusations of witchcraft: learned men, especially clerics who could be tempted to subvert their knowledge of divine power. Thomas Cooper, on the other hand, falls into the category of a man involved in what has traditionally been regarded as woman's work and who is associated with a female witch. John Winnicke offers an example of a man who, because of his poverty and low social status, did not demonstrate the strength and authority expected of a patriarchal head of a family and therefore was seen as more likely to be tempted by the illicit power that witchcraft offered.

For these men, the bodily component of witchcraft is merely the expected corollary to the story of witchcraft or diabolism, the price they must pay for power or wealth. Unlike the women who speak of intimate, even fulfilling relationships with demonic figures, the men in these witchcraft pamphlets seem to be using imps or familiars just as they are used. They are vulnerable to evil not because of their carnal desires, but rather because they are willing to step outside the prescribed roles of good citizen and good neighbor to take what does not belong to them and wreak havoc on their enemies. To be sure, female witches are accused of similar activities for similar motives. However, the sexualized aspect of relations with demons or the Devil is conspicuously absent from the narratives of male witches and is often conspicuously present in those of their female counterparts.

Conclusion

Although the East Anglia outbreaks were unique among English witchcraft trials in some respects, they nevertheless provide a fascinating glimpse of English understandings of witchcraft and the body, particularly the gendering of male and female bodies. In their explicit references to copulation with the Devil, the East Anglia trials offer a distinctly English version of the demonic pact, one that combines traditional elements of English witchcraft such as *maleficiae* and familiars with somewhat less familiar themes.

This emphasis on sexuality reveals the highly gendered nature of witchcraft perceptions surrounding male and female bodies. Women were already considered to be more vulnerable to the Devil's wiles by virtue of their physical and moral frailty.[57] Moreover, women's lustful desires in particular made them easy prey for demons who could, it was feared, fulfill their sexual longings in ways that human men could not.[58] When women were accused of witchcraft, it was only logical in an early modern context that their sexuality was at the forefront of their perceived demonic activities.

Male witches, on the other hand, were much rarer in English witchcraft for several reasons. First, they did not suffer from a gender-specific characterization of weakness, folly, and lasciviousness. Second, they were presumed to be rational, powerful, and endowed by God with rightful authority, characteristics that clearly made it more difficult for them to transgress accepted societal norms.[59] Men who violated these norms in ways

[57] Margaret Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate," *Hypatia* 18, No. 1 (Winter, 2003): 14.

[58] Marianne Hester, "Patriarchal reconstruction and witch hunting," in *Witchcraft in early modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 295.

[59] Julian Goodare, "Women and the Witch-Hunt in Scotland," *Social History* 23, No. 3 (Oct., 1998): 305.

egregious enough to warrant a charge of witchcraft tended to fall into two spaces: they either displayed inappropriate knowledge coupled with malicious character, or they were of such low social standing that their position in society no longer served to establish them as authoritative and therefore appropriately masculine.[60] In this study, John Lowes and Thomas Cooper fall into the first space, Lowes with his perceived interest in the occult and fondness for litigation, and Cooper with his familiarity with food preparation and association with an accused female witch. John Winnicke, with his lack of a traditional masculine role and abject poverty, falls into the second.

Men's and women's bodies, therefore, are treated very differently in this sample of English witchcraft literature. Whereas women's bodies are seen as the locus of supernatural activity and serve as the primary means of understanding women's urge to engage in demonic activity, men's bodies are less focal to their narratives of witchcraft and demonic activity. Women's bodies, rife with the unrestrained sexuality that tempts them to sin in the first place, become the site where moral culpability becomes shamefully evident through copulation with the Devil and familiars sucking on teats located in "privy places." Men's bodies, on the other hand, are part of the accepted witchcraft narrative, but primarily as a means of collateral in order to appease familiars. Much more important for male witches are their roles in the public sphere and in interactions with other men. While women's bodies are treated as highly sexualized vessels of supernatural activity, men's bodies are the practical means used to acquire and retain power, thus reflecting the gendered cultural assumptions Englishmen and –women held in all spheres of daily life.

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[60] Alison Rowlands, "Not the 'Usual Suspects'?" in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 18-19; Julian Goodare, "Men and the Witch-Hunt in Scotland," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, 156; Malcolm Gaskill, "Masculinity and Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, 172-173.

Women's bodies in witchcraft therefore became much like women's bodies in possession cases. In both situations, women's bodies served as the proof of their supernatural activity, and that proof could grant them heightened spiritual authority and notoriety within their communities. Possession victims were usually granted positive spiritual authority—they fought demons to demonstrate their faith, testified to the power of God even in the midst of their adversity, and were regarded by their audiences as living martyrs whose physical sufferings proved the intensity of their faith and the sovereignty of God in the world. Accused witches, on the other hand, were granted negative spiritual authority. Their spiritual power was not recognized as legitimate—as discussed in this chapter, witches were perceived to be selling themselves body and soul to the Devil in return for illicit supernatural powers. However, those powers were still feared and respected within the village. Witchcraft, although much riskier than possession, could also prove a means for women to exercise spiritual agency, even if its consequences could be violent and at times fatal. Jorden's treatise, which denies any form of supernatural activity, also chips away at the spiritual authority held by accused witches. His theories about the female body, its diseases, and its limited capabilities mean that all women's bodies, whether those of possession victims or accused witches, are stripped of the mystery of the supernatural and reduced to corrupted flesh.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Holy Maids: Elizabeth Barton and Mary Glover

In the body of Edward Jorden's treatise, in the middle of a discussion about the effects of hysteria on the animal faculties, there is a passing reference to a woman only referred to as "the holy maid of Kent."[1] Jorden uses her as an example of those who can counterfeit possession by reproducing the behaviors and sounds attributed to those who are demonically possessed—stiffened bodies, hiccupping, breaking wind, and imitating the voices of different sorts of creatures. Jorden acknowledges that both sexes can feign possession or illness, and he cites examples of both men and women who have done so. However, the feigned possession cases he cites by name are all women. Of those women, the Maid of Kent may be the most important figure he lists.

The Maid of Kent's actual name was Elizabeth Barton. She was a servant girl from Aldington during the reign of Henry VIII who, in 1526, began to exhibit strange symptoms. For seven months, she suffered a "great infirmitie in hir body," a sort of swelling that would rise up into her throat and give her almost unendurable pangs of agony.[2] She also began to engage in divination, foretelling the death of a local child and telling neighbors during her trances of things they had done while she was far away.[3] Over time, Elizabeth's trances continued to become more intense and her prophecies and divinations more

[1] Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*... (London, 1603), 12.

[2] B.R., *A newyeares gifte dedicated to the Popes Holinesse, and all Catholikes addicted to the Sea of Rome*... (London, 1579), 44.

[3] Ibid.

impressive. She insisted that the Lady of Courte of Street, the Virgin herself, had saved her from the point of death and vowed that she must travel to her shrine and give her homage. At the shrine, her trances and prophecies became so famous that she was examined by three monks of Christ's Church, Canterbury, who found her to be sound in doctrine and encouraged her to continue in her trances and prophecies. Elizabeth fell into one of her renowned trances at the shrine before 3,000 people, including gentlemen and –women of high rank. The Archbishop of Canterbury, at her request, appointed her to a nunnery, where she worked miracles during her trance-like states, including healing the sick, raising the dead, and doing good to all who had vowed themselves to the Lady of Courte Streete.[4]

Elizabeth's true test came when Henry VIII decided to divorce his first wife, the devoutly Catholic Catherine of Aragon, and marry again. Henry and his counselors had allowed Elizabeth's signs and visions during her trances to continue, despite her vast popularity, presumably because she was not speaking heresy or encouraging treason. This changed quickly when Elizabeth began to prophesy against Henry's impending divorce, saying that if Henry "did not take Katherine his Wife againe, he should be depriued of his Crown, and dye the death of a Dogge."[5] Henry, already nervous about the implications of his politically and religiously charged divorce, had little patience with dissent, even from such a famous and well-respected source. Despite Elizabeth's confession that she had feigned her trances and prophecies, she, her confessor, and several others involved in her rise to fame were executed at Tyburn in 1534.[6]

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[4] Ibid., 45.

[5] Francis Bacon, *The historie of the reigne of King Henry the Seuenth* (London, 1629), 134.

[6] "Elizabeth Barton," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02319b.htm.

The holy maid of Kent, a young Catholic visionary and miracle worker whose life ended ignominiously at the hands of the king's executioner, is in some ways far removed from the story of Mary Glover, the Protestant daughter of a grocer whose possession showed all the hallmarks of a staunch Puritan faith. Yet the two cases are remarkably similar, for both Elizabeth and Mary alarmed official channels of authority with their powerful demonstrations of bodily torment and their claims that these torments were the proof of supernatural possession. In these possession narratives, the worlds of heaven, earth, and hell collided dramatically in the bodies of young and seemingly unimportant lower-class women. Through their bodies—their writhings, pangs of suffering, and strange speech and gestures—Elizabeth and Mary achieved spiritual power and authority that they never could have held through official religious channels.

Elizabeth Barton had been dead for nearly seventy years when Edward Jorden wrote his treatise, yet it is her name that sprang to mind when he needed examples of famous feigned possessions. Although Jorden fought desperately to downplay and ultimately eradicate the rash of possession cases that seemed so prevalent in early modern England, even he could not escape the pervasive cultural assumption that supernatural possession, whether divine or demonic, conferred religious power and authority on those who claimed it. And, as he himself acknowledges, those who claimed this mystical power were most often women.

Women's Bodies in Possession, Witchcraft, and Hysteria

This thesis has argued that demonic possession gave women spiritual agency that eluded them in other areas of life, and that the root of that agency was found in the bodily signs and symptoms that women displayed. Because men's and women's bodies were

treated in very similar ways and given similar authority in Protestant cases of possession, women had a *de facto* spiritual equality with men. Moreover, because of ancient and medieval traditions that saw women's bodies as more porous and open to supernatural penetration, women were more often assumed to be possessed and their possessions were accepted as credible. (Although men were possessed as well, they were usually very young, falling more into the category of children than adult men.) Demonic possession was a means for women to gain spiritual fame and authority, as family, friends, neighbors, and complete strangers gathered in large crowds around their beds to witness the power of God and the evil of the Devil battling for control of a human soul.

In much the same way, women's witchcraft was rooted in the body, although the type of fame and authority conferred on accused witches was very different from that accorded to victims of demonic possession. Accusations against female witches centered around bodily proofs—witches' marks, the damning teats found on the body itself, and copulation with the Devil, the perverted intercourse that allowed witches to barter their bodies in exchange for supernatural favors. Men's witchcraft, on the other hand, was rooted in their reputations for masculinity and their relationships with other men in the community. Men who were seen as insufficiently masculine or who used their masculine power and authority for evil purposes were accused as witches, but neither form of accusation was rooted in bodily activities. Victims of demonic possession, whether male or female, proved the validity of their possessions through bodily symptoms. Only women's witchcraft, however, was seen as rooted in the weakness and moral frailty inherent in the female body. Men's witchcraft involved the body, but more as a necessary part of the equation of the demonic pact rather than the root of the evil in which they had engaged. Finally, although women who were accused as witches very often suffered as a result of the

spiritual authority accorded to them, it was accorded nevertheless. Witches were figures of power within their local communities, even if that power was seen as demonic in source and malevolent in practice.

Edward Jorden's treatise *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* works to undermine this common understanding of the female body as a vessel for the supernatural, a mysterious entity uniquely open to mystical promptings. He does so partly as an attempt to save women who are condemned for supernatural activity on the basis of their bodily signs—specifically, accused witches such as Elizabeth Jackson. His argument, however, results in the conclusion that women in general are not prone to supernatural activity of any sort, especially demonic possession. For women who gained spiritual authority and power through the symptoms of possession or accusations of witchcraft, this ideology marked a sharp decrease in the means of spiritual agency available to them.

Jorden weakens this spiritual agency by reinterpreting possessed women's bodily symptoms as natural, the product of hysterical women's unstable reproductive systems and inability to control their own bodies. These corrupted and polluting bodies, Jorden argues, are capable of driving women mad, to the point where they are capable of feigning or actually believing in the narrative of possession that they have constructed for themselves. The reality of their symptoms—that they are hysterical and, in some cases, verging on mental illness—should be determined for them by male physicians, he implies. Just as Robert Burton argues in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* that witches are actually old women who manufacture their outlandish confessions of witchcraft out of loneliness and overwhelming depression, Jorden argues that women who claim possession misinterpret the

symptoms of hysteria out of a desire for fame, notoriety, and meaning.[7] However, the reality that exists outside their own delusions of spiritual grandeur is the harsh world of facts and medical diagnoses, one that does not allow for spiritual renegades who stretch the boundaries of what is already known.

Modern readers can never be completely certain of what happened in early modern cases of demonic possession and witchcraft. It is comforting to assume that other factors were at play—hysteria, depression, epilepsy, and mental illness, to name a few. Few scholars have entertained the idea that at least some cases of demonic possession might have involved supernatural activity.[8] Yet despite the impossibility of identifying the exact causes at work in these cases, it is certain that the women and men involved suffered bodily symptoms that were excruciating, long-lasting, and confusing. Claiming that demonic possession was at the root of their symptoms was, perhaps, a way to assign meaning and validity to the pain they felt. For women especially, it was also a way to find spiritual power and agency through the martyrdom of living flesh. Their physical symptoms became greater than the sum of their parts as ordinary illnesses were transformed into battles in the great cosmological war between good and evil, God and the Devil. Women's bodies were the battleground for this war; the women themselves were warriors for the cause of Christ. Through the faith they demonstrated and the courage they displayed, they became embodied testimony to the power of God to save His children, even from the torments of the Devil himself.

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[7] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1927), bk.

[8] D.P. Walker writes in *Unclean Spirits*, "Whatever their personal beliefs, historians should not ask their reader to accept supernatural phenomena." D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 15.

Edward Jorden's treatise takes this interrelation between bodily pain and spiritual struggle and neatly severs it in half. Women's pain, he argues, is not tied to a greater cause or purpose. It is certainly not a means for God to demonstrate His power and authority in the world through the bodies of ordinary women who are, in some ways, the least of society. The pain these women feel begins and ends with their bodies, he claims, and ascribing any greater cause to it is either delusion or deliberate fraud. Women are confined to bodies that are constantly in a state of hormone-related flux, bound by the life-cycle events of menarche, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. The symptoms that they misinterpret as possession, a test from God to determine the strength of their faith, are nothing more than the vagaries that are to be expected from a reproductive system so unstable and fragile that it must have a man to properly regulate it.

Jorden's treatise effectively limits the understanding of woman to her body. The depth of her faith, the reserves of courage she possesses, and the meaning she herself ascribes to her physical symptoms are all invalidated by the simple fact that she is confined to a body that is unpredictable and physically weak. Moreover, her body is ruled by a reproductive system prone to disease and capable of self-pollution, with a uterus that can wander throughout the rest of the body wreaking havoc wherever it goes. A woman's body, constantly suffering from internal upheaval, makes her physically incapable of the rational nature and activities ascribed to men, he implies. Worst of all, the spiritual power that once was considered to come hand in hand with this weaker, more porous body is false, Jorden asserts. Women's bodies are simply weaker and more capricious than men's and are not capable of any special spiritual abilities or authority. Seen through the context of female spiritual agency, Jorden's treatise is the beginning of a long decline in women's

ability to relate cultural perceptions of their bodies to greater spiritual power and authority. If the weaker vessel of a woman's body could no longer hold mystical spiritual powers, it had little use in a religious context, and obedience and childbearing became its only true spiritual functions.

Hysteria and Spiritual Authority: Expanding Into the Modern World

The diagnosis of hysteria for women in the early modern world would become a hallmark of the Enlightenment and the modern period. Women became the hysterical sex, prone to fainting fits, attacks of the vapors, and other physiological and psychological frailties.[9] The association of hysteria with femininity was so strong that to name as a man as hysterical was to impugn his masculinity and call into question his sexual identity. During World War I, when shell-shocked soldiers began to display many of the signs traditionally associated with hysteria, many attending physicians shied away from a formal diagnosis of hysteria because of the deleterious social effects it would have on soldiers' and officers' psyches and reputations.[10] Treatment for hysterical patients could be cruel in the extreme, and a diagnosis of hysteria, as well as the subsequent harsh remedies, became a means of social control for unruly women whose behavior did not conform to societal norms. Clitoridectomies, ovariectomies, full hysterectomies, shock treatment, confinement in mental institutions, physical restraint, and emotional abuse were only a few of the

[9] Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), bk.

[10] Mark S. Micale, *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 49-162; Scull, 152-174.

treatments used to keep uncontrollable women firmly within the control of a still-patriarchal society.[11]

However, even within the label of hysteria, women found ways to assert agency. They could use to hysteria to avoid duties they did not wish to fulfill, to gain attention or notoriety, or to achieve a permanent status of victim that gave them secretive means of power and authority. For instance, Jean-Martin Charcot's hysterical patients at the Sâlpetriére were certainly used by the great specialist as guinea pigs for his experiments in the causes of and preconditions for hysteria, yet they too found ways to use their situation to gain national notoriety and, in some cases, start new lives away from their poverty-stricken beginnings.[12] Scholars have studied these sorts of agency as they examine the role of women in hysteria, looking at the economic and social ways in which women could use hysteria to gain increased agency, exploiting the expected weaknesses of their sex and using them to achieve power.

However, scholarship on the ways in which women used hysteria to achieve spiritual authority in the modern world is much less prevalent, and this might prove to be a useful and effective to way to expand the current study of possession, witchcraft, and hysteria in the early modern world. Women's role as vessels of supernatural power has been alluded to in studies of charismatic spiritual movements, such as Grant Wacker's work on Pentecostalism in *Heaven Below* and Dennis Covington's examination of snake-handling Christian fundamentalists in *Salvation on Sand Mountain*.[13] Much of the scholarship on women's agency and hysteria involves analyses either of women confined to

[11] Scull, 104-131; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," *The New England Magazine*, January 1892.

[12] Scull, 104-131.

[13] Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003); Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2009).

traditional societal roles by diagnoses of hysteria or women liberated from those roles by their ability to break social conventions during hysterical fits. Examining whether or not women used hysteria and the association of hysteria with femininity to achieve spiritual power and authority in the modern world is an intriguing topic and one worthy of further consideration. This sort of study would provide a context of change, continuity, or both for the current study of women's religious agency in the early modern world and would show the different cultural opportunities available to modern women to shape their own religious and spiritual experiences within the boundaries of socially-prescribed physical and mental disorders.

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